THE CITY: A LEARNING EXPERIENCE
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CONTENT

Alicja Szerląg, Kamila Kamińska
Introduction 7

PART 1
POWER, RESISTANCE, AND EDUCATION IN THE CITY

Kamila Kamińska
Educational discourses in city spaces 13

Maria Skóra
The stigma of a “bad address”. Social risks in the revitalisation of Polish cities 17

Małgorzata Prokosz
The backyard as a magic place: a common space for socialisation 39

Barbara Jezierska
Restorative justice as a way of limiting crime amongst children and youth in local communities of the city 53

Krzysztof Zajdel
Graffiti – a way of communication in the city 65

Maria Kopsztejn
Popularization of science and art in an integrated urban space illustrated by the example of a Metropolitan Area “Silesia” 75

Steven MacLennan, Chris Yuill
Contesting Cool: alternative and mainstream representations of Belmont Street (Aberdeen, Scotland) 83

PART 2
INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN URBAN AND RURAL CONTEXTS

Alicja Szerląg
Contribution to thinking about educational qualities of the urban space 97

Magdalena Siuta
Spelling out the urban space. How does a town (de)stabilise personal relationships? Urban space – a new “player” on the stage 99
Michał Machnikowski
The history of Wrocław: An example of multiculturalism and a political project 113

Alicja Joanna Siegień-Matyjewicz
The space of a small town as perceived by youth of Belarusian descent 129

Anna Józefowicz
Animating an urban areas with legends and stories of rural dwellers of Podlaskie Province 155

Alina Szwarc
Intercultural education in urban and rural secondary schools 169
I want to express my love for overflowing vitality of the city in a way that makes the city even more overflowing and vital. [...] more and more I am thinking about people, about real life as I see it in the faces of all these millions of lives walking.

graffiti writer SWOON
(Ganz, 2006, p. 204)

The book is a welcome introduction to discussion on the city within the pedagogical discourse. Wide variety of subjects served as a field of the author’s research and deliberations; nevertheless the city remains a main topic. Contributors give interdisciplinary perspectives, all showing an amazing educational potential set before the conscious readers of the city text. They also make that text easier to interpret and understand. Avoiding the temptation of giving instant instructions for education in city spaces they may help any teacher who is devoted to experiential, even adventurous pedagogies, where the “overflowing vitality” of the city serves as a perfect environment.

Toporow claimed that space is a text, therefore can be interpreted as communiqué, a statement (Toporow, 2003, p. 15). Exploring, dwelling or simply walking the city spaces, filled with an extreme variety of meanings and values, shows the powerful educational dimension of that setting. Being aware of Baudelairean/Benjaminean reading of a prime figure of modernity – flaneur, a man who appreciates the city by seeing and walking, wandering with neither aim nor purpose – we can ask important questions of relevance of those experiences in learning (Benjamin, 1973). The post-modern history of flaunerisme’s may be, according to Bauman: “with but a little stretching, told as one of the feminization of the flauner’s ways” (Bauman, 1994, p. 142), therefore issues of gender, ethnicity, and power – so strong and visible in city text – need to be addressed both in academic and everyday discourses. Processes of “colonization of life – world” by omnipresence of advertising, shrinking public space taken over for consumerism purposes and progressing ghettoization (Jalowiecki, Łukowski, 2007) of city areas do not only need description from the social sciences perspective but also subversion by artistic interventions (ex. Robakowski media art or Blu, Banksy and others in the field of street art).
The book, as a result of discussions and explorations, aims at becoming an answer (incomplete as it is) to those processes from the pedagogical perspective. Perceiving education as a science that not only describes the world but also seeks ways of changing it, even implements them as it produces practical knowledge (with no “ambition” to be technical), we try to explore and describe those processes that are apparent in city spaces, but also dwell on critical position that allows us to go further. Taking the course of conduct led by Teun A. van Dijk we have a courage to: “study the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 352). For such a purpose – city gives both a ground and a horizon for explorations.

The book is divided into two parts: first deals with more general issues arising within postmodern urban spaces. Contributors deal with a range of problems connected to social justice and inequality – Skóra and Jezierska. They also address cultural powers manifestations in the city, with their clashes and conflicts – MacLennan, Yuill and Kopsztejn. A direct, social pedagogy input is given by Prokosz and Zajdel, both exploring the problems of socialization in urban areas.

Second part takes into specific consideration both cultural and multicultural dimensions of postmodern urban and rural spaces. Establishing the area of explorations on that continuum brings to mind the Ferdinand Tönnies’ (1887/1957) concept conceptualizing the social relations found in the city and the country, that is ruralism and urbanism. As Stevenson (2003) points out: “according to Tönnies’s original formulation, social relationships can be categorized as either gemeinschaft, meaning that they are intimate, enduring and exist between people and kinship, friendship and neighborhood ties (in other words ‘community’ relations), or they can be classified as gesellschaft, which are impersonal and often contractual (that is ‘association’)” (Stevenson, 2003, p. 20). Such is the context of Skonieczny and Siuta’s deliberations, but also of other contributors in that part. Critical voice of Machnikowski on the political meaning of the concept and praxis of “Wrocław. The meeting place” project exploiting to high extend the multicultural face of the city for marketing purposes has its contra point in more traditional narratives by Siegień-Matyjewicz, Józefowicz, and Szwarc with their enthusiasm for ethnic diversity and multicultural education. Seeking ways the values are expressed, transmitted, made visible and understandable, those authors take the route set by the invitation to the discussion on educational qualities of urban space outlined in Szerląg’s introduction.

Taking seriously Gruenewald’s statement that: “the chief implication of a critical pedagogy of place to educational research is the challenge it poses to all educators to expand the scope of their theory, inquiry, and practice to include the social and ecological contexts of our own, and others’ inhabitance” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 8) we put the narrative The city: an educational experience for critical reading and invite further discussion and research cooperation.
References


PART 1

POWER, RESISTANCE, AND EDUCATION IN THE CITY

Place-based pedagogies are needed so that the education of citizens might have some direct bearing on the well-being of the social and ecological places people actually inhabit.

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EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSES IN CITY SPACES

the city is a playground.
set down your shopping bags,
  swing

  swing from bridges, swing from bus stops
  swing after you crossed the streets as a crosswalk

[...]

the city is your playground
do you need to ask them why?
Kidpale, 2006, p. 70

Over ten years ago I had an amazing educational experience of the city, and the city it was! Using the grammar of Ulster slang – Belfast is the city, so it is!Having spent half a year working for NGO at the peace line, living in the most friendly neighbourhood of so called trouble-areas has taught me many lessons, most truly meaningful. That learning experience was combined with a wide range of extreme emotions: from the hash fear whenever the pipe bomb was found in the community centre we worked for, to the excitement during the marching season; from anxiety of the “troubles nights” of July, to the soft feelings that could be the only answer to the generosity and hospitality of our neighbours. All in all, it was definitely a powerful, perspective transforming (Mezirow), and life changing interaction: me and Belfast, Belfast and us. According to Lynch: “there seems to be a public image of any given city which is the overlap of many individual images each held by some significant number of citizens. Such group images are necessary if an individual is to operate successfully within his environment and to cooperate with his fellows. Each individual picture is unique, with some content that is rarely or never communicated, yet it approximates the public image, which in different environments is more or less compelling, more or less embracing” (Lynch, 1996: 99). Belfast printed its image deeply in our minds and hearts, therefore has become a second home to me and my family, so we have to come back to it for new lessons and emotions every now and again. The discursive character of Belfast’s city text, made so visible by its murals, flags, and other manifestations of power and culture, does not need to be emphasized. It communicates its values and struggles to both strangers and dwellers, mak-
ing the response absolutely necessary. The city is a space of conflict, and therefore of the real meeting, learning, and change (Kamińska, 2010). It taught me to take part in educational discourses of other cities too, even those, which text is not that apparent nor provoking as it is in Belfast. Encouraging the readers of the book to open their eyes and minds to city texts set before them, both in their personal learning journey and the educational theory and praxis, is my ambitious goal as an editor.

Apart from that personal experience, two short sentences inspired my explorations of pedagogical narratives and discourses of the city in the last ten years. First one, by Toporow (together with his two exceptional books on city texts) has already been cited above: “space is a text, therefore can be interpreted as a communiqué” (Toporow, 2003, p. 15), the second is a simple proclamation by Mendel: “places are pedagogical” (Mendel, 2006). Urban studies have not been established within Polish academy in the same way as it happened in the West, nevertheless an amazing amount of research, resulting in great bibliographic heritage, has been conducted by Jalowiecki and his fellows. That source of knowledge cannot be underestimated, although set within social (not educational) sciences’ field. The challenge of reading those city texts, together with the goal of understanding their pedagogical dimensions and meanings, become my personal and academic path. The assumption that some of those discourses are silenced and made invisible led me to the heritage of critical pedagogy writers (Freire, bell hooks, Gruenevald, Sattersthwaite) and to the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis. According to Broeckmann: “whether in the case of minorities, social movements or special-interest groups, achieving visibility can in itself be an important step towards the goal of political effectiveness. However, visibility is always connected to the possibility of control” (Broeckmann, 2005, p. 35).

According to Sennet “since the revolutions which prompted their spectacular growth in the XIX century, cities have been messy, disorderly and contradictory. And even the most authoritarian modernists’ attempts to impose order and rational solutions on this chaos were at best partially successful and at worst social and environmental disasters” (Stevensons, 2003, p. 88). Graffiti, street and media art, happenings such as the one referred to in the Kidpale poem – performed by Barsy Brothers in Sweden – restore the city chaos and messiness. Swings put by the brothers in Swedish cities have brought laughter and joy but disturbed the communication channels near the shopping areas, therefore were immediately taken off. The group Lyyying Community (Poland) has documented their street action in the video “Lock up Mandela!”: “in which the artists performed silently, lying down on the city pavement dressed in bizarre costumes” (Broeckmann, 2005, p. 36). They asked the passers-by what did they think was going on… the subversive character of the performance sets important questions of what is acceptable in public space, to whom it belongs and what is its order (what powers constitutes it?). It might be underestimated as just a funny play, but research shows that those are serious questions in postmodern urban spaces, having educational applications (for example Turkish
immigrants picnicking in Berlin’s parks are perceived as aggressive challenge to the German public space character and culture). Poland has a great heritage of resistance in public space, Orange Alternative movement being probably the most powerful one. Art had worked as a medium; they used absurd and sarcastic humour, still with deep political meaning. Funded by Waldemar Frydrych in 1980 (time of civil war in Poland) Orange Alternative started with painting of graffiti dwarves – at least two people got arrested for this “crime”. Then in 1985 the happenings started. Telling a story about one of them, Major recalls: “I thought Militia would run after us taking hats off the people’s heads. But Militia surprised me. They instead began arresting the dwarves” (Frydrych, Misztal, 2008, p. 5). Images of street actions of the movement (often involving hundreds of citizens and the police) were broadcasted across the whole world and became an icon of Liberty. Can it be an inspiration today? Can we build resistance to the overwhelming power of negative public production, which in itself is the process of shrinking the public sphere? What are the pedagogical challenges of the contemporary world where, freedom seems to be nicely and safely set in the shopping mall? What are the dangers to the autonomy of humans in the postmodern city of high (post?) capitalism? Can we teach the new generation how to keep their eyes open and minds critical towards the discourses of power that urban environment is so full of?

Deutche’s view can serve as a context for the explorations delivered in the first part of the book, and a source of hope for critical pedagogy of place/urban pedagogy theory and praxis: “conflicts, division, and instability… do not ruin the democratic public sphere; they are the condition of its existence” (Deutche, 1998, p. 267). Neither children nor adults need permission from any power to use public spaces in democratic countries – city is our playground!

References


Beside time, space is a main dimension of human activity. It may be transparent, sometimes overlooked, but never neutral. It is subjected to constant valorisation and processes of development that change its primal value. “Artificial spaces” replace “natural space”. Its value depends not only on geographical advantages, but also on political, cultural, and economic factors. Thus, it is impossible to reduce space only to its material dimension – it consists of artefacts, has a social superstructure. Social ecology never explains social facts one by another. It is very important to understand the feedback occurring between the space and human behaviour. Spaces are often consumer goods, exploited beyond their capacities. Environmental pressures have a downgrading impact, bringing serious consequences (Łasinowski, 1997, p. 14).

High quality spaces are very rare (Łasinowski, 1997, p. 18). In relation to the biological decline and overpopulation in poor regions of the world, the resources are shrinking. Moreover, spaces are useful goods, because all human action is concentrated in their range (Łasinowski, 1997, p. 21). It is worth noticing that geographical environment influences locations of the communities, production processes, and hence diversifies local life standards, wealth or poverty levels of the population. With civilization progress, primal spaces change. They become artificial, selective, divided, destabilized (Łasinowski, 1997, p. 23). Therefore, spaces are endangered goods – objects of competition. Conflicts result from limited resources and impossibility to satisfy all needs (Łasinowski, 1997, p. 27). Human communities use spatial values in everyday existence. They mean more than geometrical plains. For their users these are collective values, objects of common experience with wide range of meanings. There are no empty spaces at all (Znaniecki; In: Malikowski, Soleciki, 1999, pp. 124–125). Because of inequalities between competitors, social and economic development of spaces varies due to degradation processes. Therefore, such spatial phenomena like concentration (inhabitation density), segregation (community homogenization), whether invasion (inflow of other groups) emerge. Human communities constantly compete for the most attractive locations to live: housing conditions, fuels, non-pol-
luted environment. It also refers to municipal spaces – major areas of contemporary human activity. Cities are living systems striving for equilibrium (Mironowicz; In: Ziobrowski, Jarczewski, 2010, p. 24). Class competition for the access to the most attractive spaces concern buildings of the best quality, housing standards (material, technical, aesthetic), convenient recreation sites and logistics, municipal infrastructure (media, roads, interchanges). Aspirations of the stronger (wealthier) are easier to carry out in the free market economy, but similar trends were also indicated by the researchers of the realistic socialism before 1989 (Kłopot; In: Borowik, Sztalt, 2007, pp. 127–128). Urban planning is not able to overpower social processes. Managing the space involves undertaking profitable actions simultaneously to keeping the balance between potential of the space and economical goals. With commoditization of space these priorities are liable to redefinitions. Cities as areas of conflict become “fragmentized” and structurally divided, mainly by the functionality of places. This disintegration is connected with strong valorisation of spaces: privatization of some, ghettoization of others (Mikielewicz, 2007). Processes of social segregation and migrations are elements of on-going competition within the city. With metamorphoses of urban areas, representatives of one social category are pushed out by others. This process is bidirectional: it refers not only to degraded, exhausted areas falling into decline, but also to those ones, which value increases due to scheduled investments.

Public spaces as commodities

In European cities, centres are of particular relevance. In the central locations communication and infrastructure come together – the distance from all suburbs is similar. Secondly, city centres – historically formed urban cores – cannot be found in the cities of relatively short history. That is where uniqueness of the buildings comes from, depicting the course of history and showing past character, pillars of local economy, vulnerability to adapt cultural or political influences. Very often, the most essential and most valuable elements of urban fabric are located in the city centres, contributing to their specificity and genus loci. City centre also plays important functional roles, being a location for institutions of diverse character: cultural, business, administrative. It is also a place of comprehensive commercial services, which are lately shifted to the malls in peripheries. The centre is the city’s heart – with rudimental meaning for the local community, as well as values of no lesser importance for the visitors. On one hand, it plays a symbolic role for the image of the city, on the other it is about awareness of the common space, a core. City centre is a place of the most intense social life and public activity sui generis – from the historical point of view it is a space for interaction, meeting point, strengthened by the shape of its infrastructure: cafés, pubs, restaurants, museums, galleries, etc. Unfortunately, urbanization processes tend to deprive city centres of “the meeting place” character, transforming their infrastructure to more car-friendly, and considering the location of the business and offices as the main goal. What’s more, sometimes there were
plans of modernization aiming to fill city space with buildings incompatible with its prior functions, what brought about the risk of turning it into glass and concrete desert. Phenomenon of commercialization of spaces is also problematic, as well as “unplanned planning”, putting business profits over public interests.

In post-socialist cities, mass transformations of their fabric can be observed. It is not only a matter of architecture and stigmatizing the modernism, but more of symbolism, cultural values and creating new images of the cities. For municipal authorities economic transformation opened new opportunities, market value of which overshadowed their risks. Commercialization of city spaces became a method of municipal budgets reparation, with simultaneous applaud for processes moving Polish cities closer to an image of the Western ones. Solutions of “socialist” connotations fell into disgrace, irrespectively of their functionality or historical value (e.g. railway station in Katowice). Planning strategies depend on vicissitudes of economic situation, gaps of still imperfect legislative system allow nothing and everything at the same time (Bielecki, 2008). Omnipresence of advertisements, expansion of commercial and entertainment functions, gated communities – these are more and more frequent images of Polish cities (Bartetzky, 2008). Pressure on market value is clearly noticeable above other functions. Marginalization of public functions is stripping the city of its original character, it generates disintegration both in architectural and social dimensions. The risk of exclusion overshadows basic levels of social praxis such as using urban infrastructure. As a result, cities resemble a mosaic, chaotic space with no other logic but the profit-oriented one. A small label of having developmental potential and animating urban life is often granted to actions derived from commercialization. The burden of optimization the city functions shifts from social goals to economic benefits. City centre areas are more and more often revitalized for commercial reasons, not to mention privatization plans. Gentrification removes previous residents, making space for the inflow of the new capital, gated communities clearly influence spatial segregation and polarization of local communities (Kamrowska; In: Lorens, Ratajczyk-Piątkowska, 2008). In conclusion, disappearance of public spheres and stigmatization of degraded places appear to be the next dimension of class conflict and a potential factor of marginalization on many levels: economic, social, cultural.

Class conflict within the city

In the free market economy, inhabiting cheap spaces is inseparably connected with financial deprivation and deficiency. “Bad address” indicates location in the social structure and certain class membership in economic categories. Place of residence is a symbol of status, prestige, but also of defeat. Following Goffman’s deliberations, consequences of having a stigma are multiple. Firstly, in psychological means, feelings of shame, anger, even aversion are born towards it. On the other hand, it is hate towards the Normals, provocative and arrogant behaviour. The uncertainty
results in isolation, avoiding contacts with others, extending beyond the bracket of social life. Secondly, while trying to get rid of stigma its owners are exposed to various risks because they are balancing on the edge of law or being tricked by swindlers or conmen. There is also a problem of stigma functioning as an explanation for all life defeats and an argument for passive lifestyle, dismissal from social responsibility, lack of acceptance by the Normals (Ziobrowski, Jarczewski, 2010, pp. 39–41). All above-mentioned phenomena are present in degraded notorious areas. Social marginalization contributes to ghettoization, growing contrasts to new posh areas result in deepening social distances and broken bonds – due to the feelings of shame and injustice, threat of poverty and degradation. Material deprivation precludes the possibility of enjoying broad offer of urban commercial entertainment. Clusters of stigmatizing features disintegrate local community what manifests in the ways of using the city as a functional whole. Changes in the name of so-called animation disclose negative connotations. Revitalization processes and the current care of facades are not altruist gestures at all – they often are sponsored by private business and the only motivation is to attract clients. Marketing ruthlessly uses culture and history, creating simulacra, embellishing stories, extending urban legends and cheap symbolic infrastructure. Sacrum–profanum become one, losing facts, creating new myths. In the pursuit of attracting tourists, cities put masks on and compete in generating “cultural products” for sale, disregarding pro-social values. Animation of space is mostly achieved by proceeding commercialization. Cafés, restaurants, pubs, and shops organize the space subordinated to the primacy of profit and guided by capitalist logic. These kinds of solutions are most comfortable and favourable, as they are self-financing and tend to animate street life with their centrifugal driving force. However, putting public spaces for sale and merely making them accessible for general public leads to new divisions and generates risk of marginalization and even exclusion for purely economic (class-related) reasons. It is thus questionable if such strategy is indeed accomplishing established goals. Window-shopping probably lures people, but also brings feelings of deprivation and alienation if it is the only affordable form of consumption. Why what mainly attracts people must be consumption? Pavement cafes and sponsored gas heaters are undoubtedly charming – not for those who cannot afford enjoying them though. Some people avoid visiting the centre because it is pointless from consumptionist point of view. Indeed, all of undertaken initiatives contribute to animating the city centre, however it always involves commercial pressure. The goal has been reached, but it seems to be a facade, not generated by basic social needs or spontaneous instincts. Questions emerge: would the metamorphose of the city centre be possible without consumptionist attitude? Would it be possible at all to avoid it in the age of post-capitalism and hyper-consumptionism? The cities indeed become centres of collective consumption, strongly determined by class stratification of their inhabitants however.
The stigma of “bad address”

Space undergoes strong processes of valorisation, since it not only is a resource and a social good, but also a commodity in the capitalist economy. Space has an assigned value; places are indicators of social prestige and aspirations. Both posh and notorious areas contribute to city mosaic, manifesting class diversity of their inhabitants, highlighting the incoherence of local community. In this sense place of residence can be identified as a stigma. Referring to the Erving Goffman’s concept, stigma exceeds categories of corporality, referring to the individual moral career. Originally, birthmarks and other physical imperfections were labelled stigmas, announcing social degradation or other disabilities causing exclusion from the mainstream practices. Figurative meaning of stigma refers rather to dishonour (Goffman, 2007, p. 31). Goffman distinguished three types of stigmas: physical deformations, “blemishes of individual character” (arising from passions, mental disorders, radical behaviours, dishonesty), and tribal stigmas (race, nationality, faith, transmitted through lineages, equally shared by all group members). In spite of diversified genesis, all kinds of stigma have something in common. After revealing any of them, normative expectations change and other features lose their value, even if positive (Goffman, 2007, pp. 34–35). Thus, stigma can be referred to as a “strongly discrediting attribute”, however its burden depends on the situational context of interaction. There are no unconditional stigmas, moreover positive features in some circumstances become discrediting (Goffman, 2007, p. 33).

Utility of stigmas spreads over various dimensions of social interactions, due to human inclination to categorize elements of surrounding world and formulate expectations. Spotting a highly discrediting stigma leads to consequent negative judgments referring to the owner’s social identity (Goffman, 2007, p. 32). The evaluation happens to be inept, however rashness of cognitive processes commands to absorb and reproduce it, in spite of stereotypes. That is how the Normals (the majority without discrediting attributes) apply diverse practices towards the stigmatized, permanently discriminating them, reducing life chances, justifying inequalities by various theories of stigma. Assuming coexistence of complex features, the Normals not only rationalize their actions, but also expect certain behaviours. Even if from the owner’s subjective perspective stigma has no negative connotations at all, it sure will be overwhelming in any confrontation with the Normals. Thus, externalized stigma and awareness of its evaluation form a discredited social identity (Goffman, 2007, pp. 37–38).

Referring the concept of stigma to the place of residence, it turns out it can also be identified as a discrediting mark. The city is not a homogeneous space – diverse entity consists of places rated by the dwellers. Beside glamorous posh places, shy and dispiriting ones emerge (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2002, pp. 30–31). For example, negative spaces are notorious areas: having a bad reputation, high crime statistics. In societies of high inequalities of income distribution enclaves of poverty occur (Misiak; In: Jałowiecki et al, 2005, pp. 270–276). They are often social housing areas. Similarly, these are also areas, which due to negligence and vandalized infrastructure
do not fulfil social standards but are available for persons of modest means in the era of commercialization. Urban legends deliver pathological stereotypes of certain areas to collective memory: thugs, unemployed, alcoholics, criminals, prostitutes. Those examples are symbols of “bad address” stigma. It is not indirectly discrediting (like physical, tangible, visible ones) but has a discrediting potential fulfilling when the address is revealed. Social bounds are breaking then.

Stigmatizing potential of the space has a complex genesis. Material deprivation and poverty are key factors because of being main reasons for inhabiting less attractive, cheaper neighbourhoods, sometimes bringing about pathology and criminalization. Their causes vary: unemployment, inability to work, economic coercion, enforced flexi-job (requiring no qualifications, of irregular working hours, lacking social insurance), employment in shadow markets. In post-industrial cities one can particularly see the effects of transformation manifesting in shrinking production sectors of peculiar kinds due to restructuring or shutdowns of factories, workshops, plants what results in dramatic unemployment (Zborowski; In: Ziobrowski, Jarczewski, 2010, p. 71). Elderly people (senior citizens), the disabled, people dependent on low social transfers (e.g. pension) are also benefiting from social housing. Enclaves of poverty, even if located in the city centres, are clearly isolated by invisible walls of social prejudices. Thus, social characteristics of inhabitants are the main causes of certain areas disgrace and degraded infrastructure becomes their symbol too.

The stigma of “bad address”: case studies

1. Nadodrze, Wrocław, Poland

Nadodrze is one of the central subdivisions of Wrocław with the population of approximately 28.6 thousand. The renovation plan assumes modernizing of 6 court-yards, 2 schools, 3 parks, and other reconstructions into artistic workshops. There are also buildings and services provided for the community on the schedule: centre for professional development, local social welfare centre, crisis intervention centre for mothers with children, educational institutions of daily support, crisis intervention centre for people with disabilities, hostel for special educational centre graduates and foster families, self-help clubs. A monumental railway station from 1868 is also located there and it is supposed to become transport service centre. 40 cameras of urban CCTV are to be installed in that area. It is estimated that the total cost of above projects will be PLN 57 million ($19 million). EU funds will cover over PLN 32 million, what constitutes 70% of eligible costs. Projects are scheduled to be completed by November 2012. Moreover, 100 Wrocław’s tenements will be restored (also at Nadodrze) due to a project launched in 2007 (“Nadodrze i Olbin – rewitalizacja w Śródmieściu”, 2010).

1 Załącznik do Uchwały NR LIV/3267/06 Rady Miejskiej Wrocławia dnia 6 lipca 2006 roku w sprawie zmiany uchwały Nr XX/110/91 Rady Miejskiej Wrocławia z dnia 20 marca 1991 roku w sprawie podziale Wrocławia na osiedla, p. 6.
Nadodrze is a devastated area. Social flats of low standards (non-quilted, with wooden windows and shared toilets) are part of the housing stock. Thus, so called “inconvenient residents” found their ways here. Furthermore, pioneers are residing in council flats – first settlers who arrived to Wrocław after the war, senior citizens, present pensioners, social transfers beneficiaries. Despite the fact that this area is located in a city centre and a majority of objects are of historic value, as they survived the Festung Breslau siege, renovation works have never been conducted there. Some
of the buildings lack ornamented facades, tracks of battery salvos are still visible. Devastated fabric of the area currently reflects the situation of its inhabitants. Nadodrze and neighbouring Ołbin are both degraded districts, becoming the symbols of the “bad address” stigma:

The procedure should be brutal, just like everywhere else. It is necessary to sell all historical buildings at Nadodrze. Either to establish owners’ rights or conduct mass expropriations on behalf of national act. (...) People who cannot afford to purchase a flat will move out. The snag is that what lives here is taking over entire area. I also live in such a place – on Huby, so called ‘Bronx’. When I was moving in, there was a kind of balance. Now the charvers seized power and they are breaking whatever they are given. It’s not only a Polish phenomenon, it works this way worldwide. Therefore, it is necessary to remove them from these areas. There is no other solution but high prices of flats. Only people that we care for in this city, namely rising entrepreneurs will buy such luxurious flats. People consciously wanting a 4-meter-flat. (...) In order to remove such mentality it is necessary to simply brutally clean the area from the people we don’t want here. I have nothing against those people, they are also human beings like me, but they are not suitable for cultivating such places as Nadodrze or my ‘Bronx’. Firstly, because they cannot afford it, secondly, because sooner or later they will vandalize those places. It’s been done worldwide this way. Such an area is later proclaimed posh district and it gathers creative people and young entrepreneurs (...). (Zabokrzycka, 2010)

The statement quoted above clearly illustrates Goffman’s theory of stigma and its reproduction. It shows the process of stigmatizing groups because of potentially discrediting feature, which in this case is a place of residence. “Bad address” becomes a social information, a relatively constant feature, reflective and personified (Goffman, 2007, p. 79). Ideology arises based on the stigma, explaining the inferiority of the discredited person, as well as warning about approaching dangers (Goffman, 2007, p. 35). From Normals’ perspective inhabitants of Nadodrze are people of different kind, they constitute homogeneous, depersonalized group of broken moral careers known as charvers. Standard negative expectations were formulated: they break whatever they are given, they aren’t suitable for cultivating such places, they will vandalize these places sooner or later. All failures are automatically assigned to the stigma as a universal cause (Goffman, 2007, p. 47). The community of Nadodrze is considered worse, they are second-class citizens. The fact of inhabiting a notorious district of a significant commercial potential is making those people redundant, unwelcome, and unwanted. Moreover, it turns out that they are not considered people (what lives here), unlike the Normals, who are welcomed, as authorities care for them in this city, namely for rising entrepreneurs. The stigma of “bad address” is dehumanizing and justifies not only prejudices, but also ostracism and violence: it is necessary to remove them from these areas, the procedure should be brutal. Economic situation is an important aspect (they cannot afford it), turning out to be a second stigma. Moreover, argumentum ad numerum appears, a dema-
gogic justification of discriminatory practices based on the frequency of their appearance: *it's been done worldwide this way*, radicalism of the method is excused by the fact that is *like everywhere else*. By formulating theories of stigma, the Normals believe their dislike is deserved and a brutal displacing or isolation are simply just. To sum up, it is worth to emphasize two facts referring to the quoted statement. Firstly, a representative of a publicly approved and trusted opinion-forming academic environment gave the speech. Secondly, its content verifies a thesis about recognizing processes of stigmatizing as non-reflexive, automatic, loosely related to the level of education and knowledge about peculiar social, political, and economic background of the situation.

2. Dudziarska area, Warsaw, Poland

This housing estate of social flats in three multi-storey blocks is situated on Praga South, adjacent to Olszynka Grochowska. It has already gained infamy. Blocks are relatively new, dating back to the mid 90’s, however, from the very beginning they were allocated for temporary stay – hence minimal social and infrastructure standards (e.g. no gas installations, coal stoves in the kitchens). Families with diverse social problems were moved there from the city centre and historical Praga area. So-called “inconvenient inhabitants” were gathered together far away from the centre, creating a ghetto of Dudziarska. Location of the houses is an essential problem for the dwellers, as they were built on a patch of field. They are surrounded by railway premises, thus the access is hampered. Analogically, exiting this area is practically impossible without taking a roundabout way. Therefore, illegally and risking their lives, the inhabitants often force their way through paths and sidings between trains, through opened cars or under them. Recurring accidents intensified railway inspections and patrols what inflamed relations between both sides. It was only in 2007, after 12 years of struggle, that the dwellers managed to win the first and so far the only public transport connection. Bus 137 goes relatively rarely though and has a circular route because of the railway areas. Apart from this line, the inhabitants can count on individual transport only, which is problematic.

Dudziarska’s surroundings is additionally discrediting since it is a low quality space. Noise made by the passing trains has a negative effect on the quality of life (daily route Warsaw–Mińsk Mazowiecki). Women’s prison and waste incinerator are located nearby. Abandoned allotments and a pond deliver recreation facilities. Dudziarska is very vandalized: damp, mouldy, elements of the door and manholes are missing. There are also 25 uninhabited flats – empty premises fall apart, worsening general condition of the buildings.
Ill. 3–5. Location of Dudziarska at the peripheries of Warsaw and a view on renovated blocks (photo: Bartek Bobkowski/Agencja Gazeta)
Interest in Dudziarska arises from time to time. Media fame (TV intervention programme “UWAGA”, TVN, 24 September 2006) didn’t bring any benefits and presenting Dudziarska as a ghetto only harmed the inhabitants. The stigma was revealed, changing from the feature of barely discrediting potential to a disgrace of “bad address” (Kowalska, 2010). Also an artistic project launched there in 2010 collapsed. Black squares, reproductions of a famous Polish modernist Kazimierz Malewicz’s masterpiece appeared on the sidewalls of the blocks without consulting the inhabitants. No dialogue and lack of identification of the dwellers’ needs made the project end in a fiasco. Intentions missed social expectations. The artists acted like Normals: patronizingly, referring to stereotypes, using generalizations. Black squares were not appreciated and understood as a grim joke, a grotesque metaphor of the situation of Dudziarska as a “black hole” (kovalesku, 2010).

Referring to the Goffman’s concept, spatial isolation and symbolic stigma result in growing problems of the community, which once separated from Normals now falls apart along with degraded buildings. Publicly revealed and long-lasting stigma reproduces exclusion of Dudziarska.

3. Accommodation containers

In the collective memory of Poles year 1997 is probably associated with the “Millennium flood”. It devastated predominantly south-western Poland: Opole, Lower and Upper Silesia. Facing massive losses of housing infrastructure, in order to prevent mass homelessness and escalation of associated problems authorities provided temporary accommodations in so-called containers. Basing on this experience similar assistance was also offered to the victims of floods in 2010 (Święcki, 2010). Ten-
ants’ Rights Protection Act from 21 June 2001\(^2\) (article 2, item 1, section 5) defines social housing as habitable due to equipment provided and technical conditions, with an area not less than 5 square meters per person (in the case of single-person household – 10 square meters). Premises may also have lowered standards (e.g., shared toilets). Article 2 item 5 section 6 defines also a temporary flat as habitable if an area is not less than 5 square meters per person. The flat is required to be located in the same town or nearby, provided that the place of residence does not worsen the living conditions.

Mobility is a very special feature of containers. Ready-made modules can be transported, embedded in the foundation and then merged into housing complexes. Containers are metal structures. The main building blocks are plasterboard, polyurethane foam, mineral wool, and plywood panels. The roof is completed by metal sheets, the floor by carpets or tiles. Container modules are like building bricks put together in dwellings of various sizes, numbers of rooms and even floors (www.modulysozialne.pl). Since finishing works are limited to connecting sanitary system, water sewage and electricity, social containers meet only the minimum requirements specified in the Act. In other words, they provide the minimum necessary to survive. What makes containers so popular is their price.

What distinguishes social containers significantly from the classical art of building is their light, easy and cheap construction. It is confirmed by the Building Law from 7 July 1994 (chapter 1, article 3, section 2) that a container cannot be qualified as a building, because “it shall mean a facility which is permanently connected with the ground, separated from the space by building partitions and has a foundation and a roof”. Nor is it a form of landscaping (chapter 1, article 3, points 3, 4a, 4b, 4c). A container is a temporary facility with construction designed for temporary use for a period shorter than its technical usability, provided for transfer to another location or demolished, not permanently connected to the ground. It is therefore closer to the “shooting ranges, street kiosks, pavilions and exhibition of street sales, tent roofs and air coatings, entertainment appliances, caravans” than to the residential buildings (chapter 1, article 3, point 5).

Solutions chosen at the times of flood proved to be starting points of more general trends. Because of competitive prices and easier installation compared to standard construction investments, accommodation containers become an alternative to conventional social housing, where people in difficult financial situation, evicted from public housing, excluded from the labour market, facing health or adaptation problems are moved. In recent years such housing units are launched all over Poland: in Bytom (Domanik, 2009), Bydgoszcz (Aładowicz, 2009), Poznań (KaT, 2009), Olecko (Malinowski, 2010), Białystok (Boruch, 2009), Tczew (Cześnik, 2008), Ustka (Bierndgarski, 2010), and Piaseczno (Staniszek, 2009) have similar plans.

\(^2\) Dz.U. 2005, no 31, pos. 266.
Municipal authorities have found a cheap solution to housing problems in their regions and they push to carry out those projects. However, they encounter social resistance, which proves that container sites are stigmatized even before they are built. Their residents are discredited by the very fact of living in those containers, regardless of actual moral degradation. In this case “bad address” is an obvious stigma. Container estates are special not only because of their purpose and spatial isolation, but mostly because of their form. These are not buildings but defective imitations, what is noticeable at first glance.

In several cities the dwellers of neighbouring areas expressed firm opposition towards planned container housing sites. In 2008 in Białystok 2,000 people from villages Fasty, Zawada, and Bacieczki signed a protest. They justified their negative attitude with fear of potential containers inhabitants. Even before the containers had any chance to appear, following concerns had been formulated: **expending money for other purposes such as alcohol and stimulants** because of savings due to low rents, **area occupied by a container housing will become a core of negative and often dangerous practices and behaviours of its inhabitants (assaults, robberies, beatings)**, also **a foundation of illegal conduct**, domestic violence, and terrorizing other residents. Containers not only pose a threat to normal people, but also significantly reduce the value of property in the vicinity (“Protest przeciwko budowie osiedla kontenerowego”, 2008). Local community was so outraged by this case that an interpellation was tabled to the Minister of Infrastructure by a local MP Jarosław Matwiejuk (Matwiejuk, 2008). In 2008 Association of Upper Silesian Narrow Gauge Railway from Bytom expressed similar pessimism. Accommodation containers were to be built near a historic train station complex. In a letter to the mayor members of the Association put forward assumptions that the appearance of new neighbours will inevitably bring thefts of stock, track infrastructure and devastation of an old engine-house. They fear area degradation due to **inclusion of structural pathology and potential aggression of the new residents**. The body of the letter is available on the webpage “Blog against the building container housing in Bytom” (www.antygetto.blog.onet.pl). It is worth mentioning that all above-mentioned dramatic visions and concerns were raised before the construction works even started, without any knowledge of investments planned, nor exact social composition of future dwellers.

Physical isolation, distance, underdeveloped transport and infrastructure of container sites are basic causes of social exclusion of their inhabitants, regardless of reasons why they ended up there (natural disasters, evictions). Because of poor access to high quality urban spaces, there is a risk of metamorphosis into closed container-ghettos of passive dwellers withdrawn from the mainstream. This reaction only deepens alienation of the stigmatized in a society of Normals. Additionally, location in remote areas far away from urban infrastructure evokes impression of danger and a need for physical separation of the risky elements. In other words, the physical (spatial) isolation becomes a false proof of the new dwellers’ degradation.
Ill. 6–9. Physical (spatial) isolation of container sites (marked with black stars) in some Polish cities Białystok, Bydgoszcz, Bytom, Poznań
Containers have a potential of degrading the social status of their inhabitants, not necessarily resulting from criminalized or pathological lifestyles. Poverty is a primary reason of most evictions. Its genesis is not universal though. The elderly, sick, dependent on social transfers are potential residents of those containers. This risk may also extend to those with milder degrees of disability limiting the opportunities for participation in the labour market. Finally, it may be single parents with small children or multi-child families. Those people are particularly vulnerable to poverty (Tarkowska, 2009, pp. 2–3), even though their life attitudes do not seem to neglect social norms. Creating one settlement for such a variety of social categories does not seem to be justified. Diversity of needs, goals, values, and life stages evaporates because of simplified profiles of potential inhabitants. Poverty turns out to be a decisive feature, regardless of its heterogeneous causes. This situation seems to be a reflection of Goffman’s idea of stigma as an unjust suffering, overshadowing individual moral career. Feeling of ease comes only among fellow sufferers, implying growing distance from the “normal” society (Goffman, 2007, pp. 52–53).

Revitalization strategies in Polish cities

Material and social conditions are both important criteria predestining urban areas to processes of the revitalization. Unemployment, precarious situation on the labour market, poverty, crime are good enough reasons for providing the city quarter with special care as well as technical decline and pollution.³ Reconstructions in the communist times differed significantly from the investments nowadays. Industrialization and rapid urbanization dating back to the 19th century brought an urgent

need for developing housing and social infrastructure, as well as transport and sewage system investments. First steps towards modern city planning were made. After World War II, magnitude of damage extorted not only renovation, but also housing investments taking into account population growth. Due to shifted priorities, 19th century city fabric avoided modernization and managed to survive political transformation untouched. Then post-industrial areas, former barracks and disused railway areas became problematic, as their peculiar useless functions, architecture, and vague legal status encouraged exploitation, reducing their value. Condition of large-plate buildings is also disputable concerning their material decay and decapitalization (Domański, Gwosdz; In: Ziobrowski, Jarczewski, 2010, pp. 45–46). Decline of the existing housing fabric, increasing ground rent and costs of maintenance are main reasons for suburbanization tendencies and urban sprawl, as well as the emergence of the enclaves of poverty and ghettoization within their borders in the city centres. Thus, popularity of revitalization comes into public discourse and development strategies of Polish cities. Animation, restoration, modernization, revaluation – nowadays these are close synonyms.

It is crucial for conceptualizing the idea of revitalization to introduce the notion of degradation. Degradation is an aggravation of space development (Mironowicz; In: Ziobrowski, Jarczewski, 2010, pp. 24–25). However, it does not have any objective indicators or measures of absolute zero. This notion is relative and fully depends on adopted assumptions and chosen goals, to which revitalization processes are supposed to lead. Assuming that reinstatement of optimum functionality of degraded areas is the main purpose, it can be held in twofold way (Ziobrowski, Jarczewski, 2010, p. 25). Firstly, it is restoring full efficiency of primal functions and objects. More often, that revitalization refers to redefining the space – abandoning historical functions and introduction new ones. Tearing down the buildings or setting them aside also have alternatives and every of them leads to specific consequences. Temporary use of the areas might be burdened with the risk of wasteful exploitation, due to temporal agreements. Assimilation by surroundings is another option. Processes of invasion may cause partial incorporation of the space to neighbouring areas. It may end up in defragmentation and disintegration. Finally, commercial investments in degraded areas are the third way. This variant seems to be preferred by Polish cities. It brings significant risks – losing control over the area and developing it in a way incompatible with social expectations, breaking functional bounds with surroundings, exploitation of the space. Market-dependent conditions can not only be contradictory to the strategy of spatial planning, but also unexpectedly change in time (Ziobrowski, Jarczewski, 2010, p. 34). Economic profitability is what nowadays counts, finding expression in the investors’ interests, possibilities of ground sales, reorientation to consumer and entertainment functions, also of luxurious standard. There are no objective points of reference; the criteria are arbitrary enrooted in power structures. Revitalization strategy depends on municipal politics: urban planning doctrine, financial condition, and privatization. It should also depend on the
needs reported and their rank. It changes in time, as well as its fundamental values. Freedom of law interpretation is still deliberately high, as it is still under construction after transformation and EU accession. Revitalization programs are ideological demonstrations of their times – reflections of privileged groups interests.

It is possible to distinguish four categories of degradation of municipal spaces. Firstly, it is material degradation, referring to the technical conditions of infrastructure. Secondly, functional degradation manifests in incompatible functions and spatial features. Composition degradation refers to broken communicative functions of the city fabric – chaos, development disorder, aesthetic crisis. Finally yet importantly, it is also possible to distinguish moral decline. Unlike previous ones, it refers strictly to social processes, mental maps, and symbolic meanings. Moral degradation reaches beyond economic context, contributing to negative attitudes and beliefs of individuals, as well as the intuitions towards the place, area, space (Ziobrowski, Jarczewski, 2010, pp. 29–33). Revitalization is thus not only a concept of modernization and reconstruction, but also of a long-term modification of images and symbols.

To sum up, valorisation of the city is not only a matter of infrastructure, but also of normative expectations and stereotypes of the local community. Subjecting the city to revitalization programs has various consequences. Firstly, it is spreading the awareness of degradation and thus making it an objective fact. Secondly, market value of revitalized areas grows due to higher standards. They are no longer available for people of certain social background and adapt their functionality to new purposes. A new genus loci becomes an interpretation of different values, pushing previous dwellers outside.

Social risks of revitalization processes

Numerous migrations to urban centres were also observed in Poland. Mostly they are well-educated young people with high aspirations and wide perspectives on the labour market. Demand for housing increases confronted with limited possibilities of construction sector. Due to revitalization, growing quality and value of old neighbourhoods, following the logic of invasion processes, economically stronger groups will push out vulnerable ones living in those areas. Consequently, isolation and segregation in inner-city areas will be significantly reduced. Emigrating population will be constrained to seeking cheaper locations, perhaps municipal authorities will take care of relocations (Zborowski; In: Ziobrowski, Jarczewski, 2010, p. 75). Invasion of central spaces and increase of their value will presumably force poorer residents with weaker bargaining power to populate peripheral areas. Regardless of local homogenization, it implies social polarization in general perspective of the city mainly in terms of education level, age, size of the family, occupation, deepening social distances, breaking bonds and disintegration of neighbouring communities (Ziobrowski, Jarczewski, 2010, p. 70).
Current implementation of revitalization programs involving deliberate isolation (social and spatial) of “inconvenient residents” lead to negative consequences for the city as a whole. The problem starts when a functional stigma is formulated in relation to certain categories of residents or neighbourhoods. Examples given suggest that it may derive from believes about moral degradation that either spreads over inhabited areas or is extrapolated to every dweller, regardless of actual accuracy of negative stereotypes. Mechanisms of generalization and stereotyping that deform cognitive processes are unconscious, automatic, beyond rational discourse. “Bad address” stigma arises. It can be interpreted in two ways. In case of Nadodrze in Wrocław it is a belief of dissonance derived from historic districts inhabited by “wrong” categories of people: morally degraded, capable only of devastation and pathological behaviour that makes their neighbourhood a notorious area. Conversely, inhabiting Dudziarska area or any accommodation containers becomes a symbol of stigma: source of degradation justifying isolation, resentment and fear. In this case, it is the space that degrades its dwellers. Both situations, however, produce common effect – the stigma of “bad address”, regardless of its origins.

From the microstructural perspective, the stigma of “bad address” is capable of determining individual biography from an early age. In the beginning of socialization processes one internalizes objective evaluations of various types of stigmas from the “normal” perspective. In later phases, knowledge of the possessed stigma raises awareness of attributed normative expectations. Reintegration of identity leads to organizing it around the stigma and acquiring behavioural patterns discrediting moral career (Goffman, 2007, p. 66). There is a cognitive dissonance between the consciousness of normative requirements and the reality of having a stigma. Usually going to school beyond the place of residence is the first moment of confrontation with Normals. Acquiring awareness of the stigma can be very violent, as it often takes forms of ridiculing, ostracism, fights, intimidation and other forms of violence. Choosing a local school postpones the moment of stigma realization. It is then discovered in romantic relationships or while entering the labour market (Goffman, 2007, pp. 67–68). A notion of so-called “youth lost at the starting point” can be found in academic literature. Remaining in isolated low-valued communities with limited access to education and recreation makes the debut on the labour market troublesome. Consequently, it becomes a reason for unemployment, dependence on social transfers, shifting to the black market or undertaking illegal actions (Giermanowska; In: Rymsza, 2005). Insufficient level of institutional interest, as well as stereotypes and fears of Normals, solidify this status quo. Spatial segregation resembles a ghetto, isolates and separates “inconvenient elements” from Normals. Social distances widen and consolidation of excluded population increases because of confronting shared stigma with the hostile outside world. The stigmatized residents morally support each other, share common experience, and are not ashamed any more. They form groups. All at the cost of withdrawal to an “imperfect world” and exclusion from mainstream social practices (Goffman, 2007, pp. 52–56). Spatial
isolation, distances, broken communication between communities as well as lack of aesthetics and material deprivation of notorious areas contribute to new prejudices and urban legends. They are also perfect background for stigmatized communities to sink in apathy and alternate reality excluded from the access to the groomed city.

Massive commoditization of urban spaces is a fairly new phenomenon, strongly affecting living conditions. Impaired infrastructure, out-dated material structure, neglects and devastation are the main inheritance of the post-war era. Recently commercialization and privatization became in Poland main ways to improve the quality of urban fabric with simultaneous benefits for local budgets. They are often closely associated with revitalization plans. Improving the quality of life should be a priority task of urban policy, in terms of not only housing issues, but also ecology, family policy, supporting the elderly, preventing social exclusion. In this context, a question whether spatial isolation of certain categories of people is a good method of city revitalization is a rhetoric one.

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Very often we go through a beaten piece of ground, pass a devastated bench and an old swing which was painted so long ago that nobody can guess what colour it originally was. In a sandpit with a rundown casing, instead of playing children, we can see dogs, that have not appeared there to make some sandcastles but something definitely different. Only a single tree, with its greenness overlooking all the grey and dirt, reminds us that there is still something alive in here. Then we close our eyes and see a green lawny carpet covered with colourful flowers, and cheerful children playing on interesting devices. We are in a hurry, of course, so we open our eyes and all we can spot is a flaking plaster or some boozer that has just decided to sit on a bench and drink another beer. This is our closest space, our backyard. We live in here but it seems that we do not want to change it so much, even though we keep our own homes clean and tidy – we want it and like it. We do not like what we see around us; what is more – we are able to describe what we would like to see instead. The question is, why do we so rarely think about our nearest territory as something that is really “ours”, private; something we can change and form according to our own needs, and not only complain about this or that.

In present text, I would like to show importance of backyard in the process of socialization and at the same time to make an effort of creating a dream backyard.

Backyard as a space and a place

Herbert Spencer in his literary work *The Principles of Psychology* (1855) pointed out that children have surplus of energy that must be relieved somewhere. Therefore, he took into account their close environment, including fields and meadows, where that energy might be released. Present-day researches like Karen Malone and Paul Tranter (2003) used Spencer’s concept to draw attention to necessity of arranging a space for children that is close to their abode. There were many different concepts of what is important in arranging an area for young inhabitants: necessity of close-up to greenness/nature (Moore, Wong, 1997); access to equipment and devices that can help children in their self-development and allow parents to take a break
from their kids who are only interested in playing (McKendrick, Bradford, Fielder, 2000, p. 295-314); necessity of building playgrounds for team-games that help both physical and social development (Evan, 1997, p. 14-27). Robert Pyle (2002) noticed that most of the time when children were allowed their freedom, they played their games and usually their first choice of place was: a backyard, a filed or a farm. But they also needed to slip out to the nearest wild place – for example, to climb a big tree or to find a quiet site in the garden or somewhere in the woods. Children were free, although close to adults’ civilization. They needed “their” space, “their” place. In the literature of the subject, we can find many references to the importance of space and place as the elements of our world. A French phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard defines space as a specific and local area, intertwined with the experience of particular place and in this particular place. The place may be a starting point as well as a destination, may have some historical connections, be surrounded with aura and intertwined with memories. The author presents the following typology of places: public (arcades, schools, stadiums), half-public (offices, workshops), personal (home), intimate and private (bedrooms), and secret ones (caves, hiding places). You must transform and clean the place if you want to get “an open space”, “to make some place for oneself” (Bachelard, 1958, p. 17).

In Franz Brentano’s opinion (Miciukiewicz, 2006, p. 210) an urban public space is in fact formed in multidimensional processes of interaction between “objective space” and “subjective space”. The first one includes constitutes of spatial forms such as buildings, squares, parks, streets. The second one is formed by individual and multiple acts of conscience, directed towards the objective space. The “subjective space” is revealed within acts of experiencing the material spatial forms coinciding on mental (perception, experience, ways of conceptualization of places) and behavioural (acts of individuals within space and its usage as well as accustoming) level. Public or non-public is formed in relation between “objective and subjective spaces” as socio-subjective matter of acts of conscience directed towards spatial forms.

Henri Lefebvre (1994, p. 33), questioning classical theories of cities creates a conceptual triad of relationships between the elements of social space. The first of them is – representations of space consisting of symbols, codes, generated patterns, created by town planners, scientists and engineers, marking out dominant ways of conceptualization of space. The second one is – representational spaces, concerning “covert and subterranean” aspects of life connected to direct, everyday experience of space. The third dimension of space is a social practice, in other words, treks and everyday walks. Combining two previous elements, we can form a ground connecting urban reality with the world of everyday life of individuals. Therefore, “the city creates an independent reality, has its own city-life, existence that cannot be reduced only to a material distribution of space – a single street, square or meeting place” (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 213).

Living in the city we deal with different kinds of space. In the world of children and young people one of the most important distinctions is between the private and
public space. According to Elżbieta Kalinowska (2002, p. 23) first of them, “own”, is directed towards personal interests, the second one, “for the public” – to the common good. The social space in private life is marked out by contacts within intimate groups of individual (family, neighbours, friends), in social life it encompasses wider social groups, institutional collectives. Activity that is the symptom of private life is placed within the bounds of local community and is taken by an individual for one's own use. As far as the public life is concerned, it is an activity taken for the common good out of the intimate groups of individual.

**Variations of backyard spaces**

It is hard to find in Polish literature an unambiguous definition of backyard. Since it exists, therefore we most often just accept it. Jolanta Zwiernik (2009, p. 412) states that during last few years significant changes in close-to-home space took place. Development of flat building caused the disposal of “free” areas such as natural hills or lawns. Moreover, the automobile development caused taking over the inner-yard space by the owners of the cars, in this way disinheriting children and youth out of another fragment of public space. The author was concerned with analysis of relations between the backyard’s location and changing proportions of private and public space. What is the most important is – she has formed a specific systematics of backyard kinds, including such ones as:

**Well-like-backyard** (Zwiernik, 2009, pp. 412–413) – sparsely equipped has almost ideal conditions for peer relationships. Tenement houses built before World War II, inhabited by indigent or less well-off families with two or more children, usually form a rectangular dark “well”. Main elements of such a backyard may include a carpet beating rack, used for beating carpets only a few times, mostly performing a social role (the meeting place of the local youth), but also used as a sports place (used for showing off some acrobatic abilities or for being a football gate in matches). This type of backyard is usually deprived of green elements, at most a single tree appears (which a child can climb in order to hide from adults). Such backyard creates strong bonds in its users, providing solidarity of the place and common identity. Despite the age and sexual diversity, children learn cooperation and resourcefulness, acquire experience in functioning in some definite social roles. The older are role models for the younger ones and, at the same time, they perform an educational role, passing down well-mastered abilities and rules of common plays. Here we experience the balance of private and public spaces penetrating and complementing each other.

**Backyard near a detached house** (Zwiernik, 2009, p. 414) – here we deal with the area around a villa, often on big suburban plots where the space is fenced and well developed, green and adorned with flowers, with a planned playground for children. Here a sandpit is a standard equipment, not to mention a plastic slide, a rope hanging from a branch or sometimes even a swimming pool, brick or inflatable
one. The users of such playgrounds are usually only children, often going out under somebody’s care (a parent or nanny) and playing under their direction. When meeting other child (children), they have no chance for play initiation or mutual learning because in here adults perform the leading role of creativity. Here we can observe superiority of the private space over the public one.

**Backyards of big urban housing estates** (Zwiernik, 2009, p. 414) – they are the space between number (a dozen or so) of blocks of flats in the housing estate inhabited by hundreds of families with different financial status and educational background. Such diversity should be socially favourable, however, an outdoor space is impersonal (therefore it is hard to identify with it) because the backyards by the blocks of flats are practically the same – appropriated by motorized inhabitants, trodden down by customers of unlawful markets, equipped with small number of benches by concrete footpaths. In daytime the benches are usually occupied by parents (nannies) with small children, in the evenings – fans of alcohol. On small green areas, we usually see younger children (mostly girls). At such backyards the public space definitely surpasses the private one, therefore, especially the youth seeks a small fragment for themselves in it, occupying gateways, carpet beating racks, benches that may be “their places”. The perfect illustration of above can be found in the moving memories of Christiane F. (1990), about the children from Berlin’s zoo. No reconstruction nor renovation could change that anonymous and pathological environment.

**Backyards in fenced housing estates** (Zwiernik, 2009, pp. 415–416) – on the backyards’ map they seem to be specific innovation. Separated from the public space with a solid fence, which may be crossed only after entering an appropriate code or showing ID to the security guard. The playground is usually a small area, where you can find a slide and sandpit, enclosed with a coded-lock fence. Still they are “for-fun devices” – stable, unambiguously specified, and because of that (unfortunately) not very much attractive. In the above-mentioned backyards an adjacent space has been made public, deprived of the recesses of privacy. It allows only such activities that are in accordance with the concept of play for “children from good families” (don’t scream, don’t run, don’t throw, don’t jump, don’t climb the three), preferred by some adults. It is a sort of limitation of self-development of playing children, both in an individual and social dimension. Often for such children shopping malls with their fun-park become a playground. Here the adults’ supervision is limited only to watching and keeping safety. There is no division into age groups here, however, the the place has a commercial character and usually you do not meet children from indigent families. At fun-park centres people spend time only occasionally, so usually children do not know one another and do not form fixed groups, what means that in this case a social contact is only temporary, superficial and more and more often anonymous.

**Backyards at detached and terraced houses in the outskirts of a town** (Zwiernik, 2009, p. 417) – this is another category of space, where the plots are smaller
and building complex denser than in the suburban areas. In here life teems on the streets or in adjacent gardens, often placed at the fronts of the houses, close to a street and without any solid fences. Thanks to that, there is no division into the public and private spaces. Lack of fences means an easier passage through a friend’s private border to his territory without an invitation. Here an important ability seems to be formed – the ability of getting in touch with both peers and their relatives. On the estate lanes children play football or go skateboarding, identify themselves with the space that surrounds them and treat it as their own. Backyard life of children from the houses placed in suburban areas of the town favours the socializing processes as they “go out” and form heterogeneous groups (like in the case of well-like-backyards).

We can conclude that in urban agglomerations we deal with different sorts of backyards. Each of them is a specific space and place for its users. However, none of them is the perfect place for socialization.

Role of a backyard in a child’s life

Every child that reaches pre-school age begins to widen his or hers social circles. Now an accustomed space is not limited to the family house, but world goes a step further – to the backyard.

Social development in this age (Kielar-Turska, 2001, p. 122) may be debated from two points of view: as integrating into a social group, often defined as socialization, or as individual’s self-forming in a certain group, in other words, a process of developing unique patterns of experiencing, thinking and acting in different situations. The process of socialization itself also means mastering knowledge by a child, both about its own group and social roles. One of the tasks of an individual is also to acquire values and standards, which were accepted by the particular group. In pre-school age play is a very important thing, because in the process every child establishes interactions with peers, learns the rules of behaviour and importance of obeying them. Games that let children discover the rules connected with specific role have a special meaning. Through those mimicked roles, children understand social roles of adults and their own sexual identity, which is determined and nourished by parents since the day a child is born – by giving name or clothes that are characteristic for specific sex. While playing a child subordinates to the rules set by oneself. For many children pre-school age is strictly connected to first social contacts with peers. Admittedly, younger of them more often play alone than in a bigger groups, because they do not manifest any social action yet. Thanks to playing though, they slowly learn cooperation with other children and form a desire for having a friend. “A friend is distinguished as a partner of a game, friends share their toys, spend much time together, talk and look at each other, and also more requests and greetings are addressed to a friend than to others (Kielar-Turska, 2001, p. 115). Initial friendship is characterized by temporariness – children take into account more exterior than
inner features of their friends, what stems from their characteristic egocentrism and inclination to make choices according to their own needs. The same refers to solving conflicts. Children quickly resign from one game and skip to a completely different activity. In such situations, an egocentric attitude is strongly marked. At the same time, the fact of being in contact with peers strengthens such behaviours as sharing, cooperation or helping. Children see and start to understand other people's experiences, and are not indifferent to their harm or joy. It is also easier to learn new competences in the group and recognise abilities of other children. Then the exchange of possessed goods stars (mostly toys).

According to Renata Stefańska-Klar (2000, p. 148) the socialization in middle-aged childhood is a bit different when the school age is reached. Parents still play an essential role in child's life, however, a teacher and new schoolmates appear – most often from the same housing area. When a child starts education, the range of social interactions widens. A child participates in them, what creates opportunities for developing and forming social competences like: consciousness development, communication abilities, understanding feelings of others’ and their way of thinking, better understanding of some social situations, knowing new roles and practicing them. Every individual possessing the above abilities is able to function in social world without losing one's autonomy and, at the same time, can improve quality of one's contacts with the environment.

One of the self-development tasks appearing before a child of this age is finding one's own place in the group of peers. The process of socialization continues – a child is building and strengthening a sense of one's own identity, trying to answer a question “who am I?”. In living space this question is fundamental and finding an answer to it determines the integrity of every human being. “I” is forming itself on the basis of different experiences that come from comparison: “oneself with the others, oneself in different roles and perspectives, one's different conditions while performing certain roles” (Stefańska-Klar, 2000, p. 151).

Ann Brich and Tony Malim (1999, p. 109) stress that on this base the “I” system is formed and it determines the sense of self-value, accepting oneself and being satisfied.

In this age an important change of understanding the phenomenon of friendship occurs – it is not anymore only spending time together or playing, but it becomes a relationship based on mutual trust. Now a friend is not chosen because of his cool toys but due to some suitable character features.

E. Erikson in his concept of psychosocial development calls the period between 6 and 12 years the age of diligence or sense of inferiority. The main feature that is being formed at this stage is the sense of competence. A child achieves the sense of competence thanks to one’s own activity in many different areas in which he or she functions – learning, playing, relations with adults, and developing interests. It is important for every child to believe that he or she is an expert in a particular domain or domains. Thanks to that a sense of self-value and adequacy is achieved. On the other
hand, if the sense of competence or professionalism does not developed, a child
starts to feel a sense of inferiority. It is so-called a conflict model of self-development,
in a life time, every individual must pass through eight such “crises”, and “each of
them results from new relations, tasks or demands that are challenging both for an
adult and a child”. At the fourth stage, such challenge is going to school, learning and

For proper socialization younger children – beside family, kindergarten and
school – also need some space where the influence of adults is diminished, in which
they can “try” new roles and develop friendships – among children of the same age.
The backyard may be such space.

Role of a backyard in the youth’s lives

Adolescents are frequently turning away from adults – the role of parents and
teachers is still crucial here, but relationships between peers, especially friends, are
more important. Every human being at the time of growing up is looking for refer-
ence within a group of people, to which they want to belong and be accepted, which
helps them become independent individuals. That would not be possible within their
families. Therefore, adolescents start to feel solidarity with their peers. Nevertheless,
self-consciousness is expressed in an effort of being different from others. The need
for social relation forms. It is the need for friendship, searching for one’s alter ego,
but also for being a part of a group of people like oneself, of the same age and similar
status. Essential part of being a member of a group is a feeling of equality and mutual
experience. The group can also serve to alleviate a sense of inferiority in some of its
members, by means of mutual affirmation.

A group is very attractive for an adolescent, as it grants an opportunity to meet
new friends of opposite sex. There are many occasions to encounter new people and
start first relationships. The most difficult situations occur when a young person is
not a child anymore but has not become an adult yet. In that age adolescents face
numerous obstacles trying to adapt themselves to society. Therefore, the group of
peers serves to fulfil the need for belonging, performing social activities and many
other emotional and social needs. Lack of adults around makes adolescents feel free
to take the initiative and acquire new abilities, in that atmosphere of freedom they
can be self-decisive. Barbara Szacka (2003, p. 194-195) treats a group of peers as the
initial social group, and claims that it is a specific structure of strong interpersonal
bonds, but with no formal connections. Such a group does not have many members,
but there exists strong emotional engagement between them, as well as high level of
identification with the group.

An ideal place for a group formation is a backyard as the nearest territory and
the most accessible one. Therefore, the crucial matter to consider is what young peo-
ple would want to do there, how they would like to spend their time.
Place of a backyard in the leisure time of children and adolescents

As far as spending their leisure time is concerned, we can notice one tendency among youngsters: the duality between those who are potential users of backyards and the ones that never use them. The generation of the beginning of the '90s, examined by Bogumila Kosek-Nita (1991, p. 103), gave following examples of the most common ways of spending their free time: watching television, going to the cinema, meeting friends, going to clubs and pubs, reading papers and books, going for a walk, going to the disco, relaxing, practising sport, listening to the radio, watching video tapes. However, the most interesting activities for both boys and girls irrespectively of school or origin were going to the cinema and reading books. Boys preferred thrillers, and girls chose romances. Respondents, generally speaking, did not mention such institutions as theatre, opera or museum. Apparently, they preferred going to concerts, as they liked music a lot. That is why at least once a year they attended music concerts, especially rock ones, but even disco polo.

At the end of 20th century the research of Małgorzata Prokosz (1999, pp. 61–66; 2000, pp. 185–189) confirmed the above-mentioned specification. Adolescents were likely to spend most of their time in front of the computer screen or TV-set, as well as in pubs or restaurants. Their interest in music and cultural events weakened. Young people did not mention going for walks, trips or doing sports anymore.

When asked for a reason why they preferred to stay at home and from time to time to go out to a pub, the youngsters pointed some dangers characteristic for a big-city environment. They simply do not want to go out because of all the danger waiting outside their home. Teenagers are afraid of bandits, subculture groups, and armed or drunk men.

Not long ago Coca Cola Poland ordered a research into ways of life of adolescent people, which was conducted by Jacek Kurzępa, PhD (2010) on a group of thousand young people aged 14–25, residents of countries in Lubuskie Province, a small city (Zielona Góra), and a big-city (Warszawa).

Research results show that young people tend to be more active while they are working and earning money, what makes them more independent, but it has a negative effect on taking advantage of their free time. The most common forms of organizing their spare time are meeting friends and throwing parties at home, during which they talk, drink, have some snacks, listen to music, and – if possible – dance. Club life is more dynamic and focused on drinking alcohol, dancing, talking and meeting new people, and flirting.

People who cannot participate in home parties or going to clubs organize meetings called spot meetings, and 21% do it every day. Especially young teenagers prefer this kind of get-togethers. Lower secondary school students meet in the backyard area, in the open space, for example by the river, or go together to shopping malls. They meet there in order to share some gossip, laugh together and spend some time
with other teenagers. According to surveys, they meet in such spots because they do not have better places (21%), because it is their territory (19%) or because nobody can interrupt them and they do not disturb anybody (10%).

Meeting in such places became a tradition of sorts, as those teenagers’ parents used to meet there as well, but nowadays meetings in clubs and pubs became popular.

The research done so far show that young people can be divided into two groups. The first group most often spend leisure time at homes, with friends or in certain cultural institutions. Those people are not interested in hanging out in backyards, because they cannot find anything suitable for themselves there. Besides, they claim that being around the streets is dangerous.

The other group consists of people who do not find cultural activities as attractive, with money being one of the reasons (Prokosz, 2010, pp. 142–144). Adolescents who belong to this group get together in the playgrounds and backyards only because they feel they do not fit anywhere else. Usually they talk and have some beer, which is what the members of the first group do at homes or in pubs. Therefore, an important question appears – are there any advantages of spending time in playgrounds and backyards and is there everything young people need to socialize? Such places are definitely some kind of territories, but they offer socializing functions only to small children. That is why in literature the word “playground” is used more often. It suggests that children will have a possibility to develop their abilities, interests and interpersonal relations while playing. Authorities of many cities have noticed that fact, which is why in places like playgrounds many interesting constructions started to appear. They definitely stimulate development of children. To sum up, playgrounds are appropriate for children, but what about socializing teenagers?

As a pedagogue, I decided to find out what needs and expectations towards the areas around us. In September 2008 the students of pedagogy specializing in therapy conducted some research and asked several groups of playground users living in five main districts of Wrocław, what they would like to have around their houses and what conditions should be met for a piece of the nearest land to be called “my magical place”. 78 children, 19 grandmothers, 16 girls and 21 boys (aged 12–14), 14 girls and 19 boys (aged 15–19) took part in the analysis during one day.

The first examined group consisted of children – the youngest users of playgrounds and backyards. For them the most important were playground facilities. They stressed the importance of well-functioning swings, carousels, and other equipment. Children were also concerned about dogs going into sandboxes, and added that they would need some facilities to jump on (“You know, I was on holidays at the seaside and there were some inflatable castles that we could jump on and nobody could get hurt”). When asked about their dreams, children started to make up stories. Boys would definitely like to have their own football pitch or basketball field. Girls, on the other hand, would love to play in their own small hut (“I would like to have it as a shelter from the rain and it has to be green”). In many opinions water, i.e. a fountain, appeared (“It would be great if we could go into the water and
nobody shouted at us”). A small pool seemed to be desired as well (“but necessarily with a slide – long and curved”). Some respondents would be happy if there were some paths for bikers (“There are cars parked everywhere or there are waste bins and no place for us, bikers”). To sum up, apparently children’s needs can be divided into two groups – recreational and that concerning physical skills. However, the most important was definitely the matter of having a good time, relaxing, and enjoying themselves in a clean and nice playground. As far as facilities go, they should be working well. Pools and huts are also welcomed.

The other group was made of teenagers who perceived their own territory completely different. Backyard should be, in the first place, a spot for social meetings. They would like to have a kind of hut – “could be one covered with grapes, so that we might eat some from time to time”. There definitely should be some seats, “but not benches, maybe cut stumps”. The younger teenagers (aged 12–14) wanted some swings, but not the regular ones – “the swings should be tires hanging on ropes”. They would like to have a tree “to climb on” as well, and with a small hut high in between the branches. Necessarily paths for bikers and roller-bladders have to be marked. Moreover, there should be a hill “so that we could slide down in the winter and run down in the summer”. Adolescents aged 15–19 claimed that they would need more green grass and trees, “so that we could arrange a picnic or simply relax on the grass”. Some bushes could also divide large areas into smaller ones, so that nobody interrupts each other. Young people apparently need a space for their private and intimate meetings: “we would like to have somewhere to stay, a kind of hut for several friends”. As you can see, this group most of all need social relations, as well as recreation and relax.

The third examined group that consisted of women of different age, who come to the backyards with their children or grandchildren. Here the expectations were quite diverse. In the first place, the women named green areas: more flowers, grass, trees, and bushes. Their needs concerned mostly big old trees with long branches, “which would create some shade and shelter from the sun for the children”. “There would be no problem to plant some bushes which would separate certain areas of a backyard”. The grass should be everywhere, not only as an ornament, but also for more oxygen for the children, or at least as a place to put a blanket on. The next thing pointed out by the women were benches, “but those solid and big ones, so that several people could sit on, and so that hooligans could not destroy them easily”.

A backyard, in the women’s view, should be safe, properly fenced, and with harmless facilities. Most grandmothers claimed that metal carousels are quite dangerous. Mothers noticed mainly the social function of backyards. Children often spend time there, so they need facilities that influence their physical development, “for example in a wooden hut they can play house”. A fountain would also be very useful, so that “children could cool down during hot summer”. It would be some kind of substitute of a river or lake, especially for children who spend their holidays at homes. Besides, it would be much cooler during hot days. Ladies were talking about animals as well. Some of them opposed allowing animals into the area of playgrounds, and some
were definitely for having dogs with them. However, there could be a special area only for animals, but they were not able to give any concrete ideas. The women also indicated the need for a small area for barbecue, with some benches and tables. As you can see, the respondents would design backyard spaces mostly for relaxation and recreation. They should be green enough, quiet, safe, and comfortable. Facilities are not as useful as the grass and trees – everything to be closer to nature.

As I mentioned in the introduction, I interviewed people who tend to spend their time in backyards and playgrounds, defining themselves as their users. Very interesting is the absence of men. We might even consider such spaces as not “manly” at all. Perhaps with the exception of cases of men cleaning their cars or taking out the garbage. That could result from the fact that in the backyards it is hard for men to find something interesting. However, this point should be verified in completely different research.

When it comes to regular users of backyards and playgrounds, it would be a good idea to revise the way such areas are organized, so that the older adolescents would be discouraged from using the facilities made for children. For example, there could be some tables with benches put around, which definitely makes conversations easier. Interpersonal relations are as important as the physical development of our children. Providing facilities like swings, slides, and more tricky constructions would invite the children to their own territory. It is essential to have the feeling of belonging to certain territory and, at the same time, feel the responsibility for it. Many people do not identify with their backyards. It is something that exists aside, not meaningful at all. It is, therefore, essential to change their way of perceiving these areas around their houses. However, every such change takes time. In many cases the initial socialisation of children did not occur – they do not feel they belong in the areas, do not consider a backyard a good place for meeting other people and spending their free time. However, it is possible to restore the bond with the nearest area, but only if an appropriate offer is made. Backyards should be friendly places for everybody, and of course, well equipped. As a result, many young people will definitely start to appear there, and make new friends, and spend their leisure time reasonably. If they feel they belong there, they will also feel responsible for their own territory. What is more, they will create and change it for better.

Summary

When we analyse the text above, we can come to few main conclusions. First, dreams about our magic places are different dependently on the age of respondents (children, adolescents, adults). Architects therefore have three choices. First is to focus on the needs and expectations of small children, and this is what most often takes place. Second is to organize the areas according to what all the users would like to have there, taking into account the aspects that appear repetitively. In case of my respondents that would be green plants, water, safe facilities, sandbox, etc. The third
solution – the most revolutionary – might be to fulfil all people's desires. Nowadays it seems too abstract, however...

Let us imagine an average inter-block-of-houses area or a regular backyard of old tenement houses. Mostly they are rectangular shaped backyards that are easy to form in a suitable way: in one end several benches and a barbecue area with some tables, so that fathers and grandfathers have their own place; a kind of partition made from bushes and a small playground (swings, slides, carousels, huts, etc.) for small children, surrounded by benches for mothers and grandmothers; and a fountain in the middle (or a little pool), and a sandbox. In the “farther area” another bush partition and a sector devoted to teenagers with all the facilities, seats, and a hut. There could be some swings on ropes as well, and other things meant for teenagers’ physical development. Those separate parts of the whole backyard area, surrounded by bushes, might be some kind of territories for different age groups. Outside the area there might be a special track suitable for bikers and roller-bladders.

There should also exist a way for the rubbish disposal vans to make it easy to take away waste bins. Places for waste bins should also be fenced and surrounded with ivies or high bushes, so that everything not quite pleasant is separated from people spending their time in backyards. Green areas should definitely dominate, so that a backyard looks healthy and nice. All the facilities should be made of wood. They are much safer than those made of metal are. In such surroundings all the users would have a chance to function well. All their needs (safety, individual development, social relations, etc.) would be fulfilled. Social relations are apparently crucial. With the restoration of identity with the nearest surrounding, we realize that something really belongs to us, and not to somebody else. People tend to take more care of things that belong to them, so that next generations could use them in the future.

One final reflection – we complain about teenagers who cannot adjust to adults, because they have different interests and hobbies, and what is worse, they do not have any at all. We are also afraid that soon our good kids will change into troublesome youth. Thinking about kids and teens today and providing them with the best conditions possible may bring surprising future benefits – the individuals devastating swings and sipping beer can become influential local activists fighting for the common good. Because they experienced “their own” and “common” backyards of “our own”.

References


Introduction

Preventing crime and decreasing the level of fear in the society closely relates to the restoration of the strong local communities. Opposite to that, a fall of the everyday principles of the social life reflects itself, directly, in an increased crime. The fear causes that people to take certain actions: if they can, they move from the dangerous neighbourhoods, install the systems securing their flats, close themselves in the fenced settlements and withdraw from the public places. An uncontrolled lawlessness is for them a signal that the neighbourhood is not safe. The scared citizens stop entering the streets, avoid some places and limit their normal activities and friendships. Withdrawing, literally, they also withdraw from the community of mutual support with other people, abandoning this way social control that in the past allowed maintaining social order. It causes understandable concern and prompts to develop effective remedying methods, eliminating the escalation of this phenomenon. One of the ways that in recent years has become more popular is a close cooperation of institutions and local communities over the improvement of social standards and culture of cohabitation, and it is conducted with an aid of education, persuasion and advice.

Local community

A local community is a group of people living within a separated, relatively small territory, such as a parish, village or settlement in which there are strong bonds resulting from the community of interests and needs and from the feeling of common roots and belonging to the place they live (Beck, 1992, p. 25). Such a community is, on one hand, an ecological population, territorial collectivity, and on the other, the moral order that existed in the Greek polis (Szacki, 2007, p. 45).

The local community is not an accidental collectivity, but the one having, beside a territory, certain attributes: type of social relations, bonds and communica-
tion (Lynd, Lynd, 1929, p. 38). In the industrializing and urbanizing societies the attributes constituting the local community on many territories of contemporary countries have been transformed, shaping new social systems and phenomena (Siemaszko, 1993, pp. 65–77), deciding on the fate of the whole community and individuals. They include:

- financial base for satisfying the most important interests and needs felt by the majority of the groups and individuals living within a certain territory;
- prevailing type of culture and traditions around which organised is or might be a majority of members of a given community, having the ability of expanding to the individuals remaining outside it;
- social bonds of people and institutions and interpersonal communication having the ability of integrating the community in order to take common actions to resolve local problems;
- ideals and models of life acquired or seized and imitated spontaneously by the majority of the community, and constituting an obligation for the other segments of the community;
- ability of formal elements of the social bond to create informal obligations, create the readiness to be directed by the internal control in respecting the social norms (Chavis, Pretty, 1999, pp. 638–640; McMillan, 1996, pp. 320–322; Putnam, 2000, pp. 297–326; Warren, 1963, pp. 2–4).

**Crimes of youths in the metropolitan environment**

The metropolitan environment is defined by the size of its population – exceeding 200,000, abundance of social contacts and relations mostly with strangers, anonymous and business-like, lacking the personal factor, base for the majority of social arrangements and contacts (Rybicki, 1972, p. 114). Outside the depersonalized, interpersonal relations the metropolitan life is characterized by the split of the sphere of social relations into the business-like relations, basically lacking any personal content and such one in which the personal contents and values dominate (Coser, 1977, pp. 305–310). Such a general base directly weakens the mechanisms of social control residing in the family and neighbourhood, and strengthens the criminogenity of other factors, such as groups of pears or subcultural ones. As a result, a large city became a territory of various explorations and gave a basis for the creation of many scientific orientations of social-wide meaning and searches for the determinants of the criminal phenomena within that field.

The criminogenic character of big urban centres may be considered in two planes: a broadly understood interpersonal relations and external possibilities of committing crime provided by the fact of living in a big city.

The crime in a big city has its specifics (Kosewska, 1978; Strzembosz, 1971). It is marked by special intensity of certain types of crimes, such as theft, burglaries, crimes against authorities, public agencies, and public order, as well as robberies and
extortions. Hence, it is necessary to acknowledge that a city, because of its character, is the factor that cumulates and not generates the crime. Creating the conditions of anonymity for the criminals, it plays the role of a magnet attracting people from social margin.

A development of many cities and shaping of their certain specific characteristics became a subject of interest of the city sociology, especially the social ecology (Park, Burgess, McKenzie, 1967) dealing with the relations of people with their life space. The impact of urban environment on human behaviour and on the socially negative behaviour was analysed in many studies. They indicate certain important regularities.

An analysis of the metropolitan space has shown a diversification among its individual spaces or fields in regard to the intensity of crime. It turned out that committing crime is promoted by the areas of the cities having the character of shopping and service centres, in which, because of a bigger flow of people, functioning of the mechanisms of social control is much more difficult; verges of housing developments (Herbert, Hyde, 1995); concentration of industries (Glaser, 1976); land development with a low standard of buildings (Coleman, 1985).

These areas are considered especially demoralizing because of the impact of negative social models on other citizens, especially the youth. In case of a lack of the positive social impacting and proper family care, youths create groups that may transform into criminal groups acting, most often, in a direct neighbourhood of their place of residence, mainly in the shopping and entertainment centres of a given city district.

A specific criminological problem is crime in the big housing developments (Application, 2000; Pytlakowski, Socha, Urbanek, Winnicka, 1997). Big housing developments – housing complexes are characterised with the following social situation: a lack of personal bonds, a lack of or disturbances in the social control, large concentration of people representing various social groups, social roles, cultural models, and systems of norms. Such a situation creates in individuals the feeling of anonymity, isolation, lack of personality, and in consequence disturbances in the sphere of the psychological life, like the state of stress, expressing itself in higher neuroticism and tendency, even a significant one, to aggressiveness expressed in behaviour, and sometimes leading to somatic changes as well. The psychical anomalies felt might cause destructive or aggressive behaviours of the pathological character and even criminal ones. In many concrete-built housing developments, the gangs of drug dealers are active, not only on the streets, but also in schools.

The big housing developments create also numerous victimological threats (Holyst, 2006). An area deprived of infrastructure and basic interpersonal bonds (for example identification of neighbours) fosters criminal acts and, at the same time, makes social protection against crime difficult, and that is why in the big housing developments we can see the intensification of crimes against health and life, theft of private and public property, and various acts of hooliganism. A diversification of the inhabitants based on their social roles or status makes the process of commu-
nication between people and development of bonds characteristic for the cohesive communities difficult. This is especially reflected in children that encounter various culture models with the simultaneous lack of assessment of their value by certain social setting, family or school. Social mechanisms that are characteristic for the fast growing metropolitan settings induce in juveniles the state of social disorientation, unclearleness, and often conflict of norms and models. A reaction for this state of anomia often manifests in pathological or even criminal behaviours.

The phenomenon of spatial mobility of people that accompanies industrialisation plays an important role in the process of rising crime among juveniles in big cities. The mobility does not promote the process of socialization because of the frequent changes of social setting. A change of the place of residence entails the need of adaptation to the new social setting, new people or different way of life. It creates serious psychological stresses in youths (Urban, 2000, pp. 206–221).

Next to the family, a school plays an especially important role in the process of socialisation. A change of the place of residence entails the need to change school. Difficulties in adapting to the new school situation may reflect adversely on the grades, and that in turn increases the probability of truancy out of fear against other complications.

Hence, an axis for explaining the crime among youths within the industrialising areas is the improper socialisation that results from the disturbances in functioning of small groups, mainly family and difficulties in school.

A large number of factors conditioning the crime among children and youths in the urban environment prompt us to look for the constructive solutions limiting its effects. A special role in this regard is assigned to the associations, organisations, NGO’s, social groups, and institutions acting within the local communities and expressing the common interests of the local community in regard to safety (Long, Perkins, 2003, p. 281).

Restorative justice in regard to crime

A crime relates to a serious crisis in functioning of a minor perpetrator or offender, victim and local community within which it took place. It exposes the helplessness of the social setting that cannot properly react to progressing demoralisation, violates the basic rights of a victim, causes in him/her the feeling of being wronged and the will of revenge, strains the mutual trust, violates the feeling of public order and safety, causes the need of restoring legal order and fulfilling the social feeling of justice, restoring damaged bonds, reintegration of the community around the questioned values.

A reaction of the society to the fact of committing a crime is the assessment of a punishment for its perpetrator in proportion to the guilt and social harmfulness of the crime. The need of assessing a punishment results from the requirements of the principle of the revenge justice (retribution), focusing on the crime and its perpetra-
tor, and not on the harm experienced by the victim. This system meets with the ever growing criticism as ineffective and being in opposition to the humanitarian concept of interpersonal relations.

In the recent years, appeared a new way of thinking about how we should treat and react to the phenomenon of crime, and persistent pursuance of development of the set of means limiting the crime without restoring to the ultimate punishment such as imprisonment. This tendency has been winning ever bigger popularity among the researches dealing with the problems of crime, and significantly impacts the procedures of dealing with criminals in the West (Urban, 1999, p. 133). One of them is the restorative justice, offering an alternative to the retribution ways of solving a crisis caused by a crime (Johnstone, 2002).

In the restorative justice the reaction to crime is not revenge, but a process in which the perpetrator takes responsibility for the penal act committed, aiming at reconciliation and actual redemption of harm in the way determined by all the persons affected by the crime: a victim, perpetrator and local community (Consedine, 2003, pp. 7–9). The leitmotif here is not only compensation for the harm inflicted, but also restoration of peace and order in the society, reconstruction of the damaged relations between the victim, perpetrator and local community (Wright, 2005, p. 161).

In the last twenty years, this model has been very strongly promoted as a chance for getting out of this dead end of the penal justice that is expensive and usually not bringing rehabilitation results and even creating an ever-stronger criminal sub-culture (Garland, 2009). Thanks to its protagonists, the restorative justice became an integral part of the systems of justice in the majority of developed countries, and research over its effective use in the process of rehabilitation, especially of juvenile criminals, is conducted by the majority of the research institutions of the western countries (Galway, Hudson, 2009).

An excellent example of this type of influence is the achievements of the British system of rehabilitation. The restorative justice is strongly propagated by the local authorities and implemented in the institutions of social aid for the socially impaired youths. The restorative justice functions within the local community and for the local community. It has to help the people feel safe. It is a clear encouragement for the people to take the law in their own hands. Instead of punishing, lynching or stigmatizing the criminals, in English edition it tries to coax them to afterthoughts over their deeds, leads to the compensation of caused harm and shows them that their behaviour affects the social setting – which takes proper actions preventing the upsetting of its stability, disturbing the social order and annexing the public space. Thanks to proper regulations and increased awareness of the citizens (Lasocki, 2010), one can initiate them in the process of rehabilitation, increasing safety of local community and decreasing the self-assurance of criminals themselves. This process has to be started from the first signals of deviation in young people, that is why actions conducted with children and youths are the most important.
System of rehabilitation of minors in Great Britain

From the beginning of the XX century, in the British system of rehabilitation of minors, the probation officers have been dealing with rehabilitation of minors in the open social setting. From 1970, under regulations of 1969 concerning all children and youths, the probation officers have been taking care mainly of juveniles from 17 years of age and adults. The cases of minors of up to 16 years of age were taken over by social services that have been cooperating with various social and charitable organisations specialising in the aid for minors and their families in a difficult life situation, often incapable in the process of upbringing.

In Great Britain there are various institutions for minors who found themselves in the conflict with law. Some of them have an open character. They employ the workers specialising in many fields, i.e. pedagogues, psychologists, psychiatrists or lawyers who develop and run the programmes of rehabilitation of minors aiming at optimal upbringing (Kalinowski, 2005, pp. 45–69).

The English system (Crime and Disorder Act, 1998) is a very interesting model of the system of rehabilitation in which, outside courts for minors and police, the local centres of social care play a special role. They are a result of popularisation, by the legislature, of the far-reaching limitation of contacts of minors of the age of up to 17 years with the legal system.

The competencies of the centres of social care include all the cases involving minors of up to 17 years of age who need care and protection; the cases of the juvenile perpetrators of crimes for whom the police used proper upbringing means avoiding an intervention of a court for minors; and the cases sent by court that assessed certain upbringing means, for example subordinating a minor to the care of a local centre of social care or subordination to the care of a probation officer – a social worker.

In regard to minors the local centres of social care may use various upbringing means, including placing them in a proper rehabilitation facility or surrogate family. If the centre is engaged in the care of minors without a previous intervention of a court for minors, it is necessary to obtain consent of parents of a given juvenile to use rehabilitation or upbringing means as proposed by the workers of the centre – for example a stay in an isolation facility on each Saturday and Sunday within 3 months or a stay in a boarding facility with pedagogical supervision. Should such consent be lacking, the centre sends the case involving a minor to a court for juveniles to consider it and issue a sentence concerning an upbringing or rehabilitation centre.

For the intervention of the centre to be effective, there has to be a fast determination or sentencing of a rehabilitation centre and execution of such a sentence. The centre has a duty to reconsider every 6 months each case involving a minor it deals with, in order to examine whether there is a need to change the earlier applied rehabilitation measure or its lifting. The rehabilitation measure used by the centre or ruled by court and executed by a centre of social care may last until the minor involved is 18 years old.
The police plays an important role in the practical model of rehabilitation of juveniles. Distinct from the solutions adopted by the other European systems, British legislators gave to the care of the police all the cases involving minors at the preparatory stage. In the British concept of the role of a judge, the judge has to be primarily an impartial and objective person. For this postulate to be fulfilled it is thought that the judge should not know the minor whose case he/she has to consider. The special sections of the police for juveniles deal with the cases involving juveniles. They are created at each police station of the administrative units of a city, community, etc. The police officers dealing with juvenile perpetrators are authorized to act in all the cases involving minors. They are obliged to cooperate with all the bodies of care over children, especially with the centres of social care and courts for juveniles. The competencies of the police include sending of a case involving a minor for consideration of a court or a centre of social care. The police have the right not to use the legal proceedings in the case of petty deeds against the law; for example in the case of misdemeanour they may apply a warning only.

Use of restorative justice in regard to juvenile criminals in Great Britain

In the English law, the longest functioning system of rehabilitation based on the restorative justice is the Referral Orders (Dugmore, Pickford, 2006). Despite the fact that they have been functioning for eight years now, they are still being implemented in different types of centres in Great Britain.

The Referral Orders are ruled on in courts for juveniles since April 2002. In their assumption, they were to change the way in which a juvenile criminal committing the first crime is dealt with (Whyte, 2009). They are ordered for the majority of the young people between the tenth and seventeenth year of age, who pleaded guilty and were found guilty of committing a crime by court. The court does not sentence a juvenile to certain penalty, ordering him only to appear before the Youth Offender Panel to consider a proper in his/hers case method of rehabilitation.

The Youth Offender Panel is a type of session of the restorative justice. A special coordinator organizes a meeting of all the participants of the dispute and their families, as well as members of local organisations and institutions that are obliged to act, and the people who are to help the juvenile involved. Such meetings take place at any place and there is no determined procedure of their conduct. A very important in them is the position of a victim that, after presenting his argumentation, takes part with other members in developing the most favourable – for the juvenile and the whole community – solution assuming the form of the formal contract between all the interested parties.

These sessions lead to the out-of-court solution of the cases involving juveniles, and the proposed solutions fundamentally differ from the formalised catalogue of rehabilitation or corrective measures used by courts. During the Youth Offender
Panel – apart from the victim of the crime, perpetrator, his parents or guardians – the social workers of the local Youth Offending Team and members of the local community appear (Community Panel).

The members of the local community participating in the Youth Offender Panel constitute a very important element of rehabilitation within the restorative justice. Their task is to organize a meeting of parties in the dispute, taking care of its proper course and, many times, substituting for an absent victim of the crime (absent because of trauma), aversion or misunderstanding of the idea of the Referral Orders, expressing his/her stance in the case in question.

Members of the local community are the neutral parties, not related to the justice system, with the proper personal predispositions, trustworthy, trained in the techniques of negotiations, ideas and goals of the restorative justice. During their training, a close attention is played to the exemplification of the considered cases with the examples from the nearest neighbourhood and such ones in which the guilt was often not only on the side of the perpetrator, but also when indirectly engaged in the crime were insensitive passers-by, cowardly neighbours or misfit parents. Its goal is to make the members of the panel sensitive to the situations, and to show them, that situations in which a young man decides to commit a crime never or almost never are unequivocal or obvious, and at the same time to realize that often the guilt is also on the side of the local community.

Before the session of the restorative justice within the Youth Offender Panel, the designated (usually two) members of the Community Panel get familiar with the case. They have for their disposal the materials gathered by the police and social workers, and they can, but do not have to, get familiar with them to be better oriented in the situation. During the sessions of the restorative justice, because they are obligated to participate actively in the discussion on the crime and its consequences, to large extent they are responsible for the shape of the contract that will be signed by the juvenile, obliging him to repair the harm caused by his crime. The contract is implemented under supervision of the members of the panel and a social worker.

Examples of the standard demands placed in the contract are (Referral Order Guidance, 2009):

- a letter of apology to the victim(s); the most often it is a letter-afterthought, so the perpetrator has to not only apologise to the victim, but also convince him/her that he understands his mistake;
- commitment to work for free for the victim or local community to repair the damages inflicted;
- commitment to start a specialised programme of support aiming at the help in the liquidation of the causes for the behaviour of the perpetrator or problems encountered by the young man. Such a programme may have an educational character or counteract addictions involving alcohol or drugs;
- coming to the meetings with the social worker responsible for the case to report on the progress made.
Signatures under the contract – by the chairman of the panel, perpetrator and his probation officer – bear witness to consent to it and are treated as a valid agreement. During the Referral Order, a young minor obliges to:

- obey the dates of the appointments with social workers of the Youth Offending Team and participate in them at least once in two weeks;
- cooperate with the social worker of the Youth Offending Team to determine the reasons for the crime and prevent the next ones;
- implement what the perpetrator obliged himself to during the mediatory meeting and to participate in all training sessions and courses that were recommended by the social worker;
- come to the scheduled control meetings of the Youth Offender Panel, organised to report on the progress made and present the possible difficulties that the young man encountered during the execution of his tasks;

After the implementation of the Referral Order, the last meeting with members of the local community and the guiding social worker takes place (Smith, 2008, pp. 124–131). If all the conditions specified in the contract are met, the Referral Order is finalised. The young man is then, somehow, cleaned from the charges and does not have to admit that he has ever been court-punished. An exception constitutes applying for consent for some works, such as with youths. In such case, it is necessary to inform about the penalty served.

If a minor subjected to the Referral Order does not fulfil or implement the tasks under the contract, he/she has to appear one more time before the members of the Panel. They may decide to send the case again to court, but they also can consider that he/she fulfilled his obligations to a proper degree, especially if he/she is willing to cooperate and shows remorse.

However, if the perpetrator avoids the fulfilment of the decisions of the Youth Offender Panel, is arrogant and does not want to cooperate, he/she is sent to court for violation of conditions of the Referral Order. In such case, the perpetrator is tried again for the first committed offense.

The newest idea of the English system of social aid for the socially impaired youths that has been implemented, within the functioning local centres specially assigned for them, is the Youth Rehabilitation Order. It was introduced on 30th November last year on the basis of the Act of 2008 (The Criminal Justice and Immigration Act, 2008). Its main task is to integrate the existing various projects of the reparatory justice from different parts of Great Britain, and even from the outside of it, making it easier for social workers and local communities to impact the process of rehabilitation of minors. The goal of the project is not only to rehabilitate a given perpetrator, but also to lower the number of young people in reformatories. It was created with young repeated offenders in mind, or those who committed an especially dangerous crime and require an especially intensive supervision (Jezierska, 2010).
Summary

The procedures of restorative justice may play the function of integration in regard to the offenders, their victims and local communities. Unfortunately, in Polish courts they are seldom used, especially in regard to minors (Lewicka, Grudziewska, 2010, pp. 174–183), although the presumption is that they are more receptive to rehabilitation than adults. Nonetheless, it would be necessary to popularise them within various groups, especially among teachers, probation officers, judges, workers of penitentiary, rehabilitation and educational institutions. Especially so that the example of rehabilitation, based on the ideas of the restorative justice implemented in Great Britain, seems to be an excellent prelude to creating a new principle of responsibility for oneself, the close ones and other members of the local community. It is a very difficult task requiring proper, large financial outlays for its implementation. However, taking into account that these potentially expensive efforts brought in Great Britain savings on social expenses ca. 80 million pounds, improving at the same time safety of the people (Youth Justice, 2004), it is worth to think whether such project could be implemented in Poland.

The system of rehabilitation in the form of the restorative justice proposes an early, quick and outside court intervention combined with compensation for damages instead of formalised court proceedings and extended execution of ruled rehabilitation or corrective measure. It functions in a local social setting, depends on its needs and abilities, proposes ways of solving conflicts by the community to which the offender belongs, leads to restitution of the social order and balance in the use of the public spaces of the big cities.

References


Graffiti – A Way of Communication in the City

In our daily city life we quite often come across graffiti. Sometimes we do not pay attention to that, perhaps marking buildings and some public places irritates us, but sometimes a single drawing particularly draws our attention because of its colouring or massage. Then we wonder: “Who has drawn it and for what purpose?” We realize that we have never seen any of the graffiti writers at work. We have an ambivalent feeling concerning that form of city creators’ activity and usually we would not agree to have our house elevation or fence painted in that way, we are not as much restrictive about other places. Generally, we likely treat the problem of graffiti as marring both the urban space and the place that is painted on. Many firms specialize in selling some paints that make getting rid of graffiti easier or simply prevent it from being painted on. There were also ideas to force the sale of paints in spray only in licensed places or to ban their selling to individuals at all.

As Kamila Kamińska writes (Kamińska, Iwanowski, 2010, p. 129) in her article: “The cities all over the world are covered with net of marks, starting with shops and advertising boards, and finishing on light signals or road signs (…) the graffiti is quite often borrowed from the sign aesthetics as well as from the slangs of advertising campaigns. Many city marks have affected the lettering or composition of graffiti”.

The phenomenon of graffiti appeared in the 1960s, some people claim it was even before the music of the ‘60s began. Everything started with simple writings, especially names, done in order to mark one’s presence (just like our ancestors used to draw in the caves). But the true spark for the movement was an interview published in New York Times, in which Demetrius, a teenager of Greek origin, boasted that there was no place in New York Subway where one could not see the marks of his presence.

The graffiti era starts along with introduction of paints in spray on the market, what had its beginning in the 1970s. The place where the phenomenon started was New York, and concretely its poorest districts like Bronx or Harlem, where multicultural influences connected to the countries of origin played important role. Each of ethnic minorities living in those places created graffiti. It is also worth mentioning that at that time the building elevations were not painted as the places for that kind of drawings were provided. First graffiti had an artistic character rather than mindless devastation or tagging (Ferrell, 1993). However, as it usually happens when that
field of artistic expression develops, the graffiti makers started to paint public buildings as well as private ones. Subway is also full of graffiti: the drawings are seen both inside and outside trains or platforms.

At the beginning of graffiti development no self-respecting maker accepted such sort of expression that would be against the law. In that respect, an evolution of graffiti makers may be compared to that of sports fans. In the past, a fan with his presence only supported his favourite team, but nowadays many actions of the fans have criminal features, not supporting ones.

One must distinguish the graffiti from ordinary daubs. Making a real graffiti usually takes a couple of hours, but a simple “space mark” just a moment. The phenomenon called “tagging” has also been described (sometimes used as damaging for the graffiti art). The main purpose of the “tagger” is to mark/tag as many places in the neighbourhood as possible. He can do so thanks to markers or different stencils on which he sprays the paint. One “tagger” with nick Picasso painted in the eighteen kilometres radius of his house, marking in that way ‘his area’ (Steward, 1989).

Painting within the urban space has a multipronged dimension. Let us try to put it in some frames, no matter how we perceive it: as the act of destroying the city space or a spatial development; a form of communication. There are various sorts of graffiti – I suggest the following classification:

- political graffiti (supporting or negating a certain political group or a single politician, for example, the writing on the wall: PIS=pisiory /cocks/, that is a typical political graffiti);
- the graffiti as the protest against something or someone (e.g. against smoking, insensitivity or racism);
- the graffiti as the piece of art with aesthetic dimension;
- the gang’s or subculture’s graffiti (e.g. in the USA, where each of the gangs that occupy certain territory mark it as well as the racial or nationalistic subcultures);
- music, sports or hooligan graffiti (usually full of vulgarisms or slogans praising their own teams);
- marking the territory (daubs, initials, nicks; the tags in the purest form).

People responsible for keeping order in their areas e.g. the building administrators, may sometimes wonder, what was the purpose of graffiti makers (or just ordinary space markers – definition of “mine”), since a group of residents neither understand nor accept that kind of activities. It may result in an attempt to stop the devastation of a particular place, for example by installing CCTV system (circuit television) or by separating certain places for graffiti. Quite often, a mindless elevation painting seems to be the simplest and cheapest way for some people to leave their mark, their “sign”, to mark the territory. It may be done by pupils, local blockers, teens, but not graffiti makers in my understanding. There is no message for the others in such painting, and it is only about giving satisfaction to "taggers" who want to mark their territory and feel the sense of power. In some rare situations it may
provide adrenalin (fear of being caught and arrested), perhaps it fulfils the paint-
ers politically and frees their emotions concerning their opinions and attitudes. For
example, less than twenty years ago in Hamilton, New Zealand, the research into
graffiti showed that 22 per cent of its inhabitants had already seen graffiti and treated
that phenomenon as a kind of offence (Ninnes, 1997).

In my paper I would like to present several kinds of graffiti, from different places
in Europe, but not only. For the purposes of my study I took some pictures of graf-
fiti in Wrocław myself, but I also got many of them from close friends and relatives,
taken by them in Sydney, London, and Germany.

Before presenting graffiti and murals of a high educational and artistic value (in
my opinion) I shall refer to those perceived as a crime, an act of destruction making
ordinary citizens a strong enemies of the whole graffiti phenomenon. I propose such
a classification:

1. Typical writing on the wall, which to the typical city dweller has no meaning
(“tag”)
2. Burning-like-letters writing, has no meaning for an ordinary man, no message
3. Writing typical for a supporter of the local football team

Written carelessly, this kind of work has one purpose: to inform that someone
in the area is a fan of that football team. It has no deeper meaning since there is no
other team in extra class, there is not even a person who would like to paint it over.
Probably other team’s symbol will never appear in the place
4. Crying letters, looks like another drawing with no meaning

I must admit the above drawings (writings) are not too original and probably not
very important to the local society. A person having a university degree in academy
of fine arts (PWSSP), with whom I consulted the drawings, has the same opinion. It is
just a “damage” on the wall that should be painted over as soon as possible. There is no
message for others. The cost of renovation is usually high, for example: according to
the report of a local government in Gdynia, the renovation of the fragment of several
buildings cost about 50 thousand zlotys (Wydatki 2007, 2008). Those are not the costs
for the entire town, but for some streets. The money could be spent on different aims,
more important for the town. All over the world the costs of removing graffiti are
enormous and counted in hundred million dollars. In the market there are many spe-
cialized companies removing graffiti, like FJ Complex from Wrocław (FJ-Complex,
home site). The cost of removing graffiti from one square meter of unprotected wall in
Wrocław is from 60 to 90 zlotys (Ogłoszenie firmy: F.H.U. WILKI Jacek Wilk, 2011).

In the western countries people have been thinking how to fight against that
plague. Several ways have been found so far (Knight, 2005):
- ban on painting (sanctions for breaking);
- deterring from painting, repercussions and punishment (e.g. social and repair
  work), but also a proper education;
- finding space where the graffiti makers could express themselves;
- promoting graffiti in some spaces which are prepared for that purpose.
In New York massive devastation of the Subway and the city itself stopped at the end of the 20th century, what is related to the term of office by Rudolph Giuliani as the mayor (1994-2001), and his practice called: no tolerance (Rudy Giuliani campaign, home site). It was proved that some delinquents braking law were also members of the gangs or culprits. Each offence was punished, even a small one, and every offender had to know the punishment was unavoidable. Giuliani was often taken, also in Poland, as a good example how to keep order in the city (a controversial figure to others).

Completely different to analysed above element of Wrocław landscape is the building in the city centre painted in graffiti style. It arouses a great interest not only in tourists but also in inhabitants of Wrocław. Many families pose for the photos in the background of the building. In my opinion that picture is very artistic and it is not only another gate or subway painted in senseless style. It is also controversial for “real painters” because for them it is too “sugary”. Such is an elevation of the building in Wrocław, opposite the botanical garden in Sienkiewicza Street (ill. 1). It might be funny for advanced graffiti writers, as it was painted from government funds.

Searching for the historical roots of mural paintings in Poland we may refer to the elevation made in different tone which comes from the period of socialist realism. It is located in Olbin, the district of Wrocław (ill. 2) – wall of the building in Rychtalska Street, Wrocław.

Now let us skip to Germany, to Freiburg. There urban space is also marked by graffiti, but mainly in underground passages. An example is shown on the picture number 3 (ill. 3). Classic underground passage covered with paint, made to look like a colourful fabric. It is not chaotic. It seems to be thought through in an artistic way by a group of people. There are some cartoon characters and some fairy tales ones. There are also strange creatures form legends, bizarre signs, and words – some of them designed just like Celtic ones (which is fashionable, i.e. in tattoos). An average passer-by should not feel embarrassed while going by such images. They rather see colourful painting than grey cement. Elderly people do not show any negative reaction when looking at those graffiti. Young people, on the other hand, might even feel proud of unknown artists’ performances.

In Freiburg, there are also other examples of graffiti. Those represent individuals. Graffiti signed with artists’ pseudonyms, which shows sort of individuality.

This graffiti is different from that presented earlier. This one conveys a kind of artistic soul of the author, and is probably aimed at provoking certain reaction. Graffiti was partly destroyed by “a marker”, who added a rough drawing of man’s sexual organ, plus he/she painted the gun over. In the background we can see mobile phones which may symbolize the way of communication that we prefer nowadays. Instead of talking to someone face to face, we would rather call or text someone. I think I can also see here the portrait of the painter himself – an ordinary boy wearing a hood that is supposed to protect him from the police or monitoring. In Germany it is often
a case that the whole underground passing is covered in graffiti, a kind of a street gallery available for anybody passing by.

We can see that all the colours used on the wall of the underground passage combine very well with the colours of buildings outside, so it is somehow matched all together. The green plants going down on the walls do not destroy the whole picture, but create a certain symbiosis.

How does graffiti look like in Australia, Sydney? Photograph number 4 (ill. 4) is an example of the piece of wall specially built for graffiti. The paintings are colourful, and remind of German ones. Those do not carry any messages, but only to fill the space.

Another case is graffiti painted over the buildings in the suburbs.

Very often they do not have any ethnic associations, and are made in a sparsely inhabited area. The Australian authorities pay attention to order and care for buildings in cities, that is why graffiti artists’ expression is directed towards suburbs and commuter belt. No artistic spirit is visible here. It is more like painting for its own sake. Australia, a young country, has not discovered great painters yet – painters that everybody would hear of. Such countries like Germany, The Netherlands, United States have well known painters. Perhaps that is the reason why in those countries graffiti has an artistic range and develops so quickly.

In the context of our exploration we need to mention one extraordinary graffiti artist known all over the world as Banksy. He has his own web site created by one of his fans (Banksy graffiti reaper, home site). He is known around the world, however his real name has never been revealed to the public. Nobody has ever taken a picture of him. He has his own spokesperson. Characteristic feature of Banksy’s works is the fact that they always carry a message. He probably discovered his style while he had to hide under one of a subway cars for quite a long time during the time of graffiti painters discrimination. At that time Banksy’s attention was drawn to a serial number of a car, what inspired him to work.

Banksy became famous for social actions. The last one had a widespread impact. On the day of Paris Hilton’s record premiere, he replaced the original CDs’ covers with his own, which presented a caricature of Paris Hilton. All those were supposed to provoke people to realize how dull lives such celebrities lead. As a BBC News journalist claimed, Banksy exchanged about 500 CDs (Banksy graffiti reaper, home site).

Banksy is also famous for other actions of “smuggling” his own works, usually to the museums. British “The Guardian” was writing at length how he managed to smuggle an exhibit into one of London museums – a stylish dead rat above which there was a sprayed sign: “Our time will come”. One of the most dangerous of his actions was painting graffiti on a Palestine wall (March, 2006).

Nowadays, 3D graffiti has become very popular, as well as graffiti painted not on walls or subway cars, but on the ground. Below we can see two examples of 3D graffiti. (ex. Tracy Lee Stum, home site http://www.tracyleestum.com/)

This graffiti makes an optical illusion; we lose the sense of space. Undoubtedly, 3D graffiti draw our attention more than simple useless painting for its own sake. An
observer of graffiti paintings has become more demanding. Graffiti is now supposed to be appealing and carry a message. Recently, this kind of graffiti has won recognition as a preventive measure in several countries. For instance, graffiti painters paint a 3D child lying on the road so that a driver who does not stop his car in the right place thinks that he has just knocked down a real child. Such an action is supposed to make drivers drive more carefully and more slowly. We can say that controversial art has found its way and serves safety.

In Poland of the beginning of the ’80s and ’90s together with the changes of political system there appeared basic tools for graffitists. As a result there appeared also first graffiti paintings on train cars which were similar to the New York subway ones. Many graffitists got inspired by U.S. works. Besides graffiti or even vandalism (not every graffiti is made by an artist), people imported also ‘black music’ and characteristic clothes (gangsta look), as well as a certain way of behaviour with a strong sense of self-confidence. All that is noticeable in hip-hop and gangsta rap lyrics.

For over few years we have been observing rapid growth of interest in street art (it is often called so) of official institutions of art. Banksy, mentioned above, at first rather mysterious, now has become a pop-culture idol. His works are worth a lot on auctions. There was even a film made by Banksy: ”Exit Through the Gift Shop”. It tells a story of many artists of street art (“Wyjście przez sklep z pamiątkami”, 2010).

Art, imaginatively speaking, is also in the street, to be accurate – on the pavement.

At times curators of graffiti exhibitions decide to arrange it not in the museums, but in warehouse buildings or open urban space. A huge event in Poland was an exhibition ”Artyści Zewnętrzni OUT OF STH” in BWA Awangarda in Wrocław in 2008 (Out of sth, home site).

Graffiti art is developing rapidly and is available for everyone, unlike common paintings, i.e. oil paintings. Graffiti do not require any particular carriers. Oil paintings require a special canvas, paints, and preservatives. In fact, everyone with a little sense of art is able to paint graffiti. There is, however, one condition – certain space and complying with the law. Therefore, a question appears – can wall or a building be used by an artist?

As I have mentioned before, communication in the form of art is presented in cities in different ways. It can cause reflexion, artistic or emotional experience (exposed piece of wall). On the other hand it can also be a usual thing with no message – simply a colourful filling of space. It is not important which city or country it is – graffiti is everywhere. Finally, the time has come for this field of art, and some of graffitists are now very famous. People react to these works of art differently.

Once I was going by buses and trams around Wrocław, and observed how passengers reacted to a great graffiti sentence right opposite of one of the bus stops. The sentence was “Remember about fidelity”. The young and elderly people pointed to the sign, smiled, took pictures with their mobiles. What other artist would be so popular?
That phrase did not belong to the artist anymore or to the potential buyer who would have it in his/her home. That phrase was part of the city and carried a message for other people.

References

Books and articles

Internet sources
Ill. 1. Mural at Sienkiewicza street in Wrocław painted during Muralia festival (supported by local government funds)

Ill. 2. Mosaic mural from surrealism times. Rychtalska street in Wrocław
Ill. 3. Graffiti from Freiburg, Germany

Ill. 4. Graffiti from Sydney, Australia

Ill. 5. Graffiti from Monachium, Germany
Building an integrated cultural identity in the public space has become, for many local communities, a way to promote the region, but its main goal is to draw attention to the need for cooperation and tightening of relations within the social group. Metropolitanization, as a symbol of modern developments in the process of urbanization, has become a synonym for progress of civilization, manifesting by “(...) economic globalization, increased spatial mobility of capital, goods and people” (Markowski, Marszał, 2006, p. 6), and thus a chance for accelerated development of regions that have a diverse wealth of endogenous factors (Czmiel-Grzybowska, 2006).

According to M. Smętkowski (2001, p. 89) – cities that are a kind of independent centres of international transfers of innovative and substantive intellectual capital, are the areas which jointly developed the right innovative environment necessary for establishment of strong and meaningful economic, technical, institutional and social relationships. Therefore, the skilful construction of the image using the infrastructure and cultural heritage is such an important element, when aiming at increasing the competitiveness of a metropolitan area. The image is understood here as a complex set of factors affecting the self-image or the image of an object or product (such a product may also be a region or a city), influencing the behaviour of consumers in the area of operations associated with this product. Hence, complex image, must, on one hand, emphasize the dynamism of a metropolis corresponding to world standards, and on the other, skilfully highlight the uniqueness of this particular place and its cultural heritage (Murzyn, 2002, p. 66).

Upper Silesia is a great example of an area, which emphasizes creation of conditions for boosting of regional development, whose goal is to build a strong, rapidly growing urban centre, which would be able to compete effectively with other metropolitan zones in the country and beyond its borders. This metropolitan centre was established of 14 major cities (combining geographically two separate regions: Górny Śląsk and Zagłębie Dąbrowskie) along with the surrounding smaller communities. These cities and towns improved management and boosted the development
of urban conurbation through cooperative problem solving, thus contributing to the formal establishment of Upper Silesian Metropolitan Union (UMSU) at June 8, 2007 (Ill. 1).

Ill. 1. Map of the areas included in the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Union


Among the most important objectives of USMU we can find the following (System Gospodarki Odpadami, home site):

• achieving a harmonious development of the whole area of the Metropolis by making the best use of the potential of each member city, while respecting their differences and specificities;

• awakening in the inhabitants of the region a sense of pride in belonging to a large body of this urban area and strengthening of the conviction about the availability of the full potential of the Metropolis to its every dweller;

• encouraging residents and visitors to “discover” the Metropolis and making informed choices about where to live and work;

• generating and disseminating of certainty about comprehensive possibilities of career choices and various patterns of living; especially directed at young, well educated people, to encourage them to settle and work in the Metropolis;

• promotion inside the country and abroad of all assets of the Metropolis: economic, cultural, natural, etc.

Within the promotion strategy of the region there is a series of actions taken to popularize the new city brand, namely the Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolis Silesia (GZMS), which constitutes a unique phenomenon (from the social and political point of view) characterized by a strong vision of a united community of diverse cultures and traditions.
The process of branding of GMZS, which is the factor responsible for changes in the area, deserves special attention. This professionally created image, subject to constant monitoring, at the moment “is positive and the most important element of the success of the metropolis, both in the image-communication field (the general opinion – overwhelmingly positive, inspiring, encouraging, ‘contagious’), internal communication (self-esteem of Silesians, local patriotism, suppression of emigration, and increase of immigration), and pro-sales communication (denoting an increase in tourism revenue, the diversification of tourist offers, combating the phenomenon of seasonality, etc.); and in marketing management and investment which gives tangible results in the form of new jobs, foreign investors, entrepreneurship, and growth of all small, medium-sized and large companies. This is accompanied by improving quality of business and increased economic competitiveness of the region” (Strategia promocyjna Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowskiej Metropolii “Silesia”, 2009).

Establishing the competitive position of the region, while perpetuating associations of the local community with their place of residence, is, to a large extent, associated with actions making the use of cultural heritage, especially the achievements of science and art. These assets most often determine the competitive position of the metropolis in the domestic market. This is mainly due to the fact that “(…) cities are centres for accumulation of cultural and scientific heritage. The cultural capital of a city (the potential of its heritage) is composed of several interrelated parts. The concept of heritage, which has an extremely wide meaning, takes into account – beginning with history and tradition of the city, and related internal and external links – the historical landscape of the city, its urban layout, its buildings, its artefacts. Moreover, it entails also institutions which collect all mentioned assets as well as the institutions of creation, proliferation and expression of culture and educational, scientific and research institutions, all of which use all the accumulated knowledge and experience. Finally, it also includes the very people making this heritage feasible” (Murzyn, 2002, p. 69).

Silesian Province is one of Poland's major research centres, bringing together some large state universities such as University of Silesia, University of Economics of Adamiecki, Silesian Medical University, Silesian Academy of Physical Education, Silesian Academy of Fine Arts and Music Academy of Szymankowski in Katowice, Silesian University of Technology, Silesian Polytechnics, Academy of Jan Długosz in Częstochowa, and Academy of Technology and Humanities in Bielsko-Biała.

Modern technologies and scientists, who through research and the resulting discoveries are helping to improve conditions in every area of economic and social life, for many residents, are role models, and the fields of science, which they represent, often seem to be completely inaccessible and incomprehensible. However, must science be only for geniuses, or can ordinary people also carry out research?

The idea to conduct lectures in an accessible way was formed by the European Commission in 2005 and, since then, has been continuously popular among all lovers of science. Meetings held during the “Researchers’ Night” (such name was...
adopted for this project), have become an opportunity to get to know scientists from a completely different angle.

As D. Sokołowska – author of the program and coordinator of Gliwice edition of the international project – assured in 2006, that the “Researchers’ Night” programme was designed so that everyone can find something for themselves. We tried to make it interesting for not only students and those involved with mathematics and computers every day, but also for those for whom such areas are completely unfamiliar. Science does not have to be boring, it can be fascinating and become a life passion” (“Dziekan poprowadzi dyskotekę”, 2006, p. 16). What is important is the passion, the desire to expand knowledge and welcome new challenges.

In 2010, the “Researchers’ Night” was held on 24 of September, and its participants were: Silesian University of Technology, University of Economics, University of Silesia and Academy of Music. As in the previous years, its goal was to break the stereotype of the “lab-rat” – a scientist, a researcher who is not adapted to live normally within the society – and to provide a closer look at the tests carried out during research.

The project was filled with evening-night games, contests, multimedia presentations, exhibitions and concerts. Faculty of Architecture from the Silesian University of Technology has offered a workshop at which participants were designing and building the longest bridge and the highest tower ever. During a multimedia lecture combined with a demonstration of the identification of diamonds, Department of Earth Sciences from the Silesian University, tried to find an answer to the question: “How to distinguish a natural diamond from a synthetic one?”. In the meantime, the Institute of Neophilology from the University of Silesia conducted exercises stressing the specifics of the Czech language and the differences between Czech and Polish. During this time a number of Czech fairy tales was presented, highlighting some language problems in each of the cartoons. Additionally, a game was offered: reading of the dialogues to the one of Czech episodes of a well-known children’s tale about Krecik.

There were also activities for those who like shopping. Rybnicki Center of Educational Science from the Academy of Economics has prepared tutorials in the shopping centres, called “Mysterious Customer – market research”. For enthusiasts of pyrotechnics, Department of Chemistry from the Silesian University of Technology has prepared a lecture entitled “Explosives and civilization, or on explosives and their use in times distant and present”. The lecturers talked about applications of explosives by military or industrial sectors (including mining), and about terrorism.

Academy of Music, in turn, tried to explain the problem of visualization of a song. The aim of the lecture and a workshop was to teach the basic elements of a musical work and the demonstration of relations between its components: “(...) how musical composition consists of smaller musical works” (Noc Naukowców, home site).
The project concluded in Gliwice with a party at “Let’s Rock!” disco, and the Vice-Rector of the Silesian University of Technology prof. Rutkowski, a devotee of ’60, ’70 and ’80 music, took up a role of a DJ.

Similarly, as it was the case in the previous years, interest in the Silesian Scientists Night was huge, and lectures offered by universities, laboratories and workshops attracted the interest of various residents of the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Union, ranging from early school age to fairly advanced age.

Silesian agglomeration is also characterized by a large concentration of culture-institutions, including theatres and music centres. We can find 21 functioning theatres and musical institutions there, with a total of 9,614 seats. This is nearly 14% of such seats in the entire country (only Warsaw with its neighbourhoods has more). The availability of these institutions, measured by the number of seats per thousand inhabitants, however, puts the region in the fifth place in Poland with a value of 2.1. Among cultural institutions there are mostly dramatic theatres (among others, Silesian Theatre of Wyspiański in Katowice, Theatre of Zagłębie in Sosnowiec, The New (Modern) Theatre in Zabrze, National Polish Theatre in Bielsko-Biała, Theatre of Mickiewicz in Częstochowa). Additionally, there are three puppet theatres: Silesian Puppet and Actor Theatre “Athenaeum” in Katowice, Puppet Theatre “Banialuka” in Bielsko-Biała, Children’s Theatre of Zagłębie in Będzin. Finally, there are also four musical theatres: Theatre of Entertainment in Chorzów, Gliwicki Musical Theatre, Silesian Opera in Bytom and the Silesian Theatre of Dance (Strategia rozwoju województwa śląskiego “Śląskie 2020”, 2010). One should also not forget about alternative theatres operating in the province of Silesia, which provide specific artistic experiences and seek new forms of expression. The most famous among these are various associations, e.g.: Cogitatur, Part A, No Scene, Korez, Gliwicki Theatre A, and Personal Theatre.

Promotion of theatrical art in the region is not limited to financing of already established institutions by the local governments, but also includes the search for new forms of action. On September 18th 2010, there was a first launch of the project called “Metropolitan Theatre Night”, organized by an association “Silesia Metropolis”. The night was organized in consultation with major cultural institutions from around the region mentioned already and the Polish Stage Design Centre – Division of the Silesian Museum.

Launching of the project was preceded by the action “Tram at Night” held on 15–18.09.2010 that aimed at acquainting the residents of Katowice, Chorzów, Bytom and Sosnowiec with the programme of planned events and performances. A significant element of these activities was an opportunity to travel on the historic tram, during which the Moon Lady – an actress (Isabella Walczybok, Ill. 2), cooperating, inter alia, with the Silesian Theatre – invited commuters to participate in the project.
At the Metropolitan Theatre Night viewers could take part in the opera karaoke, learn to breakdance or see familiar and new shows. Silesian Theatre of Puppet and Actor “Athenaeum” presented the spectacle *Elements*, from which viewers could learn about basic phenomena occurring in the natural world. Participants could also view the process of creating performances or participate in workshops during which children and their parents could learn how to make puppets themselves.

In the Silesian Theatre in Katowice, Metropolitan Theatres Night was inaugurated with a happening prepared by children living in the houses near the theatre. After this performance the Silesian Theatre Main Stage showed Shakespeare’s play *All’s well that ends well*, and the Small Stage presented a comedy *Play It Again, Sam* by W. Allen. After the end of performances, the project participants could take part in an open-air show (held by the main entrance to the theatre) by E. Kucharśka and B. Banysia entitled *Transvisions*, which referred to performances given in the theatre during the festival. Interested viewers could also see the work of the theatre from behind the scenes, with the help of various employees. Participants were also able to buy unusual items related to the theatre life, which are otherwise unavailable.

In turn, the theatre Korez played two shows – a play by J. Cartwright 2, in which the actors told the story of a married couple owning a pub, which became a refuge for many unhappy people, and a monodrama *Friend of Mel Gibson’s* about the hardships of an acting profession.

The Theatre of Entertainment in Chorzów prepared tango dancing lessons, which were given by ballet dancers, Silesian Opera gave classical singing lessons, stage movement tutorials, instrument playing, sculpting, and painting instructions.
Gliwicki Music Theatre prepared Nocturnes by Chopin, performed by the Silesian Quartet, the New Theatre from Zabrze – the second part of Forefathers by Adam Mickiewicz, and Theatre of Zagłębie gave an erotic performance The Art of Love, a scene for adults.

The event was well organized – during the Metropolitan Theatre Nights viewers could commute between performance locations using free buses specially prepared for this occasion. According to organizers of the event, the popularity of the festival exceeded all expectations, reflecting society’s desire to participate actively in the culture of the region, and thus drawing attention to the need to initiate such projects periodically.

In conclusion, we must remark that modern methods of promotion, which make use of the whole potential of the region, are the driving force for development, but also a part of integration of the region inhabitants. It is a factor, which forms the basic link in building their attitudes and allows for an even stronger identification with the local cultural heritage.

References

Books and articles
Internet sources
CONTESTING COOL:
ALTERNATIVE AND MAINSTREAM REPRESENTATIONS
OF BELMONT STREET (ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND)

Introduction

What makes a particular area or place “cool” or distinctive has been a concern of urban sociology, for some time. Early sociologists in The Chicago School (Bulmer, 1986), for example, noted that different quarters of a city give rise to different experiences, while the German urban commentaries of Simmel (1972) and Benjamin (2008) attempted to uncover just what was it about both the mental and cultural life of a city that gave rise to the, in Benjamin’s work, aura that differentiated one place from another. The recent (but perhaps controversial) work of Florida (2003), has reignited this interest in the distinctiveness of location in his “creative class” thesis, which advances that even in the fluidity of the modern global and networked economy, economic success is dependent on a certain urban characteristics and aesthetics required by the innovative and entrepreneurial in order to both attract them to live in a location and to fuel creativity.

The rationale for the chapter is to take a sociological snapshot of the Belmont Street area of Aberdeen in order to explore the various processes and tensions that have given shape to its current profile, and distinctiveness. To do so, we interrogate various processes and mechanisms that can give rise to an area exhibiting distinct characteristics that allow that area to be perceived as being cool. The first process under inspection is the historical development of the area, and how various events and wider social processes shaped and influenced the development of the built environment, before moving to issues of production and expression of distinction, and finally to how an area is infused with cosmopolitan attitudes and cultures. What we ultimately identify in this chapter is a familiar process of an area changing use after following into disuse and disrepair, before being redefined and reordered as an “alternative” space, but then being further reordered by the extension of “mainstream” commercial enterprises. What is at stake and of concern here is how public space is
created and ordered by various different social agents, and how that space is then in turn constructed and interpreted by users of that space.

We begin our snapshot with a brief historical sketch of Belmont Street, which centres on how the built aesthetic of the area developed, particularly with its mix of former merchant houses and former church buildings. Attention then moves to exploring the key historical transformation of the area, from that of a religious hub of Aberdeen to a ludic area and site of alternative sub-cultures. The next section centres on the insights of urbanists Benjamin and Jacob on the various elements that contribute to an urban area gaining an individual and unique profile, before focussing in the final section on the cosmopolitan character of the area.

A description of Belmont Street

Before detailing Belmont Street it would be useful to briefly capture the city of which it is a part. Aberdeen is a medium-sized city (population of c. 250,000) in the north-east of Scotland, and, despite what could be perceived as its relative geographical isolation, is a prosperous, and in many respects wealthy, place due to it being the centre of the UK energy industry, courtesy of the substantial oil reserves situated off the city’s coast. Aberdeen’s one overall distinctive physical feature is the material that most of the older buildings in the city-centre are extensively built from granite and this building material does give it a sense of uniqueness, difference or its own particular “aura”. It is often referred to as the granite or “silver” city, as Groom noted in his 1903 description of Aberdeen:

[the] principle modern streets are so clean, so massive, so uniformly surfaced, and reflect the light so clearly from the glittering mica of the granite, as to look, on a sunny day, as if they had just been hewn and polished from the rocks on which they stand (cited in: Adams, 1978, p. 80).

The same is true for the redeveloped Belmont Street of today. Buildings are almost exclusively granite, and a regeneration project (in 2001) introduced Caithness sandstone pavements and granite cobbled carriageways providing a unique aesthetic. During the day, and through the subtle amenity lighting at night, the street does have its own particular aura.

Belmont Street is not as the name implies just one street. It refers to a small tight-packed collection of streets running longitudinally between Union Street Gardens, an almost perfectly preserved Victorian municipal garden, and the medieval in origin churchyard of The Kirk of St Nicholas. The name Belmont Street (being the main street, but also comprising of Little Belmont Street, Gaelic Lane and Back Wynd) functions as a shorthand reference for the whole area. Belmont Street is flanked by Union Street at one end and Schoolhill at the other (consisting of the Aberdeen Art Gallery, Robert Gordon School and The Robert Gordon Student Union). With this
particular cultural and spatial arrangement, Belmont Street shares much in common with other urban spaces that are designated or understood to be distinctive urban quarters; obvious comparisons would be with Dublin’s Temple Bar and the North Laines in Brighton.

Belmont Street was initially designed and built in the Georgian period by architects John Smith (1781–1852) and Archibald Simpson (1790–1847) and as far back as the mid-1800s was described as a “fashionable district” (Adams, 1978). Some of the earliest buildings on Belmont Street were high-status merchant houses, three of which remain there today. The other influence on the built aspect of Belmont Street was that for much of its history Belmont Street has functioned as a religious hub of Aberdeen. There were historically three churches in this area, hence another name for this area being “The Triple Kirks” (“The Three Churches”). The amount of churches in such close proximity to each other is due to the particular and fragmentary path taken by Scottish Protestantism. Unlike Catholic countries where the only church permitted in an area would be a Catholic church, the main Christian religion in Scotland is the protestant faith, but it is a faith that is marked by various schisms, splits, and denominations. The main causes of the various ructions within the Scottish church centre on the legitimacy of the decisions taken at the 1732 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Space and context forbid a fuller elaboration of the complex history of the Scottish church, but for our purposes all that needs to be known is that different versions of the Protestant faith exist in Scotland, that differ by degrees of evangelism, austerity, and adherence to Calvinist doctrine.

Over time, and due to changes in religious observation, Belmont Street did not become disused or run-down but was definitely underused, given its central location. It is in the 1980s that the first steps were taken into making Belmont Street an alternative or independent area. The three large churches were deconsecrated and not in use, the old Victorian Aberdeen academy building that took up the east of the street was also not used. The other buildings in Belmont Street housed a social work drop-in centre, a carers’ centre, a works club for the national telephone company and two craft shops. The overall culture of the area started to change with the arrival of an independent café called The Wild Boar, the relocation of Aberdeen’s only independent record shop 1Up, and the opening of Café Drummond, a live music venue through the late eighties and into the early nineties. It was Café Drummond (or Drummonds as it is more commonly called) that contributed most to this change. Initially a failed attempt at a chic European-style brassiere, the venue became a location for local indie bands, dance DJs, and the occasional larger indie band on a national tour. It had all the characteristics of an alternative venue, with a distinctive cultural capital apparent in the mix of aesthetic styles of its regulars: student indie-kids, old-school punks, psychobillys, grungers and goths.

The most recent change to Belmont Street came in 2000/2001 when the Aberdeen City Centre Partnership (ACCP), as part of a streetscape regeneration project,
pledged to redevelop the area. The intention of the redevelopment was to raise the profile of the Belmont street area because it was not performing as well in the property market as its prime location would suggest. Improving the general environment of the area and creating an area in which to hold events was hoped to improve existing retail quality and increase footfall. The pavements were reconstructed from Caithness sandstone and the carriageways redesigned using smooth granite setts. New amenity street lighting and public art were introduced. The total cost of the project was £935,000 with £420,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, £245,000 from Scottish Enterprise Grampian, and £270,000 from Aberdeen City Council (Scottish Executive, 2001). The area was nominated to the Scottish Awards in Quality and Planning in 2001 as “...a fine example of the pro-active approach taken by the Planning Department in using high quality planning skills in a market-orientated approach to regeneration” (Scottish Executive, 2001).

The historical development, to sum, has resulted in Belmont Street exhibiting a distinctive built-aesthetic consisting of a mix of grand merchant houses, sizable church buildings all located in a tight-pack of streets. Occupying those buildings are a range of alternative outlets, such as coffee shops, record stores and music venues.

Table 1. An indicative list of shops, their purpose and ownership status on Belmont Street.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shop</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Ownership status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Carers’ Centre</td>
<td>Charity resource office</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drummonds’</td>
<td>Music venue and live bar</td>
<td>Chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan’</td>
<td>Bagel and coffee shop</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 UP</td>
<td>Music store</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cavern</td>
<td>Vinyl record specialists</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books and Beans</td>
<td>Coffee shop</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilau</td>
<td>Coffee shop</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Coffee Shop</td>
<td>Coffee shop</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paldino’s</td>
<td>Italian restaurant</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Priori</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siberia</td>
<td>Pub/ club</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolution</td>
<td>Bar</td>
<td>Chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lizzars</td>
<td>Optician</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniper</td>
<td>Art shop</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Mountain Cafe</td>
<td>Cafe</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pizza Express</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slain’s Castle</td>
<td>Pub</td>
<td>Chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogshead</td>
<td>Pub</td>
<td>Chain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The historical tension: Sacral to secular space, and the creation of the built environment

In his meditations on the urban, Lefebvre (1991) highlighted the necessity of comprehending history in shaping both representations of an area and its particular built aesthetics. Being resolutely dialectical in his approach Lefebvre noted that the motor of change and development is contradiction between various elements and it is through the reconciliations of and tensions between contradictions that the idiosyncratic character and profile of a place emerges. A similar importance to dialectical historical contradictions is also posed by fellow metromarxist Berman (1988) in his urban sociology, where urban space is energized and given its vigour by the interplay of opposing currents implicit within the same urban totality. A historical dynamism is also firmly part of the urban dialectic, with space open to constant change and development. It is therefore more useful to regard any space as just a moment in its existence, but a moment infused with the history of the past and the tensions of the present that will give rise to what that space could be in the future.

The historical transition from sacral space to secular space presents one of the most interesting tensions and contradictions existing in Belmont Street, providing the quarter with some of its dynamism and a means of aesthetic differentiation within the wider city. As previously discussed, Belmont Street was once a hub of religious activity within 19th century Aberdeen. The physical memory of this period is maintained in the three church buildings that provide the main built aesthetic of the area. With the decline of religion, in its mainstream form, the congregations of the churches dwindled, resulting in the buildings becoming abandoned and finally being deconsecrated from the early 1980s onwards. With the renovation of the street in the mid-1980s onwards led by the opening of alternative and independent businesses, the area became increasingly attractive as a leisure space. What the now vacant church buildings offered were essentially large buildings comprising mainly of empty space that could be adapted to a new purpose. That new purpose was for bars and nightclubs. On an instrumental level this development is fairly logical and non-problematic – “here is an empty space, let us find a new purpose for it”. On a deeper symbolic level, however, it speaks to a fundamental reordering of space and social relationships. As the historical evidence indicates during the earlier religious moment of Belmont Street the space was highly used, indicating the strong Presbyterian traditions of the North East of Scotland. Thus, at the cities heart was a powerful symbolic space physically proclaiming that heritage. It also acted as an
organizing principle for the built construction of Aberdeen, with the city radiating out of a religious core. A point worth highlighting even more given that the street abuts the Kirk of St. Nicholas cathedral, a church that can trace its history back to the 8th century, and that has been host to a variety of different versions of Christianity: Celtic Christianity, Catholicism, and latterly Scottish Protestantism.

As mentioned earlier, space is best understood as unfolding as dynamic moments over time with change being its only constant feature. The various secularizing impulses of modernity have brought about considerable changes in the Belmont Street area. The 2001 census identified that Aberdeen was the least religious place in Scotland with 42.43% of respondents claiming to have no religious affiliation (The Register General, 2001). What is notable is just how quickly the area’s religious nature has changed in a relatively short period, from being reasonably buoyant at the turn of the 20th century to being zero in the recent period. This trend does concur with recent work by Bruce and Glendinning (2010), who identify the historical arc of secularization taking firm hold during the Edwardian period (1901–1910) and picking up pace through the 1950s and 1960s. One notable reason for this decline they contend is the decline of intra-familial transmission of religious practices.

The main points of the above commentary are captured in this contemporary account of one of the churches, South Parish Church (which is now Slains Castle pub) on Belmont Street from 1909. The extract below speaks of a dialectical moment when the church was still well attended, but various secularizing processes (in this case, increasing urbanism and intra-familial change) were beginning to undermine the church’s status and size:

The membership of South Parish Church to-day is close upon 1000, and it is a thoroughly representative one. The rise of extension charges in the suburbs has, however, to some extent affected not only the size, but also the personnel of the congregation. It is found to be very difficult to retain families living in the outskirts of the city, and especially the younger members who do not feel the binding influence of long association with the parish which helped preserve the loyalty of their fathers (Gammie, 1909, p.72).

The grand historical shift towards a more secular society has resulted in a series of contradictions for the Belmont Street area. The area was historically built to be a religious centre but now acts as centre of alternative and counter-cultural entertainment, but one that is played out in a religious shell of deconsecrated churches and other religious buildings. What could be argued here while adopting the perspectives of Lefebvre is the restlessness of space and how it is transformed over time, but also, as the next section begins to discuss, in a capitalist society all space is open to commodification and being subsumed into the wider nexus of capital valorisation.
Reconstructions of distinction, diversity, and authenticity

The rationale of this piece is to investigate the tensions between diverse alternative and homogenised mainstream interpretations of the Belmont Street Area, a rational that asks the following question: “So what does enable diversity in urban environment?”. Jacobs (1961, p. 7) brings to the fore the importance of authenticity and diversity for the built environment and the lived experience of the modern city, and she notes four “generators of diversity”.

1. The need for mixed primary uses. This is the presence of people who use services as a primary function, this brings people to a place in the first instance (i.e. they work or live there). Jacobs likens this to a “ballet” in reference to the hustle and bustle on the street. Diversity needs people spread throughout the day, be they residents, workers, tourists or consumers of leisure with a balance between services proportionate to needs for the daytime working population and facilities for shopping, restaurants, and entertainment in the evenings and weekends. This mix on the street provides a condition for “secondary diversity” to grow on the back of the primary use thus stimulating the economy.

2. The need for small blocks. This is the need for small streets, the very possibility to walk down a street instead walking down an isolated, long street where there is no fluidity. The opportunity to take different routes gives people a chance of experimentation making creative “pools of use” and this intricacy is necessary to support urban diversity.

3. The need for aged buildings. There is a need for a mix between the old, the new, the elaborate and the ordinary. New construction is high cost so this automatically limits occupation to those businesses who can afford them through either high subsidies or high profit (i.e. chain stores, chain restaurants, banks), whereas independent and creative style businesses (book stores, coffee houses, neighbourhood bars etc.) typically inhabit old buildings. This provides a condition for both primary use and secondary diversity.

4. The need for concentration. In Jacobs view, a high density of residents (without overcrowding) in an area creates vibrancy and diversity through efficient land use, creating an environment for people to interact and the possibility of discovering something new, curious or different.

If one were to “tick the above boxes”, then the Belmont Street area would emerge, superficially at least, as an area of diversity. It possesses the hustle and bustle of differential use during the day and night, with different flows of people using the space for different activities across the day and the week. The space that it occupies is the classic tight grid akin to the streets around the Grey Horse Inn in Greenwich village where Jacobs formulated her ideas on the urban, with the built environment of Belmont Street figured entirely of old buildings (some nearly 300 years old), constructed out of the signature grey granite of Aberdeen city. Perhaps on the final point...
Belmont Street is a little weak, with the area lacking any real residential density, with only a few residential flats above the ground-floor shops.

On first inspection, the Belmont Street area matches Jacobs’ criteria on the elements that make a space diverse, distinct, and authentic. Exploring a little deeper however, a more complex and contradictory situation exists. Urban areas never exist in stasis, with the historical clock frozen at some convenient time, and the dynamics of urban space are beginning to influence and reorder Belmont Street. As with other areas that provide a distinctive urban form comprising of independent and small-scale shops, Belmont Street has become attractive to mainstream commercial operations. Klein (2000) has noted this colonizing impulse of contemporary capitalism in her wider critique of multinational organizations. Such companies actively seek out street-fashion and underground trends in order to co-opt and reorder them as a commercial product. Boltanski and Chapiello (2007) have also discussed parallel process existing in the business field with capital absorbing sixties counter-culturalism (job mobility, personal freedom, not being bound into tradition) into mainstream business practices. Cultural commentators such as Frank (2009) and McGuigan (2009) have also identified this move within capitalism of the rapid absorption of cool into the circuits of production and surplus value. Frank (2009, p. 4) refers to the performance of being cool and “hip” as “the cultural mode of the corporate moment”, where to be a prime consumer is to practice and perform anti-consumerism. Examples of what McGuigan (2009) refers to as “cool capitalism”, where capitalism functions by adopting the symbols and performances of counterculture, are numerous. Iggy Pop, the wild angry muscular performer and pioneer of proto-punk, for instance, now sells online car-insurance, while former-Sex Pistol John Lydon (Johnny Rotten) now advertises butter. The idiopathic instances of the tension between the marginal and the mainstream evident in Belmont Street are perhaps just another indication of a wider trend within contemporary capitalism and society.

What such a colonisation of the cool by the mainstream does achieve, however, is to nullify the original cool, thereby negating the original quality of the phenomena that it sought to absorb in order to add that quality to its own product. There is a form of alienation at play here. An object (in this case something that can be regarded as cool) is objectified into the outside world as an expression of individual or group creativity, which is then lost to the wider nexus of capitalist relations. In this removal from its original context and meaning, the now alienated object becomes something beyond and other to what it was intended to be, standing in opposition to the ideas and life-narrative of the individual or group who initially created it.

The closure of Bar Sirkus in Reykjavik, Iceland, potentially provides another illustrative example of the tendency of capitalism to wither what it desires to be like. During the 1990s and early 2000s Iceland’s economy boomed partly on back of its emphasis on high interest-rate banking, but also benefited from tourism built about
the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2010) and cool generated by artists such as Bjork, Sigur Ros and the wider Icelandic music scene. It was these artists that acted a draw for tourists, central to the scene was the music venue *Bar Sirkus*, which provided a launch pad for emerging talent. The irony of which, is that the bar is scheduled to be demolished to make way for a new hotel complex being built to accommodate the tourists visiting the city to sample the vibrant culture, but yet the place at the hub of it is being removed in the process.

What is evident here is another dialectical moment whereby Belmont Street is being potentially further reordered into another form of space. This time it is one that is structured to meet the needs of larger capitalist concerns that are initially attracted to the area by its reputation in order to associate themselves with the urban cool of the area.

The result of the increasing profile of mainstream shopping outlets, as identified above, is potentially that the distinctiveness that makes the area interesting and vibrant in the first place, and which acts as a pull factor for larger commercial concerns, who wish to attach themselves to the area in order to gain “marketshare”, is lost as the larger commercial concerns replace the vernacular aesthetic and culture with a homogenized transferable aesthetic, thus rendering Belmont Street as another non-distinctive urban area. Extra bite is given to this trend by two other processes occurring within Aberdeen. The main shopping area of Union Street has lost all of its vernacular stores, the most notable of which was Esslemont and Mackintosh, which had been a familiar local store in Aberdeen for several generations and now lies empty. Familiar big-name brand stores, common across all of Britain’s towns and cities, currently occupy just about all of the mile-long Union Street.

The loss of distinctive and local shops in Aberdeen as a whole elides with a wider trend in the whole of the UK: the reordering of idiopathic space into what the independent think-tank New Economics Foundation (NEF) (2005) have termed “clone towns”, where all British high streets offer exactly the same range of stores. Such a development presents several dangers according to the NEF. First, the displacement of local shops damages the local economy with only a partial amount of the profits being made by retail chains flowing back into the local community. Second, local shops are much more than simply retail units. They are part of a matrix of resources and places that give rise to community and a sense of place and belonging. Removal of such shops can therefore damage the fabric of a local community. Third, the aesthetic appearance of a place becomes homogenized, with the same colours, logos and so forth present in every town.

In the wider sociological literature authentic experience is contrasted to that which is commercially created. It is in opposition to modernity in the sense that cold, logical, bureaucratic rationalisation is incorporated into capitalism to create areas that may seem authentic and creative yet are bland, uniform, and homogenised. This trend of the increasing and negative effects of rationalisation is exemplified by the crux of Ritzer’s (2010) argument, i.e. the extent to which society has become
“McDonaldised”. Various aspects of life, from birth to death, have become open to being bureaucratised and rationalised (in the Weberian sense) and inevitably leads to disenchanted and dehumanised living in an “iron cage of McDonaldisation” (Ritzer, 2000). Ritzer cites the McDonalds fast food chain as the epitome of bureaucratic rationalisation and Western market economies, by seeking profit through predictable, efficient, calculable and controlled means. There may be advantages to rationalisation such as: the greater availability of goods and services that are less dependent on time and geographical location, convenience, uniform quality, providing economical alternatives, and the easier diffusion of culture. However, this ultimately denies human reason and reduces the human experience to a form of assembly line living highlighting the “irrationality of rationality” (Ritzer, 2000). Therefore, authentic experience can be challenged or negatively influenced by the increasing McDonaldisation of society.

Benjamin’s (2008) ideas surrounding art in the age of mechanical reproduction are useful for conceptualising authenticity. Technological advances, he argues, have reached a point that allows art to be mechanically reproduced. On one hand, reproduction emancipates art from its traditional ritualistic use, but on the other, this very same process depriv-es art from its own context and unique meaning (Savage, Warde, Ward, 2002). Reproduction also reduces the authenticity of a work of art because all that has made it authentic in the first place, its “aura”: its physical link to a specific space and time in history, the very essence that makes it unique, has been removed."

“Aura” can be nebulous concept at the best of times and is in certain respects better characterised than defined. In this vein, the concept of aura bears relevance for the lived experience in the city. Cities can be characterised as works of art on a grand scale, as objectifications of human ingenuity and creativity. Yet, they differ from standard works of art (such as sculpture or painting) as they are not temporally fixed and linked to a particular period of artistic endeavour – a Renaissance work of art, such as Michelangelo’s David, will always be a Renaissance work of art. Cities are continually constructed and reconstructed, a point raised by Berman in his account of what makes New York a distinctive urban environment. The consequence of this dynamic flux and flow through time is that cities generate their own unique auras that render them distinct from other cities.

Chain outlets like McDonalds, Starbucks or Gap represent mechanical reproduction of space, but this time on a global scale, while each brand is perhaps unique, their built structures and cultural practices are homogenous. The effect of situating what could be termed “reproduced space” into the dynamic flux of urban aura is a deadening one, where the unique gives way to the similar, and the flow of vernacular development is upset by the interjecting presence of a global capitalist narrative; a section of idiopathic space is therefore colonised by reproduced space, which imprints on it not only its own replicated aesthetic but promotes similar cultural practices to wherever it, quite literally, sets up shop. As a mechanically re-
produced cultural entity the chain outlets represent the antithesis of creativity and authenticity, with the potential to depreciate the aura of the place in which they are and the other places they exist. Big Mac's are the same the world over; Starbucks coffee tastes the same wherever it is consumed; Gap jeans are the same in Aberdeen and New York.

The development sketched out above, of alternative independent businesses giving way to more mainstream concerns, may not however come to pass as other elements and tensions come into play. The Academy shopping centre (tucked into a former derelict area between Belmont Street and Back Wynd provides an example of the transformation of Belmont Street into a more conventional and mainstream shopping area. In the current economic climate, however, it contains many unlit and empty retail units. The effect that the credit crunch is having on the British high street (see Yuill, 2009) may exert a countervailing tendency to the “mainstreaming” of the Belmont Street area. It could be that the empty locations and spaces become occupied not by the mainstream retailers the centre hoped to attract but by independents or, as occurred on a one-off occasion, the space becomes adapted to showcasing local artists. Referring back to Lefebvre's dialectical contentions of urban space, this lack of certainty in the future is one of the interesting aspects of the dialectic, how a contradiction or tension is resolved, and which moment and element leads that resolution is nearly always impossible to predict.

**In Summary**

Belmont Street, it can be argued, represents an ambiguous space in many ways. The Belmont Street area does many things well in relation to creating an exemplary diverse and cool area, with its distinctive layout and the number of independent and alternative businesses, but falls short in many other respects. It possess the requisite street layout, heritage buildings and independent shops and outlets, but at the same time the space is becoming less alternative and increasingly occupied by the larger chain stores and companies. The main reason we identified was a tendency in modern capitalism (whether you wish to characterise this as late or post-modern capitalism) to create surplus value by absorbing and commodifying cultures and modalities that lay outside the prevue of large-scale capitalist concerns.

Then again, taking a cue once more from Lefebvre, the constant change and re-organising of urban space should come as no surprise. Nothing is static and the various powers, tensions, and contradictions that emerge within a given totality produce change. Capitalism as an economic system in order to survive must continually seek out new profit, if it does not do so, then it is in trouble. Creating value by appropriating styles and spaces that lay not quite outside its control but are what Shields (1992) may term “marginal areas” is one way by which capital realises that need.
References


PART 2

INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN URBAN AND RURAL CONTEXTS

Home-building and place-making are important parts of community formation. If the home is a place to go out from into the wider society, it is also a place to return to for protection from discrimination and violence. [...] Minority communities were the springboard not only for the individual mobility, but also for movements for emancipation and equality.

Identity of the contemporary man is characterized as both multidimensional and multiappearental with its immanent feature recognized as a tendency for self-actualization (Rogers, 2002, p. 129). Therefore, important role in the process of creation of the individual's phenomenological field (Pervin, John, 2002, p. 174) is played by significant places and corresponding spaces characterised by specific (according to M. Bassand) aspects, such as:

- space – earth forms and re-shapes under the influence of physical, ecological, and biological factors; and those resources necessary for human life became an object of rivalry and conflicts.
- space – a carrier; it develops an extra-local character as a result of perfecting the means of communication and transport, however, it does not lose its importance despite delocalisation and expansion of the human activity on a nationwide or worldwide scale.
- space – constituting an obstacle in communication and exchange; this type of space exists to an extent in which technical means of communication and transport fail to eliminate barriers obstructing interactions between separated units (for example city – country).
- space – a symbol (sign) or acquired space, which is transformed by various groups related to it, in accordance with their expectations, but which also pressures those groups to apply certain practices. Therefore, places along with spaces generated by them always belong to someone, as noticed by M. Halbwachs: “(...) each aspect, each detail of this place has its own meaning which is only intelligible to the group members” (Jałowiecki, 2010, p. 23).

Each emphasised aspect of space generates self-specific content, which in essence belong to different systems and practices, which in turn create spaces of the epistemological, ontological, and acsiotic human experience, as well as ground for educational practices.

Among multitude of places special attention should be devoted to city, which – according to J. Grębowiec – can be characterised by specific spatial articulation, which seems to be a natural outcome of distant and contemporary socio-economical
transformations (Grębowiec, 2008, p. 26). We should also emphasise, as does the author, is not only practically-oriented – thus a form geared for satisfying expectations and needs of the inhabitants – but it is also (which is vital) a symbolic space introducing values characteristic for the inhabitants of cities, for it results from the real existence encompassing rationalised patterns of behaviour as well as phenomena that do not fit into, more or less comprehensive, typologies of the city-forming factors (Grębowiec, 2008, pp. 29–31). Therefore city “(...) in its nature arises from contradictions and intensifies those contradictions. It is a common phenomenon, but also an individualised one – just like human being, ethnical, and cultural communities” (Grębowiec, 2008, pp. 29–31). Therefore, it constitutes a material and symbolic exemplification of senses and meanings conditioning the existence and development of its inhabitants. “In the architectural space, in the world of details, ornaments, and inscriptions there are hidden contents that originate beyond everyday chase after the essentials. They allow us to look at the city that endures and evolves at the same time, to familiarise ourselves with tradition as they encourage detailed observation making each inhabitant a potential recipient and interpreter of those fascinating signs. In this way, the quality of life in the city is co-created also by its ‘stone landscape’” (Grębowiec, 2008, p. 48).

Is there thus a more convenient place than a city in which we can find such an accumulation of heritage of the past, present accomplishments, and all sorts of expectations (social, cultural, political, economic, and civilizational in general)? It is precisely a city that creates those specific educational possibilities, as it is conducive to direct contact with symbolic matter, which is a base for forming social bonds, creating the culture of the community, meeting on the contact point of cultures or environmental integration. And so appear the important goals of education embodied in the spaces of the city at the beginning of the new century.

References
Spelling out the urban space. How does a town (de)stabilize personal relationships?

Urban space – a new “player” on the stage

Contemporary science still has many lands to discover. This statement is a truism, which can expose an author to ridicule of someone who tries to preach to the converted. On the other hand, it is a very important statement in the contemporary world – a statement with a significant meaning.

The scientific pedagogy – of which I feel a representative – having education as the main subject of its research, for decades let academics conduct research at strictly set areas with the use of precisely described (suggested?) methods. Any other attempt to cross out the frames and borders – which were obligatory, approved, legitimized by the academic achievements of the great representatives – was doomed to failure from the start and prone to accusation of being not scientific.

However, this has changed. Today pedagogy, similarly to any other humanistic field of study, goes beyond widely held frames and patterns. It goes beyond well-known research areas. In ontological, epistemological, and methodological dimension it opens itself for something new and unknown to date.

The understanding of term “education” – which is the subject of scientific pedagogical research – has been broadened. Extended is also consent for research exploration of not only formal education (expressed within the frames of specific national educational system) but also the area of learning understood as informal activity “buckled down” into everyday life (Niżnowska, 2003). This peculiar kind of “revolution” in thinking about science, about what can be done and what cannot, about the way it should be done, has its multiple sources. It is difficult to point out which reason is this primal one, this “First Cause”. It is also very hard to unambiguously build the hierarchy of the reasons. However, one thing is certain – to the great extent, postmodernism has contributed to it. In contemporary humanities, it is hard to find a notion, which is more hazy, ambiguous, and ambivalent. And simultaneously, what is of course in some sense paradoxical, it is hard to find a notion which is more useful to widen understanding of different phenomena of everyday life concerning human existence. In the introduction of this paper, I would like to stress that a word “postmodernism” will be a key word for me – the key, which I want to use in two dimensions. On one hand, postmodernism incorporates different phenomena which
we, people of XXI century – regardless of a place which (only for a while, indeed we all are tourists or/and vagabonds and constant change of a place is the only one lasting element of game called life (Bauman, 2001)) we take on the Earth – face with. So postmodernity it is a key notion, which is a descriptor of everyday. On the other hand, postmodernity it is a key notion describing the research and methodological perspective taken in this paper.

In the first sentence of this paper, I have hazarded a guess cliché that modern science still has many areas to discover. In that light a researcher is a traveller that ventures deep into the unknown areas, feels excitement when entering areas where nobody has been before him/her or only a few ones have put their feet on, in a symbolic way. New research areas, new problems, questions not asked yet turn up in the front of the researcher who is avid for knowledge (and adventures). These new lands are issues, which were totally passed over or marginalized in the past scientific endeavours. Now they become rightful participants of “social game”.

Human life has always taken place somewhere. Space has played a role of no small importance in shaping human destiny. A man as a representative of the human species, most often faced the powers of nature, which he/she had to overcome to settle. Space of man’s life was a space hard-won during the struggle with nature. It was a space torn out in a fierce fight. For a millennium, a man has been settling space called country/rural, and this kind of space was the main type settled by mankind.

The Industrial Revolution – first symptoms of which could be observed in XVI century (Toffler, 1997) and which lasted about three hundred years (of course in different parts of the globe it looked differently) – started the irreversible process called urbanization. The great waves of migrations began. As a result of these waves the village’s population started to move to the cities on a large scale. The cities grew and swelled. It was the beginning of huge agglomerations, which now gather a few or even a dozen or so millions of people. The city, as life space, started to be an important player on the stage of human existence. Since it happened, since as the result of many complicated and overlapping processes a town became the main life space for a man, it is obvious that science had to notice such phenomenon. Moreover, scientific circle made town space one of the subjects of its research interest. Anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and representatives of many others disciplines of science have “entered towns” as areas, which were worthy of academic examination. At the same time, what should be clearly emphasized, the same researchers were both objective observers of everything that happened in the cities and subjective participants immersed in the centre of events. The town became a dynamic, active, and rightful participant of processes and phenomena, which can be called human existence – in an individual, group, and collective dimension. The specialists – who scientifically consider communication a process of symbolic exchange of meanings between its participants – in unison assert that town space plays in this process a role of active catalyst.
Town space constantly communicates with its inhabitants. Continually sends to its receivers – those temporary and permanent ones – different kinds of announcements. The problem could be, as it seems, both the skill of encoding and necessity of taking such an effort.

A man is a social being (Aronson, 2009). This sentence, which seems to be trivial, leads to conclusions, that satisfying interpersonal relations, strong and frequent social bonds of different kinds are indispensable elements of proper growing of an individual in the world and proper functioning within it. In the rural world – meaning small, integrated community settling given territory with the deeply rooted world of values, customs, beliefs, and convictions – an individual was naturally settled into dense network of bonds with other representatives of his/her community. The whole community took part in the process of socialization. Separate members of the community had the right to interfere actively in person's life. In the natural way, the relatives were taking over the parents' duties during their shorter or longer absence. The industrial revolution, which the town is a fruit of, has torn the whole generations out of well-known network of personal bonds and has thrown them into peculiar “black hole” where there were hardly any relations.

Nowadays, as a result of many interacting processes and phenomena, the world of interpersonal bonds was weakened and sometimes simply disappeared. Circumstances, the pace of life, hierarchy of values make caring about relationships with the other people less important. The bonds recede into the background.

However, a man still is a social being. He/she fulfils himself/herself in contacts and through contacts with others. Nowadays more problems and inconvenience must be overwhelmed to take care about relations, to initiate and build them. Interpersonal bonds, which are necessary for a person to function properly, belong to different groups.

Among the relations essential for proper functioning some authors (cf. Sumbadze, 1999; Stevens, 2001; Stevens, van Tilburg, 2000; Levis, 1993) list friendship. It is the relation, which is difficult to be unambiguously defined, because it functions at the junction of a few academic disciplines. Therefore, it is a “border relation”, as I have named it in my other paper (Siuta, 2011). However, it does not mean that friendship cannot be defined.

In the doctoral thesis devoted to this issue (The experience of friendship in the context of lifelong learning theory, 2008, Faculty of Historical and Pedagogical Sciences at Wroclaw University) I included a definition, which emphasizes both emotional and willpower nature of friendship, as well as loyalty and faithfulness at times of trouble, which are the basic features of this uniquely human bond.

Within the sociological perspective, friendship could be seen as some social process. Therefore, town space is on one hand the background of this process, however on the other hand it is the element, which actively interferes in its course. The town gives dynamism to friendship. Encourages or discourages. Enables or hinders. Promotes or deprecates.
On one hand, we expect from the town something that could be called “positive urbanization” (Karwińska, 2004). It is appropriate life dynamics, offering educational chances, career enabling, and making culture more accessible. On the other hand, the town should be “rural” in some sense – meaning familiar, local, giving sense of safety or making the contact with the others and nature easier. “Localness” of town space seems to promote friendship and encourage it. As it is shown in my other paper (Siuta, 2011) the green lands, natural areas of agglomeration unite people in one kind of friendship. It is a friendship in a male style (about female and male style of friendship see: Siuta, 2004, pp. 56–69).

Therefore, town space assumes anthropomorphic features because it possesses an ability to enable or/hinder interpersonal contacts. Such an anthropomorphization should not, therefore, deceive and arouse blissful belief that “somebody else” is responsible for the role of the city at initiating, strengthening, deepening, or weakening and destabilizing the social relations. People are always responsible for the results. Those who plan, build, extend, knock down, transform the town and steward it. Moreover, although it can be said the town (de)stabilizes the bonds, it must always be remembered that it is done by people responsible for the different dimensions of its functioning.

Therefore, the city – which creates favourable conditions for interpersonal contacts or hinders them – is built by the planners, urban planners, architects, developers, builders, politicians, local authorities. Here the problem of shifting responsibility comes up again. In the first case, the responsibility was transferred from people to the town. It was done by the phenomenon of anthropomorphization. In the second case, the responsibility for the town’s shape and its influence on individual’s functioning in relationships with others is transferred from people in general to public personas or those ones who fulfil agglomerative functions, for example the Chief Town Architect or the Chief Town Groundsman.

Nevertheless, the role of ordinary citizens, normal participants of social life is not smaller at all. The man’s subjectivity expresses itself also (and maybe above all) in conviction that he/she has real and deep influence on everything that is happening in life. The deterministic belief is inherently connected with objective attitude.

At this moment, of course, the unavoidable clash of two assumptions, which are the base of this paper, takes place. Yes, it is a truth that town significantly influences the form of interpersonal bonds. It affects positively – stabilizing or negatively – destabilizing. However, simultaneously such a statement is also true – regardless of circumstances, ultimately the decision about form, number, kind of contacts with other people is made by the subject of social interactions himself/herself.

What I propose as the linking bridge at meta-level is the conviction, which could be called “determined indeterminism”. Circumstance, situations, surroundings affect people, and very often play an essential role at shaping our fate. However, the subject is always above them. The subject is limited in his/hers corporeality, but is also granted free will, which enables him/her to take independent decisions.
Contemporary town space, especially the one in big cities, metropolis, and agglomerations, can destabilize personal relations. These are some, chosen arbitrarily by me, model situations, in which town space influences negatively the quantity or/and quality of personal contacts that people have with each other.

Firstly, in our times we can observe alarming intensifying tendency to transfer life to shopping centres and treating such poor substitute as real life. Secondly, we can observe – dangerous in its short-lived and long-range effects – dynamically and aggressively progressing process of making personal contacts unreal and moving almost whole social life of a mankind to the Internet. It mostly takes place in towns, because the dynamic technological progress and country “internetization” is mostly carried out there. Thirdly, we can observe the tendency for basing the transport to some parts of the metropolis almost solely on private one. Finally, in contemporary democracies we can see an atrophy of agora, a public widely available place, which could support natural, spontaneous meetings and exchange of opinions.

The contemporary cities offer their inhabitants closely guarded, not opened, isolated enclaves. These enclaves take shape of fenced house estates, supervised by guards. Of course, the city also offers space, which is admittedly widely available and public, but after all, it is space of non-personal contact. In contemporary cities during everyday contacts, people do not meet each other on the level of personal emotional engagement. Instead, their mutual relations are based on non-personal contact. Contact of assumed roles, which enter short-term formal interaction based on precisely described behavioural patterns. This interaction is based on professionalism of acting: general practitioner–patient, salesman–customer, office worker–suppliant, expert–purchaser, etc. They know exactly what they should expect and what is expected of them. There are many reasons for this. One of them is that non-personal contact, based on meeting of the roles, is short-term and “condensed”, which saves time; and time in a postmodern society is a commodity in a very short supply. It is a commodity of which we always have to little, and managing it is a skill guarantying success both at work and in private life. The contact of the roles enables to pass over long-lasting, painstaking, unusually time-consuming process of contact initiation and building bonds. Except this contact based on meeting of the roles lets an individual to build up protective wall and avoid potential pain. Pain that is by contrast an inherent element of deep relations, which are built on personal contact. It is some kind of defence mechanism, which is taken by a man to avoid pain and suffering inevitably interwoven with human existence.

I think it is worthwhile to examine more deeply the four tendencies (processes) listed above, which influence the destabilization of interpersonal relations within town space.

Shopping galleries – in the hierarchy of space nowadays they are the least friendly to man, it is difficult to imagine something more hostile. They are noisy, aggressive, too lurid, irritating the senses, attacking furiously all accessible channels of perception.
In my opinion, the special attention should be paid to the phenomenon of shopping centres – spaces hostile to physiological needs of man, crowded and noisy, attacking with too many stimuli at a time. They are, however, “tamed” and “mollified” by man. It is done by giving names, which should soften their hostile nature. The term “shopping park” has a positive association connected to the original meaning of this term: “A park is a protected area, in its natural or semi-natural state, or planted, and set aside for human recreation and enjoyment, or for the protection of wildlife or natural habitats. It may consist of rocks, soil, water, flora and fauna and grass areas. Many parks are legally protected by law” (Park, encyclopaedia entry).

Similarly, a term shopping gallery appeals to association with culture (an art gallery) as something elite, upper, including incorporeal element. It can be assumed that a name “shopping gallery” is some kind of symbolic violence, which a man-consumer, a participant of the market reality, becomes a victim of. It is an attempt to persuade or rather to convince an individual-customer, who very often is governed by the herd instinct and omnipotent desire of consuming, that walking within trade spaces lets him/her to participate in something with a spiritual element in it.

However, social life of many individuals takes place there. Shopping galleries become not only the places of work or shopping but also – and very often first of all – places of leisure, fun, spending the free time. Places where you can spend almost your whole life. Moreover, although so far those spaces are rather not places where you can live, it can change soon. For a few years, the theme of combining a shopping centre with an exclusive house estate has appeared in discussions and plans of architects and developers. The isolated investments can already be found. In Poznań it is the Green Point Gallery.

The following information can be found on the website: “Green Point is a commercial and housing complex of the new generation, designed for active and dynamic people – who value convenience, prestige, and unlimited possibilities of urban style of life. A carefully chosen location, unique art of building, customized interior architecture and a wide range of facilities create a unique synergy of elements ideally suited to modern rhythms of life of tenants in Green Point” (Galeria Green Point, home site).

The Sky Tower in Wrocław will be finished soon. This investment combines shopping gallery, office block and apartments. The life of a tenants will be a streak of facilitation, because “the reception of the building will offer concierge services to tenants, while fans of active rest will have access to a sports centre. The proximity of a shopping centre and delicatessen will mean that most shopping will be done within the complex” (Skytower, home site).

Of course, both investments are sensations and exceptions, which conjured up a kind of fairy-tale world, but it does not mean that a tendency to move life to shopping galleries is not real.

Young people from secondary schools or high schools spend their free time in shopping galleries. In deafening noise and in a hurry they “build” their personal re-
lations, which are hastily put together and usually last hardly a few moments. Town in shape of next shopping gallery destabilizes personal relations, which are fragile and short-lived.

On the other hand, the progressing process of making interpersonal contacts unreal in general and moving whole social life to the Internet can be observed. Real contacts, their establishing, and supporting become too difficult, requiring too large amount of effort, time, and means.

The relations built in the Internet easily come into existence. They give the illusion of belonging to the community. In the postmodern world they let people build their identity positively – through confirmation not denying. They are the cure for shyness, and they seem to be an antidote to modern sense of loneliness and feeling of alienation.

I do not claim that relations build on the Internet and throughout the Internet are something wrong. However, more evidently appearing tendency to move all relations to network can be seen as alarming. That intermediated interpersonal contact becomes a norm. Without the telephone, computer screen, keyboard or some other technological “gadgets” people feel uncomfortable. They do not have anything to talk about, and they completely do not know how to start the conversation and how to continue it. They do not know how to build a bond. The elements of their non-verbal world are unusually poor. Slowly they lose the skill of reading somebody’s emotions on the base of changes in the voice intensity. They do not know how to read the body language.

In some extreme cases, the virtual and real worlds are totally intertwined, and people lose the skill of distinguishing one from the other. These are of course extreme cases, but it does not change the fact that the virtual world – the one created by a man by his/her power of imagination – becomes for some more important than the real one. Very often, simply, the most important world.

Not long ago, I was told the story which will serve to show this tendency. A young woman has decided to close her profile on Facebook. She has proclaimed it took up too much of her time, and creating descriptions on the profile stopped giving her pleasure. She has put a short note about it on the Internet, along with a request to those who would like to stay in touch with her to do it via e-mail. What happened next gives basis for two conclusions.

Firstly, some Internet users are losing the skill of reading with understanding. Some sent e-mails were a proof of an automatic reaction. Something like that: “you have wanted an e-mail, so you have got it, but what’s up?”.

Secondly, cancelling a profile on social web portal was by some people taken as an expression of very serious life problems (depression?). The author, who up to that moment was not a very active participant of net space, was simply “flooded” with mails with questions: “but why?”, “has anything tragic (sic!) happened in your life?”. People, who she has never met in real world or with whom she has only occasional contact, inquired about her husband and personal matters, and asked: “is everything
all right with you?”. Many of them did not hide their disapproval. Many attacked aggressively and criticized in a nasty way. Probably for some “friends” from Facebook her decision was akin to suicide. And for such an action in a Polish society, which is very attached to a value of life, there is no consent.

The bonds existing only in the virtual world disintegrate faster than real relations do. Being aware that certain relationship exists only on the Internet, makes it easier for an individual to deny responsibility. The man on the other side becomes “a friend collected on Facebook” and has no shape. Contact can be built very easily in one moment; therefore, it is easier to break the relationship up. It is easy to think about him/her as someone who has no emotions. Therefore, the withdrawal will not make him/her blue, disappointed or hurt. Building the world of virtual bonds needs an assumption that it must change dynamically.

The next process, which points at destabilizing activity of a town, is transport. In some areas of a metropolis, the only possible transport is a private one. There is no public transport to the suburbs of many big cities in the United States of America and Western Europe, and private transport effectively prevents people from starting social interactions. Contact with a stranger on a bus, train, underground or tram is replaced with contact with empty passenger’s space in one's own car. Of course, at the same time the great agglomerations – wrestling with a problem of pollution and lack of parking space – adopt a policy of strengthening and broadening of public transport. Nevertheless, the phenomenon exists. Since some places, crucial from individual's functioning point of view – most often these are huge shopping malls at the suburbs – are impossible to reach by public transport, the individual must get there by his/her own means of transport. This kind of transport is not only inadvisable for the economic reasons (ride of one person by a town transport service is a few times cheaper than by a car) or environmental ones (cars produce fumes on a large scale), but also for social reasons. In an empty car, there is no possibility of interaction, and even during a ride contact is considerably limited. Driving a car requires concentration, which limits ability to participate in intensive exchange with another person.

Finally, the last processes, which proves the destabilizing activity of a town. It is disappearance of agora. Disappearance of a promenade. Disappearance of public places of meeting, and casual atmosphere of a conversation. More often towns become to a considerable degree a “blend” of zones of limited access. To get there, and what is next, to participate in social exchange that takes place there, the borders must be crossed. And these borders are different.

Some of them are physical as, for instance, the modern housing estates surrounded by high fence, guarded, and monitored. Some are more symbolic. Entry to some places is restricted to owners of a member’s cards, what gives a sense of affiliation to the circle of chosen ones. Those deprived of the cards are stamped with an exclusion stigma.

For some social groups, for example mothers/grandmothers with little kids/grandchildren, places of establishing bonds and developing contacts at one time were
playgrounds, green squares and parks with small architecture providing fun for children. Unfortunately, more often even these places are the space of limited access, in double sense. They are more often located in the area of the closed housing estates. What is more, even inhabitants of such estates rarely show up at the playground, preferring the well-known surroundings of their own flats.

In addition, social perceiving of this way of establishing contact and approval for “talking to the strangers” have changed. Once it was an accepted behaviour, nowadays it arouses astonishment, mistrust, suspicion, or even fear. Paradoxically, taunt from the stranger on the Internet is not treated as something that requires increased vigilance.

It seems that in coping with town’s influence on destabilization of personal relations people can adopt a few strategies.

The strategy, which could be called “zero”, is repression. The problem does not exist. The person does not realise the issue of (de)stabilization of interpersonal relations and town could be the problem worthy of being examined at all. Very often, it happens because the town is not “tamed”. A town to start existing for someone subjectively must be tamed. Something, what is not seen as own, does not exist (Yi-Fu-Tuan, 1987). Yet, recognition of town space as somebody’s own, calling a town “my Wrocław” or “my Kraków”, makes the issue of potential positive or negative influence of a town on somebody’s life visible.

In such a case, it is not possible to pass over the challenges, which contemporary education must face. Maybe not only those ones in its formal aspect, partly of course it is done in this way, but surely in its non-formal and informal aspects as well. I think it is worthy to make town space and its “conversation” with a man a main subject of deliberation, consideration, and deepen reflection. It should be done to bring it to light, take it out from the oblivion, and make it the main subject of discussion, which should be present in schools, different kinds of media, citizens’ activities, and widely understood social discourse. Therefore, the main task of education is bringing the existence of communicative dimension of town space to people’s attention. In addition, a very important task is drawing attention of the participants of social games to an issue of the context of surrounding. The space where the games are played is uniquely important and must not be passed over or even “only” underestimated. In my opinion, in this case the field of activities taken by researchers is open. Especially the educators should actively participate in the process of “reality translation” (Bauman, 1998) if they want to deserve the appellation of an intellectual.

I have called repression “a zero strategy” because it is based on a belief that a problem does not exist. Precisely, there is no awareness that problem of town impact on quantity or/and quality of interpersonal relations exists at all. Meanwhile, it seems that in a situation when the problem is already identified, a person can take one of three following strategies.

The first one is denial. A person intentionally denies a town can have any real impact on quality and/or frequency of his/her contacts with others. By conscious
personal decision, an individual acknowledges that a town is “only” a passive background of social processes, not active and influencing participants of social interpersonal games.

The second strategy, which is on the opposite side of the continuum, is aware and active resistance. It expresses through active and dynamic shaping of surroundings (town space) in the way, which makes it a good environment for starting contacts and taking care for supporting such contacts. Realizing hostile influence (or rather in more anthropomorphic way, hostile acting) of some town zones the individual shapes, models, restructures, arranges the surrounding area to break down this tendency, and he/she does it consciously and unwaveringly. This engagement in active arrangement of town space can proceed on three levels – namely individual, group, and common/social.

On the level of the widest influence, which is common/social, a person who does some profession or performs functions, which give him/her such entitlements – for example town urban planner – creates space, which enables interpersonal contacts. In local plan of spatial development he/she takes into consideration parks, avenues for pedestrians, sports fields etc. At a group level, inhabitants of house estates or even block of flats seek to arrange the closest to them and dependent on their influence public space in a way, which positively affects interpersonal contacts. Alternatively, they object to such architecture elements, which could hinder the contacts. Also on the individual level, a man acting within the frames of a strategy of conscious and active resistance can undertake some activities. For example, he/she can make a decision that between own plot of land and the one belonging to a neighbour he/she will not put up two meters high concrete wall, and instead he/she will put up not a very high wooden fence or hedge, which enables a free chat.

The third of the taken strategies is a passive resistance. What distinguishes it from the second strategy is not interfering with environment (the lack of active “reshuffling” of town space), and only focusing on relations with others and taking care of them. The starting point within this strategy is strong belief of the individual that in spite of not supporting circumstances or simply hostile surrounding he/she should focus only on seeking relations without an active intervention into town space.

The presented picture will be unfair and biased, if we do not attempt to point out the positive role, which town space plays in interpersonal relations. Town space has a stabilizing effect on human relations. On one hand, it is positive impetus to initiate contact, and on the other, it allows to support such a contact.

The special role in the process of supporting an engagement in a close relationship, which is based on affection and responsibility as well as loyalty, play green spaces, small cozy restaurants, clubs, small cafes, which create an atmosphere of openness and intimacy. As I pointed out in my other paper (Siuta, 2011), a male and female style of friendship could be promoted by a town through its “arrangement”. It is similar to the situation when an arrangement downgrades or puts the style of friendship on side-lines.
The male style of friendship (Siuta, 2004) is based on common acting, on doing something together and not excluding others from the relation. The men need town’s “wild” space to strengthen close bond joining them. Natural green areas within the town borders, to a slight degree transformed by human activity, excellently become this part of town space, which stabilizes male relations based on loyalty and trust.

The female style of friendship (Siuta, 2004) is based on sharing emotions and experiences. It is engagement into an intimate story. Small clubs, cafes, restaurants with cosy design and quiet music turn out to be good places in town space, which meet women’s need for communicating deepest emotions to each other. It must be done in conditions of discretion and comfort.

The whole sphere of voluntary actions – within which space is an important player – can be acknowledged town space which enables the real contact between people and stabilization of personal relations.

Last of all, it is worthwhile to notice one more situation, in which the same space simultaneously sends the potential receivers two contradictory messages – encourages and discourages, stabilizes and destabilizes at the same time. It gives the delusion of intimacy in unusually public space. It namely concerns the specific places in shopping galleries, which are the restaurants and cafes.

In many cases, in shopping centres restaurant and café spaces are islands surrounded by traffic routes, such as corridors, passages, connecting areas, stairs, footbridges or overpasses. In this way their mostly consumer capacity and purpose is underlined. The tables are crowded together in a small and not fully isolated space – customers who pass over traffic routes very often treat tables and chairs in cafes and restaurants as the obstacles on the shortest road to the point.

On the other hand, the owners of public space tempt potential customers with the delusion of intimacy. In Grunwaldzki Passage in Wrocław – shopping centre in the heart of the city – comfortable velvet sofas and romantic small lamps on the tables, which are in the middle of artery of communication, entice with the illusion of isolation.

Sharing experiences, impressions, sensations, and feelings requires silence, concentration, atmosphere of safety and paying attention to someone who we are talking to. The nice quiet mood music can help in such a case. Meanwhile, the restaurants and cafes in shopping malls take part in breaking the basic physiological needs, serving their customers loud (too loud), vigorous, stimulating music, which is interrupted with advertising and promotion. This music, instead of being a background, becomes the main stimulus absorbing the customers’ attention.

The next element of ambiguous announcement, which is sent by space of shopping centres to its customers, who would like to treat this area as the place of personal meeting with a friend, is sound. Friendly meeting of people who share their intimate emotions or tell about their experience requires lowered voice, because it sounds more intimate and personal. Meanwhile loud background of the shopping gallery extorts louder conversation in order to be heard at all. Both partners of in-
teraction in such a situation feel it is not favourable circumstance, so they put off important intimate matters to the next meeting and start less obligating chat. Raising their voice to be heard by a interlocutor carries a risk that the subject of conversation will be heard by an unauthorized person.

The shopping centres again send contradictory (ambiguous) announcement. Placement of the tables at proximity (a borderline of far phase of intimate distance and close phase of personal distance, cf. Hall, 2003), the hubbub of voices, and too loud music send a message, mostly to women who come there (but of course not only to them), that they can freely cross the distance and stay in physical contact. At the same time approval for such kind of behaviour in our culture is comparatively low. It specially concerns men, who can have physical contact with other men (like hugging and patting on the shoulder) in public social space only in few precisely described situations. These are: taking condolence in a cemetery, taking congratulations (because of wedding or child’s birth), and some sport situations.

According to Hall (2003) the distance between friends who comfort each other or protect each other by taking into arms, hugging, cuddling can be called close phase of intimate distance. At far phase of the same distance, it means from 14 to 45 centimetres, some parts of a body like a head or a pelvis do not adjoin, but hands are able to touch (clap or stroke) the other person without the necessity of excessive leaning out to him/her.

“Coffee stops” on the map of shopping centres use furniture décor to encourage entering far phase of intimate distance. Moreover, at the same time, the space around and its arrangement do not allow to forget about the “high” public area where some behaviour, in this case too close physical contact, is not accepted.

Additionally, one fact is worth noticing. Considering culture, some areas can be distinguished in Europe. In some of them the social tolerance for direct physical contacts, which people can enter in public sphere, is bigger than in others. It seems that in South Europe personal space is definitely smaller than in a western part of the continent. Physical closeness – patting, clapping, hugging, touching, taking into arms, and staying in such a closeness for some time – have got greater public/social acceptance.

One of the features of a contemporary postmodern global society is that a man is a subject; independent human being is actually put into a side-line within it. The cult of individualism has brought the dangerous phenomenon of egocentrism.

Postmodernism has brought inter alia the sense of alienation, the loss of identity and homelessness – not in the literal but in metaphorical sense. The members of

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1 Additionally, at the same phase of intimate distance, people make love or grapple each other.
2 “The area around the body of a person or an animal, into which other people or specimen of the same species cannot barge under ordinary conditions without provoking negative reaction. In special conditions, such as crowd, sports or an intimate situation, entering the personal space does not have to cause a negative reaction” Colman (2009).
3 Very interesting point of view can be found in the collection The Anthropology of Friendship.
postmodern globalised societies have lost their identity. They get lost in the world, which is not their world any longer. The world of strange identity of eternal wanderers, searchers, shipwrecked people who do not have their own stable point of reference. A man as a social being finds his/her roots at contacts with other people and through other people. The presence of loved ones helps the migrants to find weakened or even lost identity in the new land. What helps to survive in the impersonal world are the relationships with other people. As people, we are social creatures. The presence of others is for psychological and social functioning of a man as essential as sustenance, water and air are necessary for survival on the biological level. It is a paradox that at one time people, despite the distances separating them, lived with the life-giving sense of closeness, and nowadays in the cities, which force contacts, individuals have the feeling of alienation and loneliness in a crowd.

The town causes people to grow apart by bringing them closer. Nevertheless, people as free subjects can actively stand up to this tendency and build closeness despite unfriendly circumstances.

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Books and articles


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Over the last 20 years, the Polish city of Wrocław has developed an image of a Central European “meeting point”. Indeed, many of its inhabitants share the belief that their city embodies the ideas of multiculturalism, diversity, and tolerance. Besides, the city dwellers usually trace the origins of such features of the place and its population to Wrocław’s unique past, in which the influences of Polish, Czech, German, and Jewish cultures intertwined. However, this popular belief is neither self-explanatory or obvious nor based on a simple discovery of the “true character” of the city. It needs to be analysed in terms of the consequences of social and political factors, among them a particular kind of official discourse.

Background: “urban meaning” and “sites of memory”

At the most general level, my analyses are framed by a metaphor provided by Rudy J. Koshar’s reinterpretation of the category of “urban meaning,” a notion, which was introduced by Manuel Castells in his 1983 work *The City and the Grassroots*. The two features of Castells’ notion of “urban meaning” that deserve particular attention, as they might prove useful in emphasizing socially constructed facticity of any given interpretation of a city as a cultural object, are its historicity and its conflictual character. As Castells puts it:

The historical definition of urban meaning is a conflictive one, as a result of the struggle between historical actors over the control of power, resources, space, and cultural categories... The definition of the city for each society is what historical actors struggling in such a society try to make it. This process is obviously not a purely subjective matter in terms of values desires and wishes, but is determined by the productive forces, the relationship with nature, the institutional heritage, and the social relationships of production. But at the level of the historical production of the city’s role in a society, things come down to a particular social project, or sets of alternative conflicting projects, acted by social subjects (Castells, 1983, p. 71).
Although in his approach to urban meaning Castells refers mainly to political economy and the city’s position in a web of structural and economic conditions, he does not ignore the influence of socio-cultural processes. Therefore, he also recognizes complex relations linking cultural identity and symbolic meaning with territoriality (Castells, 1983, pp. XVIII–XIX), as well as efforts of various collective actors to shape their cultural environment as important research topics.

Similarly, Koshar focuses on political culture, which leads him to examine cultural meaning attached to urban space. Furthermore, he considers this urban meaning a result of a discourse of its own kind. In this sense urban meaning, he argues, “is a form of enablement involving possible ways of talking, writing and thinking” (Koshar, 1991, p. 32). In his study of the historic preservation movement in the 20th century Germany, Koshar discusses narrative practices, with strong emphasis on figurative language, through which certain meanings are imposed on a city and its space. It brings some valuable ideas, regarding how metaphors are used to define the cultural and moral roles of the city and the importance of the interpretations of its past.

In other words, to investigate the historically changing interpretations of the city’s past is to ask, whether a city is a “site of memory”. I refer here to the widely discussed term lieu de mémoire, coined by a French historian Pierre Nora, the term that has already become fundamental to scholarly research in the rapidly growing interdisciplinary field of collective memory studies. Although the definition of the phenomenon changes throughout Nora’s seminal seven-volume work on such sites in French national culture, for the sake of this introduction, it will be enough to define “sites of memory” as a large set of symbols of various types (including, among others, places in a topographical sense, physical objects, historical events, historical personages, visual symbols, and institutions) that are exceptionally meaningful to a given community, as they remain at the very core of its collective memory, which in turn informs its identity and the way it perceives itself in a historical perspective. Lieux de mémoire are symbols particularly rich in meaning as they symbolize collective past in a concise form and represent the most fundamental values and emotions related to the history of a community (Nora, 1996, p. 14–20). Nancy Wood sums up Nora’s notion of sites of memory and their role in strengthening the collective identity:

Thus, we can say provisionally that lieux de mémoire are quintessentially symbolic (whatever form they assume), a product of human or temporal agency, and comprise the bedrock of a community’s symbolic repertoire... Across their material and ideational diversity, Nora and his researchers identify in these lieux de mémoire a common memorial function: all manage to powerfully evoke a set of civic values, which together figure the nation through the idea of “La République”, and which draw their adherents into a social collectivity (“une véritable religion civile”) united in the sanctification and defence of these values (Wood, 1994, p. 124).
Since the publication of the French edition of the first volume of Nora’s work in 1984, his basic concept has been used as an analytical tool in numerous studies conducted by historians as well as scholars representing other disciplines of humanities. But its original application and the majority of subsequent research in the field took as its main subject national memory and identity, and only occasionally referring to other types of human collectives (for example local communities) that may also develop certain forms of collective thinking in regard to the past. Nevertheless, the approach to memory it offers seems useful not only at the national level, as it is focused on such phenomena as politics of official commemoration and non-professional interpretations of the past shaped by commemorative rituals, rather than on accounts of the past written by professional historians.

Having presented some general theoretical premises, in this paper I will try to formulate some hypotheses about dominant interpretations of history of the city of Wrocław and their radical change in the course of time. I will argue that one can roughly distinguish two major periods in post-war politics of memory concerning city’s past: the first one, which I call “nationalist”, started around 1945 and ended with the fall of the communist regime; then the second, which I call “multicultural”, began and continues to this date. By naming two major forms of discourse “nationalist” and “multicultural”, I do not suggest that nationalism and multiculturalism are exclusive political ideals permeating interpretations of the past in respective periods. The purpose here was merely to signal what kind of dominant categories they introduce and how they oppose each other. The second hypothesis addresses the particular meaning of multiculturalism, which is present in the city’s auto-stereotype and in the discourse of its past. I will argue that the meaning which has been constructed in relation to history differs significantly from the notion that is usually used in social sciences and generally considered commonsensical. To illustrate the argument, I will refer to examples of documents and other texts, in which the category of multiculturalism and an interpretation of the history of Wrocław are interconnected. In the final part, I will point out possible factors that might be responsible for shaping the new version of the history of Wrocław, such as the evolution of political culture, the application of marketing logic in building the city’s image, or the collective identity issues. Thus, my aim is to investigate what kind of urban meaning has been imposed on the city or, to use Nora’s concept, what kind of site of memory it has become. The analysis presented in this paper is tentative, as a proper verification of the aforementioned hypotheses would require a detailed investigation of a huge body of historical and sociological data. Nevertheless, it can provide some insight into relationships between history and memory, political culture and city promotion.
The “nationalist” discourse of the communist era

Since the instalment of pro-soviet communist government in Poland in 1944, the status of western territories of Poland (pre-war German regions of Silesia, Pomerania, and East Prussia), including Wrocław, has been one of the most important topics of both domestic and foreign policies. On the strength of international agreements, the western Polish-German border was moved westwards to the Oder–Neisse (Odra–Nysa) line and, in consequence, an estimated number of circa 7 million Germans were expelled, soon to be replaced by Polish immigrants from central and eastern parts of the country (many of them, in turn, were forced to leave their home regions that fell under Soviet jurisdiction). In the case of Wrocław, this huge population transfer caused an unprecedented situation: new inhabitants found themselves in a gradually depopulating urban space filled with objects and symbols left by former citizens. Therefore, appropriating the space and building emotional bonds with the city was an immediate necessity. Moreover, for more than two decades, Polish authorities had to cope with a complex political problem, which was the refusal of the West Germany to recognize the border, undermining the legitimacy of the Polish rule over newly gained territories and thus causing a sense of its provisionality. The communist government put forward a number of arguments related to the issues of strategic security and economic development in order to legitimize its claim to the acquired lands. However, this would turn out to be insufficient. Therefore, Polish authorities addressed the problem of western territories by discursive means, popularizing a favourable version of the history of Wrocław and the whole region, or, as German historian Gregor Thum puts it, “mythologizing city’s history” (Thum, 2005, p. 257).

What were the distinctive features of the “nationalist” discourse and what kind of meaning it provided? Firstly, as the term “nationalist” suggests, the new narrative was built on a simple ethnic categorization: it emphasized, above all, the continuous, strong opposition between Polish and German nations and states (and their pre-modern antecessors). On the grounds of such interpretation, Wrocław was merely an object of struggle between two nations, deprived of any kind of distinctive identity (in the sense of not being related to larger ethnic or national communities). Moreover, it were Poles and their national interests that were presented as sole victims in centuries-long conflict with their perennial enemy. This somewhat biased interpretation is based on the historiosophical assumption that expansionism is an intrinsic quality of an ethnic group or a nation, and that German imperialism was continuously threatening Polish state since the Middle Ages (see: Kiwerska, 1993, p. 73). Secondly, if the figure of perennial Polish-German struggle was the basic frame of interpretation, then a large part of the city’s past which could not be easily fitted into such a frame (namely the long period when Wrocław remained under stable Habsburg, Prussian, and finally German rule) had to be marginalized or literally omitted in historical narratives. Designed by such peculiar assumptions introduced
by official propaganda, the part of the history of Wrocław, which could be employed in the construction of collective identity, was cut significantly short, as if it ended in the Middle Ages. The identity of the post-war community of Wrocław was conceived as the national identity, with the clear purpose of cultural unification and no significant reference to regional diversity or to the heritage of ethnic minorities (see: Łaska, 2006, p. 20). On the other hand, it may seem understandable, considering the fact that the new population of the city consisted of a blend of immigrants from various regions of pre-war Poland, that it was difficult for them to spontaneously constitute a homogeneous cultural community or to feel at home in a completely new environment.

A specific rhetoric repertoire was invented at the very beginning of the communist regime in Poland, as it is present in the first official documents issued by the communist party. For instance, in the Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego, the provisional government established in 1944 under Soviet auspices), the historical continuity of the Polish-German conflict is symbolized by a reference to the battle of Tannenberg, which took place in 15th century. In the same document, one can find the idea of population transfer to territories, which will be “vindicated” from Germany in the near future and will “return to the motherland” (Manifest Polskiego Komitetu Wyzwolenia Narodowego, 1944; see: Kiwerska, 1993, pp. 46–49).

There is another important philosophical premise behind the “nationalist” rhetoric: the quasi-organicist and, in some sense, ahistorical understanding of Polish national territory. According to its logic, Polish state has a permanently legitimate claim on Wrocław, the whole region of Lower Silesia, and other western territories, because those regions are parts of Polish native lands (or even, to look further back, part of Slavic native territories), which were only temporarily occupied by other states, ethnic groups or nations. New historical narratives brought a useful foundational myth and the notion of continuity, through which they strengthened the legitimacy of Polish government by what David Lowenthal described as “claims of priority” (Lowenthal, 1998, pp. 173–191). Being first implies the development of a special, permanent, quasi-organic bond with the territory in question – the bond that the rhetoric of post-war historical discourse about Wrocław’s past often emphasized. Thus, Wrocław and surrounding territories were referred to as “Recovered Territories” (Ziemie Odzyskane), which had only recently “returned to the motherland”. As the minister of recovered territories Władysław Gomułka put it in his often quoted speech in 1946, Polish immigrants came to the lands that rightfully belonged to them, lands that “were finally liberated after long centuries of enslavement” (Gomułka, 1964, p. 135; quoted after: Thum, 2005, p. 238). Paradoxically, the assumption that western regions are “naturally” Polish, the backbone of historical propaganda supervised by communist authorities whose doctrine explicitly denied any connections with nationalism, had its origins in the ideology of the pre-war nationalist movement (see: Thum, 2005, pp. 235–239).
The interpretation of Wrocław’s past introduced after the Second World War successfully constituted a “site of memory” of remarkable political importance in domestic politics. The examples of historical discourse as well as related politics of memory demonstrate how suitable images of the past can be used in order to legitimize government over certain territory. Thus historical narratives should be considered as ones of significant factors supporting the strategies of turning space (urban space, for instance) into a “symbolic domain” (see: Nijakowski, 2006, pp. 108–123) of a given community. The process behind this symbolic appropriation consists in what Maoz Azaryahu described as redefining the semiotic sphere of the city:

The past is a basic component of the official culture. National or collective “past” is a cultural construct of primary importance, since the past is an effective strategy for legitimizing the ruling social and moral order... The past is constructed by the present. Nominated agents of the ruling order are entrusted with the task of selecting the version of the past from a given reservoir of “historical facts” (historical figures and events)... In order for a particular version of the past to be part of the social realm, it must operate in the semiosphere, i.e., be part of the mechanisms of generating and distributing meanings that are constantly at work in the networks of social communication. The role of the past as a legitimizing factor is the reason why the official version of the past dominates the authorized public networks of social communication (Azaryahu, 1990, p. 32-33).

The functionality of historical discourse as means of legitimization is rather apparent in the communist period, whereas in the case of post-1989 era, the context in which interpretations of the past are developed seems more complex.

The rise of a new paradigm: recalling cultural diversity

Needless to say, the fall of communism in 1989 and the beginning of the process of European integration brought a radical change to the dominant patterns of political culture in Poland, both at the nation-state and the local levels. Here I will concentrate on one particular idea introduced into public discourse, into interpretational frames within which social actors impose meanings on urban space, and into the way people perceive their own local community – the notion of “multiculturalism” as well as related concepts of “openness” and what we may call “the sense of being European”. Undoubtedly, in the last twenty years, Wrocław has lost much of its alleged exclusively national identity and its myth of purely Polish past – at least at the level of official discourse (to which I will refer in this part of the paper), significant part of historical narratives, and social memory they inform. To point out just one example of how this change resonated in scholarly research: in a large international and interdisciplinary research project Breslau/Wrocław has been listed as one of Polish-German “sites of memory” (Centrum Badań Historycznych PAN, 2011, p. 2).

The first and foremostly important turning point in the revision of the local memory paradigm was obviously the fall of communism itself. Nevertheless, it was
only the beginning of a long process. Now I will point out a few moments that may be considered particularly meaningful to the new image of Wroclaw’s past and the concept of multiculturalism it is supposed to symbolize.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the idea of multiculturalism conveyed by the official discourse is that the alleged cultural diversity is, above all, a phenomenon that took place in the past or even was a general description of the whole city’s past. It might have taken a few years for the new concept to take shape, but the idea of Wroclaw as the “meeting place” of various cultures was already present in the strategic declaration passed as legislation by the City Council in 1998 under the title *The Strategy – Wroclaw 2000 plus* (*Strategia – Wroclaw 2000 plus*, 1998). In this document, the past cultural diversity is positively valued as the city’s heritage and an important resource. Wroclaw at the turn of the 21st century is described as a “city with thousand years of history in which traditions of various nations and cultures intertwined,” whose specific location makes it “a potential site of exchange of goods, services, and ideas of European importance”. Living in such an environment, citizens have to “come to peace with the city’s history and tradition” (*Strategia – Wroclaw 2000 plus*, 1998).

Thus, the complex history in which the city has changed its political and national affiliations is supposed to determine the unique atmosphere of the city, its hospitality and the openness of its inhabitants – factors that constitute the spirit of the place, its *genius loci*. What is especially interesting (and to some extent instructive of what the dominant culture in Poland is like), is that the term “the meeting place”, which has become the city’s motto, was coined by pope John Paul II, who referred to the multinational history of Wroclaw during the Eucharistic Congress in 1997.

On 1st of June 1997... Pope John Paul II said: “Wroclaw is a city situated at the joint of three countries which were linked very closely by history. It is, in a way, a meeting point, a city that unites. Here, in some way, meet the spiritual traditions of East and West”.

These words shortly and clearly summarize the mission – the historical mission of our city and, at the same time, a vision of its presence in Europe and in the world.

The declaration of 1998 symbolized the fact that nationalist interpretations of the past had been officially rejected in public discourse, making room for the new idea of historical multiculturalism. The legitimacy of the new discourse increased in 2002, when the historians – Norman Davies and Roger Moorhouse – published, in cooperation with local authorities, *Microcosm: A Portrait of a Central European City* – a historical narrative of Wroclaw’s past, which remains the most influential, acknowledged, and representative work within the new paradigm. In the preface to the Polish edition, Davies explicitly states that they are interested in regional history rather than in Polish national past and that both Polish and German perspectives in the historiography of Wroclaw have to be considered incomplete, as there are also other traditions deserving investigation (Davies, 2002, p. 10).
The book by Davies and Moorhouse, apart from its historiographical value, has to be considered as a means, elaborate as it is, of city promotion. The strategy proved largely successful: in the first place, the new version of the past was strengthened by a scholarly proof; secondly, the book turned out to be a major success influencing popular imagination and fostering the sense of local identity among many of the citizens; thirdly, editions in foreign languages (including German) made the new interpretation of the past and the multicultural image of the city available to the European public. Efficiency of the new rhetoric was soon to be proven in various contexts. For instance, a promotional article in the *Time* magazine referred to some of the concepts introduced by the new discourse – the author even pointed out all the changes of the city’s name in exactly the same way as it had been done in *Microcosm*:

In its 1,000-year history Wrocław, the capital of the southwestern Polish province of Lower Silesia, has had no fewer than four rulers and five names. Founded at the turn of the first millennium Wrotizla, as it was first known, received city status in 1241. It was renamed Wretslaw when the Bohemians claimed it in 1335, Presslaw under Habsburg rule in 1526, and Breslau when it belonged to Prussia, and then Germany, from 1741 to 1945, when it was returned to Poland.

Almost 60 years later, Wrocław and its visitors are finding much to appreciate in the multicultural history and energy of this city of islets on the River Odra.

...when the city returned to Poland after World War II, its then communist government encouraged residents to erase any part of its German past. The idea was short-lived. Visitors are more likely to find a city whose residents are as fond of its history... (James, 2002).

All patterns and premises first formulated officially in the 1998 strategy and permeating the historical narrative presented in *Microcosm* were once again stated in the new document called *The Strategy – Wrocław in the Perspective 2020 plus* (2006). Here, the main concepts are reaffirmed as elements of the city’s official image in an even more explicit manner than earlier. Again, Wrocław is presented as the environment where cultural values related to multiculturalism and tolerance are recognized. Furthermore, urban meaning imposed on the city includes a clearly moral role, which is supposedly rooted in the symbolic meaning of the city’s location.

The city with a thousand-year tradition in which various nations and cultures made their impact. The city that was lost by some and regained by the others. The place suitable to serve as a warning against consequences of bad choices and apt to become a symbol of European harmony over resentment (*The Strategy – Wrocław in the Perspective 2020 plus*, 2006, p. 69).

In accordance with previous declarations, location and history are emphasized as valuable resources, which help to understand and accept the present-day diversity of the European society.
Devoted to the principles of tolerance and mutual respect, we open the city to the friendly interaction between various cultures and views, boldly engaging the assets of our location and history (The Strategy – Wrocław in the Perspective 2020 plus, 2006, p. 73).

The promotion of the City, which in its past belonged to different states, as one of the cradles of the European cultural diversity (The Strategy – Wrocław in the Perspective 2020 plus, 2006, p. 93).

In a similar manner as in 1998, the authors of this strategy refer to the unique spirit of the place, determined by its past, which contributes to “the potential of Wrocław’s attractiveness.” For example, genius loci attributed to the city expresses itself through “the open-mindedness” of city dwellers.

The residents are open-minded about themselves and newcomers. There are low barriers of interpersonal relations, variety, tolerance, ability to adapt. A sense of youth (of the spirit) and energy – the feeling of the place where dreams might be realized (The Strategy – Wrocław in the Perspective 2020 plus, 2006, p. 69).

Changing the character of a given place as a site of memory also requires an adequate policy towards space and meanings inscribed in its particular elements. Among other goals formulated in respect to urban space, the City Council points out the intensification of the semantic function of certain objects in the city fabric. As an example of multicultural space, local monuments protection program mentions the District of Mutual Respect, where temples of four different religions are situated in extraordinarily close distance to each other (Gminny program opieki nad zabytkami na lata 2010–2013, 2010). Emphasizing the coexistence of the traces of various religious cultures on such small an area is meant to authenticate the new, multicultural image of the city, even though the population of the city is mostly Roman Catholic (and Wrocław does not differ in this respect from other major cities in Poland).

In order to summarize what has already been said about the two types of discourse on Wrocław’s past, let us briefly repeat what constitutes the difference between them. First of all, the discourse of the communist era implied that the nation state was the most legitimate locus of collective identity for local people, and that national history was the narrative in which the genesis of this collective identity was to be found, while the post-1989 discourse allows to develop local identity and local history of their own kind. Secondly, the “nationalist” discourse used allegedly permanent Polish-German conflict as the basic frame of interpretation, whereas other replaces the metaphor of conflict with a notion of succession of cultures over centuries. The post-war discourse imposed an urban meaning based on the logic of exclusion: the city could be either German or Polish, never both (and because of its origins and a sense of historical justice, it should be considered Polish). Conversely, the present-day official discourse puts emphasis on the concept of the “meeting point” of different nations and their cultures present, now or in the past, in the city space. Moreover, the “nationalist” discourse was highly selective, as it tended to focus on
those periods in history when Wrocław belonged to Polish state and ignores the Czech, Habsburg, Prussian, and German periods, whereas the post-1989 discourse divides its historical scope more equally (see: Table 1).

Table 1. Two examples of discourse of the city’s past

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Focus on national identity</td>
<td>1. Focus on local identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Antagonism between nations and cultures</td>
<td>2. Succession and/or coexistence of nations and cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. City as an exclusive property</td>
<td>3. City as a “meeting point”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before drawing conclusions about the notion of multiculturalism that prevails in the current discourse about Wrocław, one more problem should be addressed, namely, the character of the process of paradigm change which is said to be taking place in the interpretation of city’s past. To say that the present “multicultural” interpretation differs significantly from the “nationalist” one does not mean stating that the latter has been completely removed from collective memory. It merely means acknowledging the change of the officially dominant interpretation, while the structure of the actual views and beliefs about the past remains an empirical question. The analysis of data from empirical studies of place memory and local auto-stereotype may lead to a conclusion that there is inconsistency between the declared acceptance of cultural values promoted by the new discourse and relatively deep-rooted factual knowledge about the city’s past: although city dwellers accept “openness” and “tolerance” as some of the most important common features of the local community, their knowledge of the past refers almost exclusively to post-war history and historical personages of Polish nationality (Lewicka, 2008a, pp. 219–226; Lewicka, 2008b; Pluta, 2006, pp. 237–250). Nevertheless, as Maria Lewicka suggests, this kind of ethnic bias may well be an intrinsic quality of social memory in general (Lewicka, 2008a, p. 213).

Two notions of multiculturalism

Up to this moment, I have been using the terms “multiculturalism” and “cultural diversity” rather freely, without paying much attention to their possible definitions. The reason behind this strategy is that I have been referring to these terms as elements of discourse under investigation, not using them as analytical concepts designed to describe social reality. Now is the right time to extract the meaning of multiculturalism introduced by the post-1989 discourse and to confront it with the notions commonly used in social sciences as well as with commonsensical interpretations. I will argue that similarity of categories is at least to some extent misleading.
and that the sense of multiculturalism constituted by the official discourse of the city’s past departs from its standard understanding in social sciences.

Consider this short definition of “multi-cultural society”:

A society characterized by cultural pluralism... As an ideal, multiculturalism celebrates cultural variety (for example linguistic and religious diversity), and may be contrasted with the assimilationist ideal assumed in many early studies of race, ethnicity, and immigration (Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, 1998, pp. 434–435).

There are two general ways to understand multiculturalism and cultural diversity. The first one can be called descriptive, while the other is normative or even, as someone might argue, ideological. The descriptive strategy focuses on the social structure of a given society and considers the complexity of its composition in any aspect that may refer to cultural issues (ethnic, national, linguistic, religious, etc.) without valorising it. A definition by Amy Gutmann is a fine example of this understanding:

By multiculturalism, I refer to the state of a society or the world containing many cultures that interact in some significant way with each other. A culture is a human community larger than a few families that is associated with on-going ways of seeing, doing, and thinking about things. This stipulative definition has the advantage of leaving most moral questions about multiculturalism open to explicit argument. Multiculturalism is not by definition good or bad (Gutmann, 1993, pp. 171–172).

One may look for cultural diversity in any given aspect of culture and within social entities of any given size; however, probably the most common are analyses of ethnic and religious multiculturalism of a modern nation state. This form of multiculturalism is sometimes, perhaps unintentionally, considered to be multiculturalism per se (see: Smolicz, 2005).

On the other hand, the same term designates a political idea of promotion (or at least acceptance) of cultural diversity, thus normative approach to multiculturalism.

The notion of multiculturalism and cultural diversity commonly related to the city of Wroclaw does not fit to any of the types mentioned above. To put it more precisely, it has something in common with both types, but significantly transforms the standard meanings of the term.

As has already been mentioned, in social sciences the term “multicultural” usually refers to certain characteristics of social structure of a society or a group of people at a given moment. Therefore, it implies that more or less frequent interactions between people of different cultures are part of everyday experience in such an environment. The intensity of such interactions as well as the cultural composition of a given society or group are measurable, so the fact that one describes it as multicultural (or monocultural) should be verifiable. Finally, the dominance of ethnic and national perspectives notwithstanding, this notion of multiculturalism can be
applied with any sort of criteria of diversity, thus taking a broad definition of culture for its point of departure. Conversely, the multiculturalism of Wrocław is almost exclusively a discursive fact, as it can be found in processes of communication, in the interpretations of space and in narratives about the past. The city’s population is monoethnic and Roman Catholicism remains the dominant religion – in these dimensions the cultural structure of the city’s inhabitants is similar as that of Poland as a whole. If so, the only possible way to talk about cultural diversity is to seek for it in the city’s unique past and in traces it left in the city fabric. Although it may encourage the search for as many dimensions of cultural diversity as possible, in most cases diversity is reduced to a variety of national affiliations and ethnic issues (see: Table 2). Paradoxically then, in the multicultural city of Wrocław, intercultural interactions are very rare (at least in comparison to multicultural cities in Western Europe) – unless one considers interacting with meaningful space. The possibility of the actual multiculturality, resulting, for instance, from multiethnic immigration to the city, is perceived in the official discourse as a challenge or even a threat, which should be addressed by the reaffirmation of traditional, conservative values (see: Strategia – Wrocław 2000 plus, 1998; The Strategy – Wrocław in the Perspective 2020 plus, 2006, p. 64).

Table 2. Two concepts of multiculturalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard notion</th>
<th>Multiculturalism of Wrocław</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The cultural dimension of actual social structure</td>
<td>1. An interpretative frame and the topic of discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Measurable and empirically verifiable</td>
<td>2. Immeasurable and unverifiable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. (Potentially) any kind of cultural diversity</td>
<td>4. Dominance of ethnic and national perspectives</td>
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Context: building the image

What is the socio-political context of the development of the new version of Wrocław’s history? It seems that building the city’s image should be highlighted as the most fundamental process at work here. However, it would be an oversimplification to bluntly state that an official urban marketing strategy is the only important factor. One has to bear in mind other, more general contexts, such as the expansion of Western political culture or postmodern turn to local identities (e.g. see: Castells, 2004, pp. 63–70).

Nevertheless, it would be difficult to deny the marketing value of the multicultural image brought about by the new discourse. It is not surprising, as nowadays places and social behaviour of citizens are considered to be legitimate objects of marketing practice (see: Kotler, Haider, Rein, 1993; Kotler, Lee, 2007). Therefore, a city image is a matter of great importance. As Ewa Glińska, Magdalena Florek, and Anna Kowalewska put it:
...A city is not only a spatial entity, but also a social and cultural construct with numerous interactions and relations between people and territory in which they live, work, stay, receive education, or invest. The environment (streets, parks, buildings, etc.), as well as social and cultural phenomena that occur in it, constitute an unique identity of a city and some cities are given even their own personality (Glińska, Florek, Kowalewska, 2009, p. 23).

Of course, a positive image helps to attract tourists, both from Poland and abroad. What values are supposed to be associated with elements of urban space and city’s past is a question of great importance, because, to refer to a concept put forward by John Urry, interpreting visited places as sets of signs and their meanings are ones of the experiences which constitute “the tourist gaze” (Urry, 2002, p. 3). Tourists are not the only group that the image of tolerance and openness might attract – it can also convince members of what is believed to be the most innovative class of people (scientists, entrepreneurs, artists, etc.) to settle in the city. Thus, it affects the city’s human capital. The logic of marketing might also be the key to understand how a positive image facilitates governing over a city and its inhabitants: for instance, if city dwellers believe that the image and specific atmosphere of the place they live in is constituted by modern, positively valorised, and seemingly “Western European” ideas of tolerance and multiculturalism, then it may affect their level of satisfaction and foster their sense of attachment to the place and local identity (see: Lewicka, 2008a, pp. 211–212).

The image of historically embedded multiculturalism in Wrocław is therefore ambivalent. From one point of view, it remains a social fact, a discursive means of a political project and marketing practices. Being predominantly discursive, this kind of multiculturalism does not produce social and psychological costs that are intrinsic to actual cultural diversity: there is no anxiety, no considerable risk of engaging in conflictual interactions, no costly misunderstandings of cultural difference. From a different perspective, though, it may prove useful. Klaus Bachmann (2005, p. 99) suggests that in spite of its fictitious character, the quasi-postmodern “myth” of multicultural Wrocław refers to the notions that are not only understandable and acceptable from the Western European point of view, but also promote creativity and openness among local citizens. In this sense, it makes authentic intercultural relations more plausible to occur.

References


The history of Wrocław: An example of multiculturalism and a political project

THE SPACE OF A SMALL TOWN AS PERCEIVED BY YOUTH OF BELARUSIAN DESCENT

Introduction

Space is a vital element of our world, is a human being's environment and a place of broadly understood existence (Nalaskowski, 2002, p. 9). Since the dawn of time, a man “has the need of place as a sign of safety, as well as need of space as a sign of infinity of thought and own physicality” (Kwiatkowska, 2001, p. 57).

Almost everything, that occupies a human being, is connected with the experience of space. Space is a structure of perceptual world, function of culture, social bonds, activity and emotions. Space shapes mutual relationships between people, their actions, attitudes, enables them to communicate, first and foremost on a level fulfilled with variety of symbols (See in: Hall, 2003). Therefore, space is fulfilled with certain values, is a certain value. (Bukowska-Floreńska, 2000, p. 9). It is a subject of intensive, more or less long-standing interaction between material, symbolic and aesthetic values, concentrated on it, and a certain social group. Owing to this fact, the group is able to satisfy their various needs in the area, establish relationships and make their existence meaningful.

However, city space is a result of overlapping mental, ideological and symbolic dimensions. It is a reflection of certain cultural qualities. Its creation “is one of the fundamental ways of organizing both individual and group activity. It embraces materialized as well as invisible models which control a man’s behaviour” (Hall, 2003, p. 152). A man immersed in certain space becomes its promoter, starts identifying with it.

City space, according to B. Jałowiecki, “is hierarchized by its users, and so it has a gradable nature – from home space, through its nearest surroundings, neighbourhood (housing complex), district to city space” (Jałowiecki, 1980, p. 8). Still, there is another way of perceiving space – “from the most personal, which can be shaped according to one’s needs and likes, through acquired space, to entirely unknown and alien” (Jałowiecki, 1980, p. 8). On account of that, how do the youth of Belarusian descent treat the space they happen to function in?
Space – selected definitional points of view, classifications

Space is an ambiguous notion, therefore, there are many definitions of it in the subject literature. However, its matter is not always identically understood by sociologists, psychologists, architects and urban planners. Diverse ways of comprehending space arise not only from the lack of notional precision, but from philosophical mind-sets – typically unverbalized, and often unrealized by their users (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, p. 316).

H. Lefebvre formed four hypotheses concerning space. They read as follows:

1) it is assumed that space is a pure form, lucidity, lightness (absolute idea, essence, analogy to Platonic number); this viewpoint excludes ideologies and interpretations, pure space form is freed from all content (sensual, material, experienced, practical);

2) it is taken that space is a social creation (result of work and division of work); is ultimately objectivisation of what is social, and consequently, of what is spiritual;

3) it is assumed, that space is neither a starting point nor an approach point, but a go-between, i.e. means, tool, environment, mediation; therefore, space is an intentional tool of politics, that is subject to manipulations, but the intentions might be hidden under the pretext of spatial form coherence;

4) it is surmised that space is a figment, subject or sum of subjects, a thing or a collection of things, a commodity or a group of commodities (connected with reproduction of social production relationships) (Jałowiecki, 1988, p. 11).

Special attention should also be given to a conception explaining the relationship between space and society by Znaniecki, which basic assumption was distinguishing physical space from social one. The author replaced the notion of ‘space’ with ‘social value’. The ‘social values’ are limited, indivisible, variable, qualitatively diverse, and assessed in different ways. Occupied places, empty places, spacious interiors, crowded interiors, exteriors, seats, vicinities, centres, boundaries, measured territory, expanse, left side, right side, top, bottom, front, back, cardinal points, remoteness, proximity, routes, wilderness etc., are listed among those (Znaniecki, 1938, pp. 90–91). None of the values mentioned, according to Znaniecki, “occur isolated so that they could be simply sectioned and associated with other spatial values within a common geometrical system” (Znaniecki, 1938, p. 91). No human being, the author follows, “can stay individually anywhere, permanently or temporarily, without entering a spatial value range of a team” (Znaniecki, 1938, p. 94). Also, it is essential that a certain section of space may have a different value for various social groups, which is emphasized by Znaniecki: “like phonetically the same combination of sounds occurring in various languages may represent a different word in each language, similarly geographically the same piece of surface of the Earth is not the same social subject, when it occurs in human experience as a state territory, district territory, national group territory: we deal with four different and separate subjects, elements of four various social systems” (Znaniecki, 1938, p. 92).
A concept of space as a value was also developed by A. Wallis, who introduced a notion of cultural area. According to the author, social space is “an area utilized and shaped by a given community, that it is connected to by means of system of knowledge, ideas, values, and rules of conduct, owing to which, it most fully identifies with the particular area” (Wallis, 1990, p. 13). A cultural area, in the view of A. Wallis, is a functionally defined space that is subjected to long-lasting and intensive interactions happening between a focused on it set of material, aesthetic, and symbolic values and a certain group (community). Owing to this fact, the group (community) is able to satisfy its cultural needs in the area, at the same time achieving a sense of social integration as well as possibilities for development (Wallis, 1979, p. 17). Symbolic spaces, shrines, cemeteries, monuments, some districts, monumental areas connected with a group’s (community’s) history and determining its memory are, without any doubt, something more than mere material forms denoting certain functions. These, by rule, make a peculiar “taboo”, infringement of which is perceived as sacrilege and forbidden by custom and/or the law. Obviously, the values are typically entirely independent of economic criteria. Particular forms and types of space thus, have both a function concerning utility values, and a meaning connected with symbolic values (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, p. 318).

As space constitutes a value (of itself), it also has a certain value and therefore, it is in group and individually, both realistically (often in accordance with the law) and symbolically appropriated. The mere fact of its appropriation imparts a social character to it, because it entwines it in the whole of social relationships and cultural system. Every space fragment constitutes someone’s property in a legal sense (of the word), therefore it leads to distinguishing a number of spaces (types of spaces) such as: space of state, state institutions space, territorial communities’ space (communal property), enterprises’ and institutions’ space, and private persons’ space. However, private property and actual ownership do not always overlap. Space, formally being owned by a state, territorial community or an organization can be utilized by everyone and have public character. Obviously, on a number of occasions, property of a given space means an exclusive right to utilize it by an individual or a social group. Consequently, private or public character of space is connected with the right of ownership, it is not identical with it (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, pp. 318–319).

The concentration of social space can also be noticed in J. Chałasiński’s output. The author defines a territory of a given social group as a fragment of space in a physical sense, as well as of social space filled with the entire system of social institutions and life forms of a given group (Chałasiński, 1936, pp. 495–501).

Sometimes the term social space bears purely metaphorical meaning, as “a certain dimension of social reality”. Therefore, we talk, for instance, about an argument between groups, which takes place in a social space determined by a net of mutual relationships between the conflicted subjects. As such, the notion of social space does not refer to any specific area or place. More often, and in accordance with the vernacular understanding, it is used in reference to an area or place distinguished
by certain socially conditioned features (traits). In this respect, we talk about social space denoting:

1) a territory inhabited by a social group of certain specific traits, which marked it in a specific way;

2) a place created by a certain social group, which gave the place a function and attached significance to it (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, p. 316).

Whereas, Chombart de Lauwe notes that “social space is determined by points of attraction, symbols represented by the Church, the stock exchange, as well as limits of arrangement of individuals belonging to a certain professional category etc., which is connected with landform features, industrial concentration, type of the housing industry” (Chombart de Lauwe, 1952, p. 24, cited in: Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, p. 316; see also: Chombart de Lauwe, 1960, pp. 403–425). According to the author, social space is an area having certain physical features, inhabited by a community of specified class and profession characteristics. The groups mark their space in a specific way, according to their own businesses, needs, and conceptions.

Understanding the social space mostly as an area of distribution of groups, having certain characteristic features, at the same time directs attention to studying relationships between the features and physical properties of the area. It turns out that there is a strong relation between them. Every city has better and worse districts differing in type, housing standard, equipment, a way of utilization, and consequently, inhabitants’ behaviour. This leads to a conclusion, that it is probably the character of space, which determines such behaviour (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, p. 317).

Space has a social character, because it is not a creation of nature, but of a society, in addition to which, it is worth stressing that it was determined by natural, cultural, and social factors. It is the people that built roads, bridges, airports, villages, cities, farmlands, factories, and the like. During the process of their creation individuals or groups entered certain relations based on power, ownership and exchange (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, p. 317).

Space is social also because it is characterized by peculiar types of human actions. Such a definition allows classifying social space depending on activity types. Therefore, we distinguish production space, consumption space, work space, habitation space, leisure space, everyday life space, occasional space, day and night space. Such comprehension of the social space is connected with functional division used by urban planners and geographers (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, p. 317).

Another reason, for which space is social, is that people attach concrete values to it. The value of space can be both measurable and immeasurable in character. The former case can define it in technical or economic terms, whereas the latter – in social ones. The technical value of space is also known as its usefulness for fixed purposes. Consequently, the economic value is as much as its price, depending on its practical qualities and importance, which a given group attaches to a specific fragment of space. Space may be important for people also because it symbolizes values of cultural nature (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, pp. 317–318).
Other categories connected with space – precise, simply descriptive, and emotionally loaded – fill colloquial speech. They embrace place, area, territory, environment, landscape, and homeland. The place is strictly limited. It is outlined by objective coordinates as well as its individual qualities – a landscape, an important event connected to it, which stays in people's memory: births, childhood, youthful years, and the like. An area is extensive, its boundaries can be outlined or entirely fuzzy. The area can be at the same time nobody's and somebody's property, clearly underlined by special signs or an enclosure. Whereas a territory is linked to a group holding dominion over it. It is a land, on which a special jurisdiction of power is exercised. By contrast, the environment is what surrounds us. We can distinguish natural environment i.e. air, sky, water, the wildlife, as well as the social environment i.e. individuals and groups we belong to or have contact with. The term “environment” is also used to describe certain unique social groups and then it is used outside spatial context, talking about environment of professional, artistic or criminal nature (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, pp. 319–320). A landscape can be defined as “the environment physiognomy. It is a form arising from contents enclosed in both natural and cultural ecosystem of a given place. Therefore, the relationship with it ensues primarily from perceiving the precincts. Moreover, its permanence in perspective of hours, days, and ultimately historical tradition, creates a sense of identification with a place. Stability of the situation manifests itself by means of local relationship: flat – street – city, creating a sense of local identity over a period of time. Constant seeing the same places or similar forms of the surrounding landscape gives, consciously and unconsciously, a sense of their immutability, and over time indigenousness. The spread develops through movement, transferring of one area onto the other (...). It is the movement, which allows to make landscape comparisons, sense their dissimilarity, distinguish local identities, and consequently over time, with recognizing them better, to develop a sense of identity up to regional scale, and ultimately national one” (Bogdanowski, 1983, pp. 183–184). Homeland is the most emotionally comprehended notion of space. According to Ossowski, we distinguish “private homeland” (a sphere of personal experience connected with land, landscape, familiarity and customs) and “ideological homeland” (a sphere of symbols and duties, i.e. commitment to struggle and improvement) (See in: Ossowski, 1967; Ossowski, 1984). Those two categories (“private homeland” and “ideological homeland”) constitute two types of relations between an individual (or a group) and its assigned area, which can decide of qualifying the territory as a homeland (Ossowski, op. cit., p. 210). The “private homeland” is an area, to which an individual is connected by means of its direct, personal experiences; it is a territory on which he or she spent the entire life or its considerable part (Ossowski, op. cit., p. 210). The attitude towards the “ideological homeland” is based on convincing an individual of its participation in a community and the conviction, that it is a territorial community, connected with the exact area. My homeland in the ideological meaning – is the land of my nation (Ossowski, op. cit., p. 210). In Ossowski’s view, “a regional homeland” can
be situated between “private homeland” and “ideological homeland”. The bond joining an individual with “regional homeland” is created by means of participation in a group called regional community (Ossowski, op. cit., p. 252). The regional community is made of “territorial community, which has, in greater or lesser extent, a sense of own identity, however does not consider itself a nation” (Ossowski, op. cit., p. 252). The “regional homeland” contains elements of “special bond between a social community and a specific area recognized as own. It is a relation with a territory through a bond with a community considered as own. Area domestication occurs through identifying with a community inhabiting the area. The essence of the relation is assigning it many qualities, real, and symbolic meanings” (Sadowski, Czerniawska, 1999, p. 20).

The aforementioned types of space i.e. place, area, territory, environment, landscape, and homeland are characterized by a multitude of meanings and elements, which are tremendously significant to an individual or a social group, because they are deeply ingrained in its psyche and present in every day experience. The categories facilitate organizing the world and creating, marking as well as acquiring space (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, p. 322).

An interesting concept of space was put forward by Bassand. He distinguished four basic aspects of space:

1) space – ground, created and metamorphosed by means of physical, biological, and ecological supplies;
2) space – carrier, gains extra-local character owing to improving means of communication and transport;
3) space – distance, becoming an obstacle in communication and exchange;
4) space – symbol, material in character and carrying extended symbolic content, marked with different emotion, feelings and values, which means that it is an acquired space, formed culturally and socially (Jałowiecki, 1988, p. 15).

The notion of space is also interestingly defined by Jałowiecki, according to whom it is:

1) an abstract idea;
2) a property of an idea;
3) natural environment created in a specific way in the process of evolution;
4) human creation, anthropogenic, cultural, and social, created so by an individual, a group or a human community (Jałowiecki, 1988, p. 11).

The author also created a classification of space, distinguishing: social space (social interactions, norms, values, codes of conduct, history); personal space (home); life space (a housing estate, district, work place, school); ecological space (unknown regions); geographical space (natural environment); mathematical space (an abstract idea); physical space (a property of an idea) (Jałowiecki, 1988, pp. 11–26).

Considering the above-mentioned context of social space division, according to Jałowiecki, further part of the text, basing on empirical data, will contain analysis of the attitude of the youth of Belarusian descent to a town space.
A brief digest of space definitions and classifications has showed that, it is one of the most essential of a man's needs. Space, as Tuan writes, “is wide open, suggests future and encourages to take action (…). Closed and humanized space becomes a place. Place, in comparison with space is a peaceful centre of established values. Human beings need both place and space (...). Place represents safety, space is freedom: we are attached to the former and yearn for the latter” (Tuan, 1987, p. 13). Therefore, on this account space should be a special subject of research inquiries.

Faces of a city

A city, like every significant notion, has many definitions, dependent on paradigm assumed by an author. Therefore, it is defined differently by geographers, sociologists, anthropologists, while urban planners, economists or ecologists have yet another view on it. However, there is still no definition of a city, which would embrace the whole of processes and phenomena making up the complex term. The biggest difficulty in determining it lies in the fact that there is no way to show the phenomenon multifaceted character within merely one scientific discipline or with the use of a definition of one type. After all, a city is a type of a pot, where various complex cultural, social, demographic, economic, and ecological processes take place. Some are of the opinion that a city is a creation of civilization, while others – that it makes up an engine of progress. The difficulty in defining the notion of “a city” arises from it being an expression of numerous contrasts as well as symbol of various compromises (Pawlak, Pawlak, 2010).

Typically the term “city” refers to an internally coherent and relatively permanent centre made up of more or less heterogenic individuals (in a cultural and social sense), contradictory to a village, since created as a result of concentration of people with non-agricultural professions (connected to trade, craft, industry, and the services industry), characterized by congested housing facilities, developed communication, transport and energy network, as well as manufacturing goods for local and external consumers. The definition does not have a universal value, because different city concepts are connected with different civilizations (Wielka Encyklopedia PWN, 2003, p. 329).

Nowa Encyclopedia Powszechna PWN reads that a city is a historically developed type of housing estate, established by the existence of a specific community, focused on a specified area of separate organization, legally acknowledged and established, as well as creating, within its activity, a group of permanent material devices of special physiognomy, that can be considered a distinct type of landscape (Nowa Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN, 1996, p. 186).

A city, according to a geographer Flis, is “an estate distinguished by a big concentration of buildings, most often multi-storey ones and a population, which is developed by carrying out its professional activities, and that requires gathering a considerable number of people. Opposite of the actions mentioned are agricultural, herding or hunting activities, which require relatively big territory and addition-
ally disperse a population. In an administrative sense – an estate which was officially
given city rights” (Flis, 1982, p. 208).

Therefore, a city is a human estate, which meets the following requirements:
demographic (minimal number of inhabitants), functional (majority of popula-
tion employed in a non-agricultural activity), urban (compact and intense housing
development, large density of population), sociological (domination of urban life
qualities) (Pawlak, Pawlak, 2010).

Special attention should be paid to a city concept, formulated by a representative
of the classical social ecology movement, R. Park. In his opinion, a city “is some-
thing more than a mere agglomeration of individuals equipped with communal
goods, such as streets, real estates, electric lighting, tramways, telephones etc. A city
is also something more than a simple constellation of institutions and administrative
machines: tribunals, hospitals, schools, police stations as well as all sorts of offices.
A city is a state of spirit, a group of customs and traditions, attitudes and sentiments,
inseparably connected with the customs and transmitted via traditions. In other
words, city is a product of nature, especially human nature” (Park, 1915, cited in:

Other of the social ecology movement classics, Burghess, underscored that, a city
is a system of concentric zones arranged one inside the other, with a business sector
as common and the most important part of a city. Zone I is a central area, which is
the main administrative-trade centre of a city (it encompasses: institutions, offices,
state buildings, railway and bus stations, communication stations, industrial centres,
as well as cultural-entertainment centre). Zone II is a connecting area, because a spa-
tial expansion of the central district results in displacing its former users. They move
to zone III to preserve the smallest spatial distance between a place of their residence
and their workplace. Zone IV is allotted for luxurious residences belonging to city
elites. While zone V is occupied by migrants and people, who are not entirely a part
of a city circulation yet (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, p. 19).

According to social ecologists, city is an outcome of the following processes:
centralization, concentration, segregation, invasion, and succession. The centraliza-
tion expresses natural inclination to concentrate institutions and people in certain
towns as well as certain city districts. The concentration, on the other hand, is a natu-
ral process of gathering institutions and people of similar characteristics within one
city zone. The segregation lies in a selection of people made by individuals contend-
ing with each other for the best social space. The invasion is penetrating of certain
types of individuals and social groups from one area of a city to another, marking
and appropriating space. Whereas the succession lies in a definitive seizure of city
areas by a community as a result of invasion processes, which supplanted primordial
communities of the areas (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, p. 19).

Znaniecki, a representative of the culturalist movement, believed that a city is
a humanist entity, which is realized in experience and human activity. According
to the author, “people admittedly inhabit a city territory and on this account they
consider themselves as ‘residents’ of a city; spatial conditions influence life; however it does not mean that they can be easily situated in the territory (...). After all, they are not only bodies, but also experiencing and active subjects, and considering the character they are not in a city, but – if this can be expressed so – a city lies within the zone of their common experience and activity, they create it as an excessively complex social structure” (Znaniecki, Ziółkowski, 1984, p. 34). Therefore, city research is about analysing its individualized reception, interpreting judgments, as well as understanding actions i.e. activities undertaken by its residents (Jałowiecki, Szczepeński, 2009, p. 21).

According to A. Wallis, another representative of culturalist movement, city is a system constructed “of two organically connected, cooperating by right of feedback, but autonomous subsystems – urban and social. The former is understood as the entirety of city material elements created by a human being, as well as natural elements, which make up its spatial structure. While the latter is understood as a community of city users, which basic structure is made of its residents. Each of the subsystems has a complex form and structure, which contributes to a considerable complexity of their mutual relations” (Wallis, 1977, p. 79).

Another concept of a city, which won itself many supporters, was initiated by L. Wirth, the creator of the neo-ecology school. The author offered describing a city through style peculiarity of its inhabitants. He attracted attention to cultural elements of city (urban lifestyle) and influence material aspects of urban life exert on him. He particularly focused on concentrating resources (economic, knowledge etc.), city size (from demographic and spatial aspects) as well as diversity of urban communities. He claimed that a city is a constant, relatively big, condensed gathering of socially diverse individuals. The bottom line of his theory of a city was the assumption, that with increase of space, number and density of population, a process of urban communities’ heterogenisation occurs automatically (Wirth, 1938, see in: Jałowiecki, Szczepeński, 2009, pp. 22–25).

Analysing Wirth’s views, Jałowiecki distinguished the following characteristic phenomena and relations occurring within urban space:

• blurring traditional cultural models and weakening social bonds is a reason why only formal social control can maintain city unity;
• lack of mutual acquaintance between inhabitants which results in weakening bonds and relations between individuals;
• physical proximity does not lead to standardizing conduct; contacts become impersonal, indirect, short-lived, casual;
• multiplying and deepening divisions: work, social groups;
• developing the market, crossing state barriers by the capital and development of enterprises, urban culture becomes cosmopolitan;
• protection from excessive number of contacts results in an increase of importance of mass culture’s influence, transferred via mass media;
• rising population density supports competition;
competition and frequency of physical contact, with lack of understanding for others, are sources of tensions and conflicts, whereas bureaucratization and institutionalization of life in a city is a way of relieving the tensions;

• assessment of individuals is done by means of external criteria e.g. possessing material goods;

• city areas valorisation is done based on following criteria:: availability, price, development, location;

• blurring class differences affects difficulty with determining own social status and orientation in situating other individuals in a social hierarchy; it is accompanied by a considerable social and spatial mobility (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, pp. 22–25)

Przecławski distinguished the following characteristic features of city:

• “spatial proximity does not result in psychosocial closeness;

• social contacts are business-like, passing, superficial and anonymous by nature;

• neighbourly bond vanishes; social bonds are shaped independently of spatial proximity;

• tradition has minimal function; city inhabitant has to constantly adapt to changes, new situations and cultural models;

• there is a considerable diversity of cultural models one has to choose from; simultaneously, however, there is a standardization of many culture creations;

• an individual is free from direct control – and is subjected only to indirect institutional control; therefore, a necessity for great tolerance for different models of behaviour;

• diversity of cultural models, freedom from social control, and disappearance of neighbourly bonds result in frequent signs of social disorganization;

• diversity of social groups, professions, social classes creates great opportunities for social promotion; simultaneously causes frequent conflicts arising from fulfilling different social roles by the same person;

• concentration of information, science and art centres results in activity of a series of incentives prompting individual's development of interests;

• city inhabitants are more and more frequently directed by rational premises in everyday life; the secularization process in a city is progressing faster;

• a city inhabitant becomes accustomed to facilitated life, and often to a relatively easy profit;

• lifestyle is characterized by great spatial and social mobility; frequent movement from one place to another and frequent change in social status;

• an urban family is a two-generation family, of little number of children, based on equal rights of sides, a woman more often professionally works outside home;

• an inhabitant of a city feels superiority of a certain type over an inhabitant of a village;

• the range of city activity exceeds its administrative borders, and it frequently exceeds the borders of a district, a province or even a state” (Przeclawski, 1966, pp. 38–39).
Of known sociological concepts of a city one can single out Webber’s approach, according to which city constitutes a fusion of three defining features and systems, i.e. market, administrative-political centre, and city community. The author offered introducing an “ideal type” of a city. It was assumed to signify an association of individuals or groups, governed by appropriate formal (e.g. law, market) and informal regulations (e.g. neighbourly relations, social control, traditional gatherings) (Weber, 2002).

While Simmel introduced yet another definition of a city, describing it as a form of a community, ensuring individual a certain type and degree of personal freedom, which does not have a counterpart in other circumstances. Cultural and anthropological-political definitions of a city are based on this point of view, which highlights both anonymity of an individual and tolerance towards unusual comportment (Cieśla, 1993; Simmel, 1975).

A city, according to the representatives of macro-structural and structural-functional view in urban sociology, is a system of production, consumption, exchange and management. Production is human activity, which aim is to manufacture goods, commodities, service, and information. Consumption is connected with individual and group appropriation of all social products. Exchange concerns products, services and information between the spheres of production and consumption, and within their range. Management is a regulation process between production and exchange, which is expressed by means of various plans, projects, programs and the like (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, p. 31). City space is, therefore, according to Castells, structural systemic entirety, which fundamental elements remain in close relations: creative localization tendency, labour force reproduction, institutional organization, as well as cultural symbolism centre-outskirts (See in: Castells, 1982).

According to the representatives of the humanist movement, a city is a system of signs interpreted by actors during their everyday both common and festive activity. “Interpreting” a city is a complicated process, which proceeds on, at least, a few identified levels and planes. There can be mental maps embraced in terms of perception and understanding space-time models, fragments, frames and other forms of defined space values, based on permanent or variable social memory data. Yet, the most frequent are the pictures of a city and its elements, their messages of the perception, reception, assessment, and valuation processes. They carry certain meanings, both constituted by experiences of viewers and participants of urban life, as well as constituted for them. After all, city is alive, meaningful, and experienced reality of individual and collective existence (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, p. 38).

The above-mentioned review of city concepts proves that their authors are more focused on distinguishing paradigms and specific definitions, rather than looking for common elements, as a result of what determining actual notion meaning is difficult. Similarly, it is difficult to define types of city space because, as Jałowiecki believes – “contemporary city is composed of penetrating and overlapping weakly organized spaces, and its area is usually indefinite, and its plan often reminds a stain of spilled ink” (Jałowiecki, Szczepański, 2009, p. 379). However, every attempt is made to organize the
chaos. The first way of organizing space i.e. urban division, introduces organizational order. City is divided into work, habitation, service and leisure zones, which are connected by means of infrastructure and transport network. It is possible to distinguish, within space, housing estates and service centres, which are hierarchized depending on a number of potential customers, supply, and accessibility. The central, citywide part has the highest position in the hierarchy and it is assigned certain functions. In addition, the administrative division is introduced. City is divided into quarters, districts, regions, and the like. It is obvious that the urban and administrative divisions are not of big importance to the city inhabitants, and location in space is often defined by traditional names of given areas, which are derived from names of the former villages successively joined into a city limits. The second way of organizing space is introducing, by its own inhabitants, organic order based on defined models, stereotypes and spatial archetypes. Space sections itself off and hierarchizes based on specific practices and symbols (ibid.). Types of space distinguished by inhabitants are: home (flat), district, quarter, centre, streets, work space, ludic space – new metropolis areas.

Therefore, every human being has his/her own picture of a city. City has always fascinated a social individual and still majority of people succumb to its magic. After all, city constitutes a cradle of civilization, universities were created in it, law was shaped and art developed. People sought a better life in a city. City would also make a man free (Jałowiecki, 2000, p. 201).

The analysis of research findings

The research of space perceptions by a society, as well as of factors conditioning them is essential when one wants to comprehend spatial behaviour of individuals and social groups. The first important field of study in spatial perception is behavioural sphere. The second, equally important, issue is a semiotic sphere of space i.e. its significance for a perceiving individual or a group, therefore content, that is communicated in both literal and figurative sphere. The third problem is, however, the influence of a specifically perceived and valued space on a physical and mental state and self-esteem of individuals and communities. In the research devoted to space perception, it is fundamental not only to find an answer on how a given individual perceives and evaluates, but also to learn why the perception process is such, therefore, it is about finding variables determining the entire process (Jałowiecki, 2000, p. 154).

The research carried by me concerns small town space in perception by the youth of Belarusian descent. The choice of the community sample of Belarusian descent was dictated by the fact that these are representatives of one of the biggest national minorities in Poland. According to Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań 2002 (National Census of Population and Housing 2002), the Silesians are largest ethnic minority 173,2 thousand people, while the consecutive places are occupied by representatives of national minority, i.e. Germans – 152,9 thousand people, Belarusians – 48,7 thousand people as well as others. What is more, the Belarusians residing in Poland,
according to Budyta-Budzyńska’s typology, belong to autochthonic (historic, settled, traditional, old), tight community (See in: Budyta-Budzyńska, 2010), and their communication with habitation place is probably different from the major group.

The research carried out was trial research of partial research nature. This is only an introduction to proper research. The trial research was carried out between 8 and 9 September 2010 in Hajnówka. The selection of individuals for the trial was intentional, without any extreme criteria in selection of individuals, i.e. respondents were selected deliberately, based on a great amount of knowledge of the population. The criteria for selection were: gender, age, respondents’ faith – Orthodox, national self-identification – Belarusian nationality, residence location – district town inhabited by Belarusians, making autochthonic group in the area and majority of all residents (data obtained from: Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań 2002). Considering the fact that subject of research is a small town space in perception of the Belarusian youth, the research was carried out at Zespół Szkół z Dodatkową Nauką Języka Białoruskiego (Complex of Schools with Additional Tutorial of the Belarusian Language) in Hajnówka. Both the name of the institution and the trial research carried out indicate high percentage of the Belarusian people learning there. The research sample included 112 statistical units. They were the students of first, second, and third of junior high school grades, as well as first, second and third grades of high school. A detailed characteristic of the representative research group is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the representative research sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features studied</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Altogether</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of people</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National self-identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarusian</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish-Belarusian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-year-old</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-year-old</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-year-old</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-year-old</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-year-old</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-year-old</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own research.
In the research sample, there were 62 women, which makes 55.4%, and 50 men, which makes 44.6% of the entire sample. All subjects of research are of Orthodox faith (100%) and all of them live in the town. As many as 67% of all surveyed stated that they were of Polish nationality, 23.2% – Belarusian, 8.9% – half Belarusian and half Polish, while 0.9% were of other nationality. As far as the age of the surveyed is concerned: 13-year-olds constitute 17.8% of the respondents, 14-year-olds – 17%, 15-year-olds – 15.2%, 16-year-olds – 17%, 17-year-olds – 17%, 18-year-olds – 16%.

The practical objective of the research was:

a) determining perception type of their place of residence situation by the surveyed;

b) determining the grade of spatial identification of the surveyed;

c) determining sphere of bond and interaction, sense of safety and perspective of the surveyed;

d) determining the surveyed relation with their current place of residence;

e) determining, what are the survey participants’ plans concerning future place of residence.

As a standard and a point of reference for final results of the research, as well as generalizations resulting from them, I chose a typology of cultural identity by Szafraniec. The author, in her research concerning the young, considers impact of four analytical dimensions: way of residence situation perception, identification space, sphere of bonds and interactions, sense of security and perspectives. She also distinguishes the following types of cultural identity of the surveyed: an underclass man (indifferent, traces of identification), an alienated individual (negative identity, alienation), a borderline man (potential migrants, enslaved), as well as a man of transgressional attitude (a multidimensional man, who is capable of transgressing material, social, and symbolic borders) (Szafraniec, 1991, p. 53).

In my research, I was interested in, among other things, whether there is any relation of the surveyed young with their place of residence. The research has shown that all of the surveyed (100%) are connected with their current place of residence. They mentioned many reasons for the relation, which are shown in table 2.

Table 2. Respondents’ national self-identification and reasons for their relations with the place of residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for relations with the place of residence</th>
<th>National self-identity</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Belarusian</td>
<td>Polish/Belarusan</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of people</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number of people</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family, friends</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ancestors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The research has shown that 49.3% of the respondents describing themselves as Polish are connected with their town, because their family and friends live there, whereas 26.7% of young Poles are connected with current place of residence, because they were born and brought up there. The surveyed of Polish nationality are connected with their place of residence also because: there is their family house (13.3%), they attend school there (5.3%), their ancestors had lived there (4%), they feel secure there and people are friendly and happy (1.3%). However, it has to be pointed out that as many as 61.5% of respondents defining themselves as the Belarusians are connected with their current place of residence, because their ancestors had lived there. 30.8% of young Belarusians are connected with their current place of residence, because their family members and friends live there. Another reason for which the young of Belarusian nationality are connected with their place of residence is that they were born and brought up there (3.8%) as well as there is their family home (3.8%). However, it is different with the surveyed of double nationality (Polish and Belarusian). As many as 40% of respondents is connected with their town because their ancestors had lived there. The surveyed of double nationality are connected with their current place of residence also because: their family members and friends live there (20%), there is their family home (20%), they feel secure there and people are friendly and smiling (20%). In case of the surveyed of other nationalities, only place of birth and upbringing (100%) is a reason of their connection with current place of residence. The differences in selected reasons for connection with a place of residence turned out to be statistically relevant ($\chi^2 = 63,746; \text{df} = 15; p < 0.001$).

It appears that, for the surveyed young, a hometown is mostly the legacy of their ancestors, family members and friends' place of residence, and consequently place of birth, upbringing, location of their family home, school. Therefore, the basic bond with a hometown is determined by inner motivations of emotional type.

The graph below presents relations between respondents' national auto-identification and their relation to a place of residence.
The research has shown that 10.7% of the respondents describing themselves as Polish has definitely positive attitude to their town. As many as 78.7% of young Poles has rather positive attitude towards their current place of residence. While 10.7% of the surveyed of Polish nationality has rather negative attitude to their place of residence. None of the respondents describing themselves as Polish mentioned their definitely negative attitude towards their town. It is different with a group of the surveyed defining themselves as Belarusian, where no less than 88.5% of them has definitely positive attitude to their town. 11.5% of the young Belarusians has rather positively attitude to their current place of residence. None of the Belarusian respondents indicated rather negative and definitely negative attitude to their town. It is worthwhile that in a surveyed group of both nationalities – Polish and Belarusian, not less than 80% of the respondents have definitely positive attitude towards their town, while 10% of the double national status respondents are rather positively disposed towards their current place of residence. However, also 10% of the respondents having two national statuses are negatively disposed towards their place of residence. None of the respondents belonging to the group indicated rather negative attitude to their town. At the same time, it has to be pointed out that 100% of the surveyed having other national status are rather positively disposed towards their current place of residence. The differences in selected reasons for connection with a place of residence turned out to be statistically relevant ($\chi^2 = 74,161; \text{df} = 9; p < 0.001$).

It appears, that the attitude of the young Poles and the respondents of double nationalities status, to their hometown is more ambivalent, varied, with a majority of positive feedback, therefore they are indecisive. However, majority of the Belarusian respondents and those of other nationalities positively valorise their hometown, their attitude is more coherent. Ultimately, it can be said that among the surveyed young positive attitude towards their place of residence, defined by emotional bonds, attachment to home sites and private homeland, prevails.
In my research, I was also interested in whether the surveyed young people describe their hometown as “homeland” and if there occurs any relationship between national auto-identification of the respondents and them defining their place of residence as “homeland” (table 3). “Homeland” is also known as “private homeland”, indicators of which are home, place of birth and of residence. Using the term in relation to one’s hometown may signify great attachment of an individual or a group to territorial community, co-believer of the same religion, family, culture or tradition.

Table 3. Respondents’ national auto-identification and defining place of residence as “homeland”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defining ‘homeland’</th>
<th>National auto-identification</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Belarusian</td>
<td>Polish/Belarusian</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own research.

The research has shown that 40% of the respondents defining themselves as Polish calls their hometown – “homeland”. According to 60% of the young Poles, their current place of residence does not deserve to be titled “homeland”, but both 100% of the surveyed Belarusians and 100% respondents of double national status (Polish/Belarusian) call their town “homeland”. In addition, 100% of other national status residents call their place of residence “homeland”. The differences in defining a place of residence as “homeland” between the respondents of varied national identification rate turned out to be statistically relevant ($\chi^2 = 37,110; \text{df} = 3; p < 0,001$).

It appears that the most assimilated group, i.e. people describing themselves as Poles, shows no identification with homeland. From the point of view of identification space, according to K. Szafraniec, it can be interpreted not as the respondents’ indifference towards their place of residence (borderline type) but as negative identity (alienated type). For Belarusians, people of double national status and individuals of other national status the situation is different. The identification is complete, which in this respect, could be described as positive identification (K. Szafraniec did not distinguish a type of cultural identity possessed with such feature – in my opinion she should have also distinguished positive types).

The bond of the respondents with the residents of their hometown was also a subject of my research interest (graph 2).
The research has shown that as many as 93.3% of the young Poles have rather strong bond with their hometown residents, while 6.7% of the surveyed of Polish national status can be described to have a rather weak relation with residents of their hometown. None of the respondents describing themselves as Polish indicated strong or definitely weak relation with residents of their town. It is entirely different in a group describing themselves as Belarusians, where as many as 84.6% of them have special relation with residents of their hometown, while 15.4% of the young Belarusians are characterized by rather strong relation with the residents of their town. None of the Belarusian nationality respondents indicated rather weak and definitely weak relation with residents of their town. In a group with double national status (Polish and Belarusian), as many as 80% of them are strongly connected with their hometown residents, while 20% rather strongly. None of them indicated rather weak or definitely weak relation with their hometown community. However, 100% of the surveyed having other national status have definitely weak relation with their town inhabitants. The differences in selected reasons for relation with hometown residents among four surveyed groups, characterized by varied national self-identification turned out to be statistically relevant ($\chi^2 = 198,634; \text{df} = 9; p < 0,001$).

It appears that young subjects to the survey are generally strongly related with their hometown residents. However, in young Belarusians and respondents of double national status we can notice slightly stronger relations with local community. Probably, interpersonal relationships have greater importance than those with young Poles, although the relationship with their hometown residents of the latter respondents can also be characterized as rather strong.

The table below shows a relation between the respondents’ national self-identification and a character of ethnic cohabitation in their place of residence.
Table 4. Respondents’ national self-identification and a character of ethnic cohabitation in a place of residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character of ethnic cohabitation</th>
<th>National self-identity</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>Polish/Belarusian</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number of people</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number of people</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared community – it makes no notice to national differences</td>
<td>8 10.7</td>
<td>26 100</td>
<td>4 40</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference awareness – noticeable national differences</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>6 60</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evident differences – but shared interests and sympathy</td>
<td>39 52</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evident differences – but no national conflicts</td>
<td>28 37.3</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very evident differences – lead to misunderstandings and conflicts</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75 100</td>
<td>26 100</td>
<td>10 100</td>
<td>1 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own research.

The research has shown that 10.7% of the respondents describing themselves as Poles maintain that nobody pays attention to national differences. According to 52% of young Poles, differences between communities are evident, but one can observe attitudes of mutual interest, or even sympathy. In the view of 37.3% of the surveyed of Polish nationality, national differences are evident, but typically they do not result in contradictions and conflicts. Whereas 100% of the respondents describing themselves as Belarusian maintain that everyone in their hometown creates one shared community. In the surveyed group of double nationality status (Polish and Belarusian) 40% think that in a community nobody pays attention to national divisions, but 60% say that the differences are evident and sometimes lead to misunderstandings or even conflicts. The differences in selected reasons for ethnic cohabitation character in a place of residence among four surveyed groups characterized by varied national self-identification turned out to be statistically relevant ($\chi^2 = 198.634; df = 9; p < 0.001$).

It appears that young Belarusians think that residents of their hometown constitute one shared community i.e. pay no notice to national differences. Majority of the surveyed of double national status is aware of their national difference. However, majority of the surveyed Polish nationals discerns the differences, but seems not to notice the conflicts. Analysis of the above data proves that accommodative type of ethnic cohabitation dominates among the young Belarusians. Therefore, it can be assumed, that according to the surveyed young Belarusians inter-ethnic relationships
in their place of residence are based on tolerance. According to Belarusian respondents, residents of their hometown are strongly attached to their religion, mother tongue, territory as well as nationality, but they also accept core values of other cultures. Local community, according to young Belarusians, lives in full harmony, shapes attitudes of openness and respect for others, and is attached to shared values, arising primarily from inhabiting a common state (See in: Nikitorowicz, 2001, p. 97; Sadowski, 1995, p. 218). However, in the surveyed of a double national status assimilative type of ethnic co-habitation dominates. One can assume that in the double national status respondents’ consciousness, some representatives of national minorities inhabiting their hometown try to assimilate culture of the majority, because they consider it an inevitable condition for social acceptance, whereas majority representatives try to create a homogenous society based on their values. Among the surveyed of Polish nationality, a type of ethnic cohabitation that prevails can be best described as cultural pluralism. It can be assumed that, in the consciousness of the young Poles, the inhabitants of their hometown belonging to different national and ethnic groups “have a full opportunity, on the basis of legally formed and publicly ensured equal chance, to maintain their identity as well as preserve and develop their own culture” (Sadowski, 1995, p. 222). It is different with the surveyed group of other national status, which is dominated by a type of ethnic cohabitation referred to as cultural conflict. It can be supposed that in their consciousness the members of minority and majority represent contradictory objectives, values, motives, bearing, which leads to competing between them (Nikitorowicz, 2003, p. 753).

In my research, I was also interested in whether the surveyed young feel secure in their hometown. Consequently, the research has shown that all of the surveyed (100%) feel secure in their town. They mentioned various reasons for feeling secure, which are displayed in table 5.

Table 5. Respondents’ national self-identification and reasons for feeling secure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for feeling secure</th>
<th>National self-identity</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Belarusian</td>
<td>Polish/Belarusian</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of people</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number of people</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Because I know almost everyone here”</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Because here I have a family and friends I can always rely on”</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Because it is a peaceful town of low crime and aggression rate”</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Because good and decent people live here”</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The research has revealed, that 12% of the respondents describing themselves as Polish feel secured, because they are familiar with almost everybody in their hometown. As many as 80% of young Poles feels secure in their hometown, because there they have family and friends they can always rely on. The surveyed of Polish nationality are secure in their place of residence also because: “it is a peaceful town with low crime and aggression rate” (2.7%), “town is well secured by the police” (5.3%). At the same time, it has to be pointed that 50% of the respondents describing themselves as Belarusians feel secure because they are familiar with majority of inhabitants, while 23.1% of young Belarusians feel secure in their hometown because there they have family and friends they can rely on. The surveyed of Belarusian descent feel secure in their current place of residence also because “good and decent people live here” (26.9%). In a surveyed group having double national status (Polish and Belarusian) 30% of the participants feel secure because they are familiar with almost everyone in their hometown. The surveyed of double nationality status feel secure in their hometown also because there they have family and friends they can rely on (30%), “good and decent people live here” (40%). With respect to the surveyed of other nationality, 100% of them feel secure in their current place of residence because “it is a peaceful town of low crime and aggression rate”. The differences in selected reasons for feeling secure among the four surveyed groups of varied national self-identification turned out to be statistically relevant ($\chi^2 = 88.389; \text{df} = 12; p < 0.001$).

The sense of security is a significant reason for accepting one’s hometown. Majority of the surveyed of Polish nationality feels secure in their town because members of their family live there. It signifies that family bonds are probably an indicator of security for young Poles. Majority of young Belarusians feels secure in their hometown because they know almost all of their neighbours. Therefore, the security indicator in a hometown for Belarusian respondents is probably living in a community in which everybody knows one another. It is also an indicator of their inner bond, proving that we deal with an integrated community. Whereas in a surveyed group of double national status (Polish and Belarusian), majority feels secure in their town because good and decent people live there. The fact that the surveyed belonging to this group highlight leading a decent life may signify the existence of strong inner bond. Honesty is also a characteristic feature of traditional local communities in the view of their inhabitants, one of the essential rules determining behaviour. It determines the character of a community collective life. The security
indicator in case of the surveyed of other national status is most probably the lack of social pathologies phenomenon, such as hooliganism (crime), vandalism, in their place of residence.

The subject of my interest were also plans concerning future residence in a hometown by the respondents (graph 3).

Graph 3. Respondents’ national self-identification and future residence in their hometown

![Graph 3](image)

Source: Own research.

The research has shown, that 12% of the respondents describing themselves as Polish wants to continue living in their hometown in the future, as opposed to 88% who wish otherwise. However, 50% of the respondents describing themselves as Belarusian want to live in the same place in the future. Also 50% of the respondents of Belarusian nationality have no intention to inhabit their hometown in the future. In a group of double nationality status (Polish and Belarusian), 60% want to live in their hometown in the future, as opposed to 40% who do not wish to do so. However, 100% of the surveyed of other national status does not link their future with their current place of residence. The differences in selected reasons for inhabiting a hometown in the future among the four surveyed groups of varied national self-identification turned out to be statistically relevant \( \chi^2 = 22.293; \) df = 3; \( p \leq 0.01 \).

The analysis of the above data proves that majority of the respondents describing themselves as Polish do not want to live in their hometown in the future, probably because they do not feel that they belong there, as well as they are aware of the lack of prospect for development of the town and aspire for changes in their lives. A similar approach in this respect is also shown by the surveyed of other national status. With the Belarusian respondents, half of them declared their intention to stay in a hometown in the future, whereas the other half claim otherwise. It is probably caused by the fact that they are very tightly bonded with local community, attached to their own religion, mother tongue, territory as well as to
national status, while others are enticed by the prospect of a better life in a bigger, developing city. In the surveyed group of double national status, the attitudes concerning future residence in their current place of residence are similar to those of Belarusian respondents – they are strongly bonded to a greater extent, however an opportunity to raise the standard of living draws them to a huge city. Why does that happen? The reason for it may lie in the fact that “a place is the beginning and the end of our migration, space is movement, while movement in space is a natural process, arising both our curiosity, and fear of the new hidden in boundlessness of space (Petrykowski, 2003, p. 214).

Summary

Summing up the above deliberations, it has to be said that all respondents are bonded with their current place of residence. A small hometown is for the surveyed young primarily a legacy of ancestors, but also their family and friends’ place of residence. Positive attitude towards a place of residence dominates among the surveyed young. However, people describing themselves as Polish do not identify themselves with their homeland. Belarusians, people of double national status – Polish and Belarusian, as well as individuals of other national status fully identify with their motherland. The surveyed young are generally strongly bonded with the residents of a town. Nevertheless, the young Belarusians and the respondents of double national status can be characterized as having slightly stronger bond with the local community, than people describing themselves as Polish. Considering the issue of ethnic cohabitation character in the view of the surveyed young, one can notice that, according to the young Belarusians, inhabitants of their hometown constitute a shared community. According to the majority of the surveyed holding double national status, the local community is aware of ethnic differentiation. Majority of the surveyed of Polish nationality claim that inhabitants of their hometown notice divisions, but do not seem to pay attention to conflicts. The group of other national status maintains that the type of ethnic cohabitation that dominates in their place of residence, can be described as cultural clash. The research has also shown that all of the surveyed feel secure in their hometown. Considering plans concerning future residence of the surveyed young in their hometown, it can be noticed that majority of the respondents describing themselves as Polish do not intend live in their hometown in the future. A similar attitude can be observed in the respondents of other national identity. Among the surveyed of Belarusian nationality, as well as those of double national status, some declare their intention to stay in their hometown, while others declare otherwise.
References

Books and articles


**Journals**


Why are fairy tales and legends still told? These magic stories are a special key to the apprehension of culture of one's society. In spite of their having emerged ages ago, in the reality other than today, among country cottages, they communicate universal emotions and values.

The tales of the old people, legends (Woźniak, 1987, p. 24), both traced to the ancient as well as those closer to the present day, are a kind of interpretation of the culture of the region, particularly the key to understanding the specific community. They are also an expression of feelings repeated in a given culture, and often a suggestion on how to deal with them.

Legends and stories related to a specific region depict “our family roots” and remind us of values that must be continuously cultivated, namely the love of one's country, the closest land, so called “small motherland”.

Many of them have not yet been written down and are still circulating orally thanks to the memory of the oldest inhabitants. Others, because of the current value of the regional revitalization, seeking to identify with the heritage of ancestors and interest in local stories, have been compiled (Niewińska, 1995; Lippoman, 2008; Koronkiewicz, 2003, 2007; Gerasimiuk, 2006; Samojlik, 2008; Czajkowski, 2003).

I have interviewed inhabitants of villages and analysed legends of Podlaskie Province. The collected regional stories have allowed me to enter the world of grandfathers. I asked the inhabitants of villages, what they would like to save from the past, from their “courtyard”. I want to draw attention to showing the magical thinking, the need for punishment and reward, love of nature and faith in miracles – the attitudes nearly gone in urban areas.

The source material is so diverse and rich that it could be used to enrich school and after-school programs, at various stages of education.

After analysing the source material, I wanted to propose several paths, thematic circles, which can enrich the education of contemporary children, and used to compose library-therapeutic or socio-therapeutic programs.

Jerzy Nikitorowicz sees the need for transfer and consolidation of knowledge about the region, its opportunities and differences, such as: the problems of the en-
vironment, local history, the role of family in transmitting traditions, moral values. The awareness of the problems of the region is still necessary. The role of family and school is to nurture the memory of family and local heritage, so that children do not reject the heritage of their ancestors. It is essential to form a social identity (Nikitorowicz, 2009, p. 214). The tales of rural area could also help to enrich the urban space – often anonymous, cynical, and uprooted.

We can look for:
1. Significant people, who may serve as a personal model
2. Cultural borderland in the Podlaskie Province
3. Value-memory, of such values as:
   a) tradition
   b) work
   c) respect for nature
   d) love
   e) justice (reward and punishment)
4. Memories of the old space (past and present, the meaning of symbolic space)
   a) family biographies

**Significant people, who may serve as a personal model**

Among the magical tales, the stories of a male hero who fulfils the superhuman task are frequent. In collected sources material I searched for specific female characters, meaning brave, courageous women, who have benefitted the region, for example by protecting its borders, nature, and culture – spiritual and material.

I have created a classification of those women:

a) **women founders, founders of the places and institutions**

Izabela Branicka – in the years 1762–1763 established a maternity palace school (Koronkiewicz, 2003, p. 141); Queen Bona (Michalak, 1996, pp. 16–17, 50–53; Interview with Mrs Fiedorczuk, 2010); Princess Helena, daughter of Tsar Ivan III, wife of Aleksander Jagiello – their marriage was an attempt to combine the two religions, thanks to her a monastery in Supraśl is built (Koronkiewicz, 2003, pp. 61–62); Queen Jadwiga – founder of the church in Choroszcz.

b) **women brave in the face of a threat to homeland and loved ones**

I found stories about mothers that brought their sons to honest and brave people, who imposed on them such values as loyalty and service to the country (Lippoman, 2008, pp. 193–196). I also found a tale about a young woman, who, during World War II in the area near Michałowo, tried to help the partisans by supplying them with clothes and food (Lippoman, 2008, pp. 71–73).
c) women protecting wildlife, nature, native land

For example, so-called ghost of the White Lady-Countess, which can be found on the land of the current Village Museum in Ciechanowice, or herbalists, witches, faith healers.

The symbiosis, a strong relationship with nature was the basis for power of herbalists, witches, called in the local dialect “szeptucha” or “matiuszka”. They were the local doctors, astrologers, psychologists – healing diseases of body and soul. Their wisdom was based on love, hope and faith, and gave people the joy of life, they do not infringe the rights of nature. These women were the medium of harmony of nature and supernatural (Janion, 2006, p. 67). People living in forests from many generations believed that in the body of a witch resides the ghost of the Forest, whose goal is precisely to watch over the balance of nature.

According to one folk tale, near the present-day in Szudziałowo, located in the middle of Knyszyńska Forest, lived a woman who cured people and took care of animals (Lippoman, 2008, pp. 20–21). Each village had its “szeptucha”, who could relieve skin diseases (Interview with Maria Dacewicz, 2010) or give advice on improving marital relations. They cured by sifting through the ashes or burning wax (Interview with Eugenia Sidoruk, 2010). They also transferred their power from generation to generation, from mother to daughter.

d) women who cultivate national traditions

Examples can be found in fragments of the diary of Mirosława Aleksandrowicz (Aleksandrowicz, 2010).

Cultural borderland in the Podlaskie Province

The Podlaskie Province is an example of cultural borderline. Contrary to most of Poland, which is homogenous in terms of ethnicity and religion, the North Eastern Region of Poland has several minorities. For many centuries Jaćwing’s tribes, Jews, Tartars, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians lived there, so their cultural, social, political, and economical influences remained. In analysing such relations, legends and other folk stories are very useful.

I have analysed about two hundred stories passed over from generation to generation, existing in the Podlaskie Province in the “we”/ “them” (“other”) context.

I have differentiated three types of cultural borderlands in those stories.

a) Religious borderland

Motifs present in Podlasie folk tales are connected with places of worship – some refer to times of Slavic tribes, others underline deep religiosity, the relationship of rural residents with Christianity, their faith in the power of prayer and divine plan.

The oldest name of the city –Białystok – is associated with Jaćwing’s tribes that lived in areas between the Neman and Narew rivers (Koronkiewicz, 2003, p. 19). They were also pushed out from Drohiczyn by Bolesław the Chaste (King of Poland) in
the mid-thirteenth century. Their defeat is associated with a tale of hidden treasures, which says that, during their escape, they buried gold idols near Choroszcz town, on the Mount of St. John. In addition, the name of the hill survived as “Świętakowizna” (from the name of the Slavic god) or “Babia Góra” (Mount of Women). The second name was derived from women who were staying there and were faithful to the old beliefs (Koronkiewicz, 2003, pp. 8–13).

Choroszcz itself for centuries had a multi-ethnic climate, its residents prayed in four different churches: the Catholic, Uniate, Orthodox Jewish Synagogue and the Evangelical church.

The Christianisation of the area of Podlasie ended in the nineteenth century, which is often associated with vandalism due to the cutting down of the sacred trees, burning old temples – everything that reminded of tales and legends of Podlasie (Janion 2006; Bruckner 1980). Jaćwings left over 500 of tombs in Białowieża Forest in the wilderness called “Zamczysko”. Jaćwig warriors, as the legend said, are probably also buried in Drohiczyn at the Castle Hill.

After the arrival of Christianity, in places known for cures, miracles, and revelations temples were built, as an act of thanks to God and the Virgin Mary. Folk tales noted deep attachment to the providence of God, and this is often believed to be miraculous.

There are many places of Christian worship in Podlasie, places of wonder or so-called “living water”, for example: Szmurły (Interview with Mrs. Dojs, 2010), Krypno (Koronkiewicz, 2007, p. 73), Święta Woda near Wasilków, Grabarka, Stary Kornin, Lady, Dobrowoda, Zawyki, Lubiec.

The border between paganism and Christianity in many legends and folklore is fluid. The old order was replaced by a new one, but revitalization is still present. Folk magical thinking and the need for wonder are profoundly rooted in human mentality.

b) Ethnic – national borderland

There is an interesting Belarusian story about the demarcation of the border between Poland and Belorussia. Probably then this saying arose: Remember, Lasze (an old Polish name), the land as far as the Bug (the river) is ours! (Gerasimiuk, 2006, p. 78).

Many stories emphasize the support from representatives of other nationalities during wars fought by Polish people over the centuries. Particularly emphasized is courage, bravery of Tatars knights, at the same time, of Polish patriots (Gerasimiuk, 2006, p. 99).

After the Swedish invasion Tatar settlements were established in eastern Poland. Nowadays Tartars live in Kruszyniany, Bohoniki, Sokółka, and Białystok. The story about one warrior named Ali survived in folk memory. It is said that he defeated phantoms in the cemetery in Sokółka (Lippoman, 2008, p. 61).

Another Tartar hero (in the mid-seventeenth century), living around the Grzybowszczynsza village, had a dream – an angel showed him the location of the hidden
treasure. After a long search and digging in the ground in the forest, he came across a huge stone. He turned a rock over and set up the river (now called Nietupa).

Tatar Burdziłło from Tykocin, after overcoming many religious and cultural obstacles, married his beloved Lubka. This tale became a common history against the Teutonic Knights, and an attempt to explain that we are not strangers, but we create unity as we have common fate (Koronkiewicz, 2003, p. 49).

In folk tales, a significant impact of various nationalities on Polish material culture is visible. Their presence in old stories, passed on from generation to generation, is important for creating high awareness of the existence of ethnic diversity, and what is more, emphasising its merits.

In the oldest tales, the topic of the Jews is also present. In Mielnik village, no one besides a Jew helped a man who returned from II World War. Years later, he recalled: “only a Jew helped me”. Even the first doll that his daughter gets is a gift from a Jew (it was so-called Wanka-Wstańka) (Interview with Maria Dacewicz, 2010). Mielnik village on the Bug River is also the ethno-national border of the region, with its interesting history of both the material and the spiritual. Our roots are also a part of Lithuania. In the sixteenth century, Queen Bona, to balance the Germanization in the current Podlasie, settled there also Lithuanians.

One of them, at the meeting point of three country borders-Polish, Lithuanian, Russian, on the Wiżajny lakeside set up a village under the same name. As a folk legend says, the water nymph helped him (Lippoman, 2008, p. 117).

c) Linguistic borderland

Traces of names of villages are found in cultural borderland. Many Belarusian names have been polonaised, such as Sawiny Gród, Holakowa Szyja, Sorocza Nóżka.

Tales and legends can be told once again, used in working with youth and children. These stories explain the existence of the community, they are a key to understanding culture and they are a sort of cultural dream. We could organize bibliotherapeutic workshops in order to involve young people emotionally in contents related to their “small homeland”. It would teach about tolerance, using drama or other techniques of improvisation, where the participants would become members of the multi-ethnic society. This work would explore the specificity of culturally diverse groups (Haudford, Karolak, 2009).

Value-memory

What is the role of folk tales in the transmission of moral values? I have established three functions.

a) the value of tradition

As the flowers are the pride of the earth and plants, so the habits and customs are the gravy of our daily lives. They are the heritage of the centuries (Gloger, 1888).
As we can derive from the stories of older inhabitants of the villages, formerly common work integrated the community and people connected by common work felt closer. There were also opportunities for social gatherings (sometimes then marriages were formed). One of those social activities was making sauerkraut. During the winter girls gathered in cottages on the occasion of spinning and tearing feathers. A dozen women gathered in one cottage.

Every mother bred geese because quilts and pillows were basic elements of a dowry of every young girl. Mothers made them for their daughters. In addition, baking bread, making butter and cheese was a constant occupation of farmers.

Harvest festivals were also a way of cultivating tradition, where young people gathered and gave crowns and bread to their fathers and mothers. Many beautiful traditions are associated with Christmas Eve (Interviews with Józef Nikitorowicz, Maria Dacewicz, Eugenia Sidoruk; see also: Babicz, Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa, 1978, pp. 150–159). Abandoning some traditions was mentioned by the interviewed with regret.

Mrs Mirosława Aleksandrowicz was awarded in the fourth edition of the regional literary contest on the history of the region “Nasze Gniazdo” (“Our Nest”). I survived to save the images of those times and events from being forgotten. I did from a great need of my heart (Aleksandrowicz, 2010, p. 50) – the author was writing in a diary. Her mother appears in a diary as a silent heroine, who alone after the outbreak of the Second World War had to constantly look for new safe place to stay, to save her and her children’s lives (her husband was lost). Despite threats and constant traveling, Mirosława remembered one Christmas in Poczopek that showed her mother’s attachment to tradition and the validity of its cultivation.

I do not remember what we had to eat, but under the table, covered with white cloth, was a smelling hay. According to the tradition, after supper we dragged the blades of grass from the cloth. Annual holidays were celebrated solemnly (Aleksandrowicz, 2010, p. 16). On the other hand, Easter was remembered thanks to a special woman called Mrs Stasichka. She had made some beautiful Easter eggs. As the author of the diary said, she learnt the secret of doing the Ester eggs right then.

b) work

All the people with whom I spoke remembered the hard work: (...) parents were busy; there was a lot of children, and to keep control over them an adult invented, or added to well-known stories, fragments intended to scare a child. Every grandmother, for her own purposes, frightened children (Interview with Agnieszka Łęczycka, 2010)

Another woman mentioned that (...) for a long time there was hard work. There were a lot of children, but it was obligatory for them to rip buckwheat, lupine, dig potatoes; women also spun, wove, sow linen (...). The hardest times for women came after the war, when a lot of them became widows, lost their husbands or sons (Interview with inhabitant of Narew village, 2010).
A woman carries three quoins, and a man carries one quoin—(...) – in such a way the role of women in the family was defined by an elderly lady from Grabowiec village. Women decided about most of the matters in the family (Interview with Mrs Hanna, 2010).

c) respect for nature

I was interested to see, what these sources say about the environment problems and respect for nature.

We must not destroy the land we live on. The protection of landscape is as important as the protection of monuments of material culture, the nation, or taking care of language. Love of nature is an expression of the emotional relationship with the land, inheritance. Therefore, an attitude towards nature can be a measure of attachment to the fatherland, respect for it and its ancestors.

Symbiosis with nature, animism, were visible on the example of herbalists, medicine-women who have the power to heal and make charms, who also probably knew the speech of animals, for example the women from the village Czechy Orlańskie (Gierasimiuk, 2006, p. 85), Szudziałowo (Lippoman, 2008, p. 20), Hajdukowszczyzna (Interview with Krystyna Rusaczyk, 2010). Nowadays Walentyna from Orla village, who has helped ill people, has become famous all over Poland.

The above tales are examples that people were in closer contact with than today. That nature, when we tried to listened it, indicated sources of water with medicinal properties (called “living water”), showed man-friendly space for settlement, examples of that are Boćki village (Lippoman, 2008, p. 22) or monastery in Supraśl (Czajkowski, 2003, p. 61; Koronkiewicz, 2003, pp. 61–62). People for years have enjoyed the benefits of the land, and they had more respect for nature and her rights, as well as for beliefs and rituals. In legends of the current Podlasie, one finds expressions of the belief in sacred trees, especially oaks (Lippoman, 2008, p. 89-90), the spirit of the forest (often in the form of a bison). While wonders were explained as an interference of nature, and therefore, people thanked the spirits of nature, gods, and other Slavic demons. One should honour them for their help (Bruckner, 1980, pp. 41–48). The oak that grew in Tofilowce once a week could help the neediest (Gierasimiuk, 2006, p. 87). In the area of the Kusiczy village a tree grew, which was thought to be a defender of the village. It drew all the lightning, burned several times, but returned to life (Gierasimiuk, 2006, p. 73).

Many of the stories emphasize, how people in old days took care of nature around them: (...) respected and did not cut down trees without need, because they knew that nature is a shelter for animals and birds, source of food for humans (Kazberuk, 2010). A bad man was banished from the Cisówka village for illegal cutting of yew trees.

As the legend says, prince Daniel, the son of the King of Russia (in the middle of the 13th century) did not respect nature, violated her rights, and ignored her power. While he was riding with a marriage proposal to Poland, a water nymph cursed him and as a result, there was no marriage and war between Poland and Russia flared up again (Koronkiewicz, 2003, pp. 39–41).
d) love

The need for love, the power of true feelings in the stories of the Podlasie region, may be an example that a true feeling is worth waiting for.

I analysed fairy tales, traditions, and legends depicting a tragic romantic love. There are also others, in which love undergoes severe trials but finally wins, it is love long awaited, but satisfied in the end.

True love never dies. Who loves truly, will be faithful and no one can change his/her mind. An example of this is the bride of Szczuczyn (the story from the seventeenth century), who died mourning her beloved – her heart broke from the pain. The legend says that God heard her pleas and did not allow an unwelcome marriage with another man.

The theme of rival families of two lovers was popular. This rivalry was never an obstacle for lovers – therefore, we can talk of romantic love, often unfulfilled, unhappy, but stronger than death.

After death, ghosts of lovers Prince Wasyl and Presława, daughter of the witch Ksantypa, meet once a month at new moon. Wasyl is buried in the wilderness called Zamczysko and his beloved – in a nearby barrow in the Białowieża Forest. Their love story took place in the eleventh century.

A drama of lovers from two warring families of Lithuania took place on the shores of Lake Gaładyś – at the border of Poland and Lithuania. Great affection for a peasant girl from Łaziuki village burned in a nobleman. For her, he went into hell, to which the gate was, as the story said, in an old willow tree by the Lake Niklerz. That is an example of the theme of challenging the devil. The moral was: when you really love somebody, even the devil is not scary (Koronkiewicz, 2003, pp. 48–52).

A moving story was that of love of a hunter Bogumił for a goddess, who was transformed into a deer. He was not aware of this fact and shot her. Then he looked after the wounded girl for months. Eventually she remained with him and they lived happily ever after, had fourteen children, whose descendants live in the Białowieża Forest to this day. It is said about them, that they are “real people of the forest”; they do not feel well anywhere else, they are “marked by the wilderness” (Koronkiewicz, 2003, p. 69).

e) justice (reward and punishment)

A common theme of folk tales is a collapse of temples and churches, which are then buried in the ground. People said that the cause of their disappearance was a lack of faith in God among rural residents and sins committed by the people attending the mass. Such tales are told about churches in Czyże, Kruszyniany, Łomża, Zawyki, Mikołajewo, Muryny, Tokary (Gierasimiuk, 2006, p. 79).

There is still a strong belief in the divine care and justice in many villages in the Podlaskie Province. Present rural residents and their descendants claim that the fire in Czechy Orlańskie village in 1990, which burst suddenly, was extinguished by the power of prayer (Interview with Mrs Hanna, 2010).
The same happened in the village Dmitrowicze (the rural commune that existed until 1939, now in Belarus). An elderly woman saved this village from the fire by praying to the icon of Virgin Mary Protector. Local people believe that her prayers caused a miracle, the fire died down, and the church and the rest of the village survive to this day (Gierasimiuk, 2006, p. 56).

A woman from Narew village claims that God saved the driver, who fell asleep behind the wheel, warning him against the crash. God appeared to him in a dream and woke him up (Interview with Agnieszka Łęczycka, 2010).

In Supraśl, ghosts forced local residents to clean up a neglected cemetery (Czajkowski, 2003, pp. 52–54).

A mother, who did not care for their children, received the punishment for greediness and laziness (Czajkowski, 2003, pp. 36–38).

On the other hand, there is a belief that a loving mother will watch over her child even after death (Sienkiewicz, Wasila, 2010, p. 66). In stories we find beliefs that dead mothers’ ghosts come to their orphaned children to feed them or rock them, but they are not visible to anybody. This illustrates the essence of parental care, and a special role of mother as a guardian in the family in the countryside. In folk mentality, only mother’s love was so strong that it could materialize in any place and time to protect the children (Interview with Elżbieta G., 2010; Interview with Bogusława Gawrylczyk, 2010).

Belief in a hidden treasure is also a variant of theme of punishment or reward. On one hand, there are cursed treasures bringing misfortune because they were paid for with human blood or soul (a soul was sold to a devil). On the other hand, the prize – treasure, is a reward for honest work and effort. For example, Złota Wieś (Golden Village) owes its name to golden treasure, hidden somewhere at the foot of the mountain, known as the Golden Mountain, lost by a greedy wife, who drowned saving the gold. The palace in Różany supposedly hides treasures of Sapieha Prince (Gierasimiuk, 2006, p. 21). One story says that cursed gold, for which one of the local farmers sold his soul to the devil, lies near Krupice village. Another legend says that the finder of a ruby ring, which was buried on the shores of the Lake Dreństwo, will get happiness and prosperity for the rest of his life (Lippoman, 2008, p. 174).

Until this day near Krzemienna Góra in Knyszyńska Forest, you can hear the ghost of the bride calling his beloved. Girl’s brothers, greedy for gold, murdered her future husband shortly before the wedding. However, they did not find the treasure because, as the story says, it may only be revealed by a man of pure heart.

Memories of old space
(past and present, the meaning of symbolic space)

a) family biographies

Discovering our own family roots, traditions and their role of tradition in family could be interesting. Discovering a witnesses of the great history by micro-history, history of the closest persons, history not only from textbooks – these are the
best examples of revitalization of values, traditions, feelings directed towards a small homeland. This way emotions connecting generations are born.

I would like to present an interesting monograph of the Łęczyca family, crest of Niesobia from Podlasie, written by Jan Łęczyca in 2007. As the author wrote, this monograph was a gift for newly wed family members.

This monograph was titled *Silva rerum*, which means *lots of things* This was a name given by Polish people to a special type of domestic books, where family members reported most important events of family life. They were so called ancestral books, and the author regrets that this custom has already disappeared. His dream is to complete this monograph: (...) gaining greater knowledge of the history of the family is not just for my own amusement or megalomania. It is an important signpost; an imperative for future behaviour and actions that bond a family (...). It is a proof of memory and respect for relatives who are no longer among us.

In the monograph, we can find, for example, the history of a name Łęczyca in Poland (it was a noble name from the beginning of XVI century), the origin of the family, heraldic legends.

The best way to commemorate the symbolic space, old places and people, is a historical museum. The museum in Narew is such a place. There from the very beginning all the exhibits are collected, maintained, restored, cleaned, and welded by one person – the owner and custodian of the museum Marian Święcki. The aim of establishing the museum was to preserve the events of the past for descendants, to promote the tradition of Podlasie and highlight the actions of merit.

Mr Święcki uses old things, his own ideas because, as he says, it is free. He called his museum “regional museum” and is proud of the fact that, when tourists come to the museum, he is able to guide them for as long as three hours. (...) People who arrive even from abroad, can look and maybe use some of the ideas (source: own research). He likes to talk, he wants to talk, and he is happy that he can be a guide.

Personally, he considers himself to be rooted, and his motto is a belief that a nation without its own history is dead. (...) All the time I am doing something here, this is my whole life (source: own research). Therefore, the museum contains an interesting and original collection of stones, collected by the owner, as he says – he could see different forms in them, for example shapes of the animals. In the museum, we can also find an old farm tools like harrows, a treadmill, a harvester, threshing machine, and a rack wagon with iron wheels; clothing like the uniforms from the early twentieth century, embroidered shirt from 1920, a Soviet soldier’s uniform, miner’s suit etc.

Showing me the original rattrap he said: (...) think that people from previous generations, to make their lives easier, had to invent a lot of things by themselves, not like today, when we can find everything in the store (...) (source: own research).

In the museum, we can find the gallery of over 200 photos, presenting Narew village in the past and present.

Unique stories connected with many exhibits cause them to stop being ordinary, come alive, and deserve respect. For example, there is a greatcoat from 1920,
in which the soldier fought in the Russian-Japanese war and went on foot all the way from Mongolia; or a frying pan made by a local blacksmith, which had been used by a family during the war and for many years after.

An interesting collection, which may be an inspiration for researchers interested in folklore and history of the region, is a collection of *Nowe legendy gminy Michałowo (New legends of Michałowo Municipality)*, gathered and edited by secondary school pupils. In this collection of sixty-six short stories, we can find explanations of the names of villages situated in Michałowo Municipality. These stories are partly fictitious, however, in the legend not historical truth is important but motivation to acquire knowledge. Existence of this small book is a proof of young people’s desire for knowledge of local culture. It was an effort for them to find interesting people, who are fond of the region. Such projects are extremely enriching for contemporary urban space.

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What could we save from rural space? How and to what extent that content could enrich urban space? What does survive from the past? Which events? About who? About what? How to give them value today?

In the tales and legends, we will not find historical truth, but motivation to study. They are cultural dreams. Traditions, values, historical facts come alive here, but they are an expression of a specific memory, a human memory, but still a social memory.

They are a collection of what have existed in the minds of old people from generations, what is important for them. In the stories of Podlasie we could find, as I wrote in this article, for example elements of cultural borderland, strength, power of tradition, also a touching love story or hidden treasures.

From time immemorial, legends, fairy tales, stories were passed on from generation to generation. Legends, fairy tales and stories connected with a region fulfilled particular role – to build bonds with this region and its tradition. They talked about specificity of culture of a small part of the country and, at the same time, communicated integration of a particular community with the whole country. Reading legends may have a decisive influence on the personality of a young reader, shape his empathy and sensitivity to other cultures, and awaken reflections on the history of the region.

As a resident of Podlasie, I am convinced of the importance of broadening young people’s knowledge of the region by familiarizing them with such elements of folklore as tales and legends. I also consider reflection on the role of the family in cultivation and preservation of cultural heritage important.

It seems to me that nowadays we could benefit from the wisdom of “the older”, which could be transferred to next generations (traditions, folklore, language, memories, fairy tales, legends, omens, rituals). Perhaps this is the last opportunity in the world of modern civilization to revitalize those values, which are being destroyed by
mass culture. I am convinced that, in the ever-changing contemporary world, role of family in cultivating traditions and passing them on is especially important. It seems necessary to teach children, young people, the younger generation about their own culture in the family, inside this living tradition.

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INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN URBAN AND RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Introduction

In the literature, much attention is paid functioning of schools in culturally diverse environments (in a multicultural environment). These issues for a long time were a subject of deep analysis of many research centres in our country. Reasons for interest in this subject are related primarily to the fact of cultural diversity of modern societies, with the ever advancing world of migrations (Nikitorowicz, Misiejuk, Sobiecki, 2007, pp. 16–29). On the other hand, this situation is not new, because people of different nationalities inhabited our country for centuries. They were following various religions, customs and rituals, which is particularly evident in areas of the borderland. Jerzy Nikitorowicz says, “we encounter the phenomenon of multiculturalism throughout the history of mankind, as man and his culture develop best when confronted diversity and convictions of another man” (Nikitoworicz, 2005, p. 63). This phenomenon, however, will continue to expand, in fact, further differentiation of modern societies cannot be avoided. Elżbieta Czykwin writes: “(...) Poland will become a place where foreigners from different parts of the world stay for a longer or shorter period of time. Opening up to other countries will cause Poles to confront “other” or “alien” that so far, on a mass scale, has been met mostly with stereotypes and prejudices. Attitudes of respect, tolerance, and curiosity towards otherness can and should be developed in respect to national minorities who live among us, and strengthen by the fact that common fate and citizenship brings us closer to them” (Czykwin, 1996, p. 97). This issue is particularly important since the European Parliament adopted the proposal of the European Commission, and year 2008 became the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

Moreover, as anticipated in the “Scenarios for Europe“, by the year 2010 every fourth inhabitant of the continent will be a migrant (Niemiec, 2003, p. 74). According to Statistical Office GUS’ data between 1989 and 2002 more than 85,000 people, including 16,445 school-age children, came to Poland from abroad.

In just three years (from 2001 to 2004) in Poland, approximately 500 children were born in repatriant families. Of course, for this reason there are many doubts

1 Scientific work financed from funds for science in the years 2009–2011 as research project.
as to the shape of contemporary and future education. There is growing consensus about the concept of “school without borders”, main feature of which is educating students to be open towards other people and cultures. The basis of this type of education introducing young people to the culture of “small homelands”, while shaping tolerance, openness, and honesty with oneself and others. However, studies show that in contemporary elementary schools there are no conditions to accomplish this kind of task. The example can be the lack of adequate teaching aids, especially well-designed textbooks with appropriate content (Igielska, 2006, p. 10).

In the '90s in the Białystok region, the research related to the shape of education was carried out in a multicultural environment, which showed a clear negligence on the part of teachers of issues of cultural diversity (Czykwin, Misiejuk, 1998, pp. 51–55). Research conducted in 1997 among the teaching staff in Warsaw had similar results. Although more than a half of respondents gave an affirmative answer to the question “whether the school teaches tolerance towards other ethnic groups and nations”, few people could give examples of specific educational activities in this field. Among teachers, there was no agreement as to the assessment of the curriculum. However, according to most, the existing curriculum is the cause of the fact that the school can teach tolerance at a minimum, and even school textbooks contain little on the subject, that would be allow to create a positive image of the “other” (Nasalska, 1999, p. 78). A few years later, a study was conducted, in which researchers examined the content of history books, searching for topics related to multiculturalism. It turned out that virtually none of the texts had a direct reference to this type of education (Stańkowski, 2004, p. 44).

Full professionalism of teachers is very important. It is associated with so-called professional qualifications. As noted by Genowefa Koć-Seniuch, this level of professionalism is expected from a qualified teacher, and is expressed by competence, demonstrating specific techniques and skills (Koć-Seniuch, 2003, p. 45). Contemporary teacher functioning in a democratic society should not only have certain abilities, but also develop them – especially in the context of cognition and communication. So on one hand, teachers should carefully consider selection and implementation of educational content, because it primarily depends on them, how it will be done. On the other hand, school programs created by the teachers should be thoroughly analysed. It is assumed that future school programs will include entirely new areas of knowledge; there are also new subjects and courses. While the society will become increasingly diverse in terms of culture, more and more educational content will be added to teach about cultural diversity (Ornstein, Hunkins, 1998, pp. 368–378).

In Poland a need for the in-depth analysis of multicultural contents exists because for many years there were no practical tips for exercising the cross-cultural education (Weigl, 1999, p. 10). Undoubtedly, the reform of the education system brought about many changes in this area, but more importantly, it gave teachers, pupils, and parents greater freedom in undertaken educational activities. In connection with the requirements of contemporary education, teacher training initiatives
are needed, to show them how to expertly “combine elements of regional and cross-cultural education” (Lewowicki, 2002, p. 38). However, they are only implemented in some schools. This does not mean that prior to 1999 there were no attempts to do something similar. In the early ’90s Primary School of the Association for Alternative Education – “TAK” School in Opole was one of the first to lunch a program “Meet with others – and let others not to be strangers” (Weigl, Maliszkiewicz, 1998). We should also remember about the assumptions of such programs and projects as: “Neighbours”, “Me towards the other” (Nasalska, 1999, p. 82), “Anti-discrimination every day”, “All different – all equal”, as well as cultural awareness program “Towards an intercultural identity” (Nikitorowicz, 2005, p. 104).

**Intercultural Education in School**

Intercultural education is, according to J. Nikitorowicz, “the sum of mutual influences and interactions of individuals and groups, institutions, organizations, associations, unions, and environment conducive to human development as a fully conscious and creative member of the family, local, regional, religious, national, continental, and global culture. It enables one to become capable of active self-realization, develop unique and lasting identity and distinctiveness”. Thus, one of the tasks of modern education is the realization of such course content, which will lead to a thorough understanding of our own culture (with its values and specificity), while exploring others, but also trigger dialog and interaction. The author therefore notes the need to construct a proper curriculum, the goal of which should be to equip pupils with knowledge of different ethnic groups, their recognition and understanding, foster open and tolerant attitudes towards “otherness” (Nikitorowicz, 2002, pp. 180–181).

In 1995, the school sent the Ministry of Education a document “Cultural Heritage in the Region. Assumptions of the Program”, which became one of the first documents governing implementation of the regional education, but it also served the purpose of multicultural education (*Dziedzictwo kulturowe w regionie*, 1995, pp. 1–4).

The document organizing teaching of this type of content was issued by the Ministry of Education on February 15 1999, and took effect on 1 September 1999. In the general education curriculum for elementary and middle schools, including educational objectives, we can find directives on teaching pupils to establish and maintain correct relations with other children, adults, people with disabilities, representatives of other nationalities and races, as well as on creating a sense of belonging to the school community, local environment, region, and country. Educational programs should also include information on similarities and differences between people, as well as the diversified heritage and research into culture, to help develop understanding and tolerance.

Regional education can serve well to implement the demands of this type, also in terms of organization (Kutrzeba, 2004, pp. 38–50). J. Nikitorowicz treats regional education as the first stage of intercultural education (Nikitorowicz, 2003, p. 936).
Regional education strengthens autonomy of schools, and supports innovative and creative solutions. The main purpose of its implementation is not to adopt the same practices in schools across the Polish. Importantly, the implementation of regional education is not only important from the standpoint of students determining their own identity, but also for development of tolerance, openness, understanding and acceptance of other cultures (Boczukowa, 2000, p. 30).

Rationale and objectives of regional education are to equip pupils with knowledge of problems of the region, whose inhabitants are to implement main recommendations of pedagogy and epistemology. The objectives and tasks are intended on allowing the fullest possible participation in community life, which involves exploring and transmission of specific values for the good of both man as an individual and the human civilization as a whole (Treder, 1999, p. 26). – This is particularly important nowadays – in an era of slogans about globalization. Many contemporary societies propagate the return to the concept of “small fatherland”, fostering regionalism and cultural values, because all people are born and grow up in an environment that teaches them and shapes their personalities. Initially the most important role in one's life is played by the family, then the school, and surroundings. Over time, number of people and other important factors affecting one's life grows. They all have a strong influence on beliefs, habits, attitudes, and system of values (Walasek, 2004, p. 163).

Concept of borderline (national, linguistic, religious) has a special significance in regional education. Here variety of values is particularly evident, and they often intertwine. Creators of the concept of regional education consider education a cultural value that should be passed from generation to generation. This essential element of education seems to be the foundation for human future. First, we shall all become members of the local community (the feeling of kinship with the “little homeland”). Next step is the identification with the country of origin. Thus, a man equipped with the appropriate cultural competence is ready to engage in the intercultural dialogue, to understand the cultural “other”.

Regional education as a pedagogical concept emerged relatively recently – in the ’90s. This does not mean that it did not work before (Petrykowski, 2003, p. 9). It seems that it appeared repeatedly at schools, even in times of war, even though the situation of our country then was not conducive to implementation of the process of this type learning. Most schools lacked the means of teaching and methodological materials for teachers. Although nowadays the cultural heritage is of particular concern, there are also significant obstacles. To properly implement regional education we lack most of all “(...) the basic experience in this field, relevant and necessary facilities, good textbooks, and numerous relevant programs (...). Moreover, we still need to work on creating good social climate around this issue” (Treder, 1999, pp. 36–37).

Raised issues are reflected in the requirements posed on education at all its stages. The need for integrating the curriculum and a holistic perception of reality has been stressed for a long time. The ability to combine subjects from different areas of our lives, and even the proper use of the knowledge in practice, are more important
than acquiring a fragmentary knowledge on specific subjects. Jerzy Niemiec, considering the transformation of modern education, notes that one of the intentions is “a departure from this training and the transition to a learning problem (…). Not objects, but mostly people should be the main concern of education (…)” (Niemiec, 2000, p. 43). It is, therefore, necessary to look at the content of education primarily in terms of the requirements that are posed on it, ways of adjusting the context of education in a multicultural society.

**Research Assumptions**

Tests were carried out in the school year 2009/2010 in sixteen schools (eight urban and eight rural) in the south–eastern part of the Podlaskie province. Four districts with varying degrees of cultural diversity were an important part of the research: Hajnowski region and Bielski region (20%), and Białystok and Siemiatycze (2%). The purpose was to have a randomized sample taken from school for ethnic minorities. Selection of a research group was based on the fact that the territory of Podlaskie is situated mostly in the border area, where different nationalities, religion, languages coexist. This is one of the reasons why locations of this type are extremely interesting from researcher’s point of view. Many contemporary works attest to this fact – for example T. Lewowicki, J. Nikitorowicz, A. Sadowski.

The main research method was a diagnose with following techniques: uncategorized interview with the management of facilities, research documents, observation and survey (to be used in the analysis, questionnaires of 618 students and 241). In the course of the study, we sought answers to following questions:

1. To what extent education about cultural diversity is reflected in records of a school?
2. To what extent teaching about multiculturalism is implemented in the surveyed schools? How to implement this type of education? Are the teaching objectives associated with the development of tolerance and openness towards others being achieved?
3. How, with which methods of training and organizational forms, and in which school subjects and cross-curricular content relating to multicultural education are implemented?

**Multiculturalism in the gymnasium – the position of school directors**

Interviews with the management of schools were needed primarily for general information related to high schools. They also provided the opinion of the directors on the selection and implementation of multicultural content.

Directors talked about the directions of changes in the selection and implementation of educational programs in the context of the reform from 1999, drew atten-
tion to the disturbances resulting from creation of gymnasiums, also argued that the content became more general, as is apparent from the summary of the curriculum and reduced number hours for certain subjects. Many people stressed that school programmes now contain more issues related to European and regional matters. Several people noticed that more information about reducing contemporary social pathologies had turned up in textbooks.

Many respondents expressed the view that high school students have no impact on the selection of educational content – half took a very firm position on this issue. Several people said that choice is possible to a small extent (e.g. choice of reading materials). Four people admitted that students can influence the content selection only for “artistic” subjects. Three respondents added that the grammar school students may, in some part, determine the form of the content of education.

Another goal of the interviews was to learn about the implementation of multicultural content. All directors agreed that it takes place in their current schools. The vast majority said that it is achieved mostly with a variety of extracurricular activities. According to the directors, various projects, educational programs, competitions, workshops, and exhibitions provide an opportunity to incorporate multicultural content. Activities of student clubs, hobby groups, bands (European clubs, regional circles) also do that. School’s tradition of preparing for holidays (e.g. Christmas carols, Christmas Eve of the school and class) are also an opportunity to teach about different cultures. Only 30% of the directors found that the content is taught in specific classes, in subjects such as the Polish language, foreign languages, social studies, history, music. Generally, need for implementing content related to multiculturalism in today’s schools is evident. Respondents express it in following statements: It is necessary and the real lesson of tolerance and respect for otherness; We must prepare students to function in a diverse environment; This is necessary in an united Europe, in times of open borders and migration; Delivery of such multiculturalism content in our operations is a necessity; Variety cannot be a problem, you need to know your value; We must protect cultural values of our society; To enrich students’ knowledge.

To a question: Do you think that content of multiculturalism is implemented sufficiently?, directors gave very different answers. Almost half of respondents said that their schools are doing very well, while adding that you can always do better. Many people noted various shortcomings in this regard: We should do it better; Need more time for extracurricular activities; That depends solely on the good will of teachers – there is no time to incorporate such content; It is often only a small fragment of the whole; Lack of financial means is an obstacle; No teachers are adequately prepared to implement the content; There are no specified basis for this.

Directors were asked, whether they think students are interested in topics related to various religions, faiths, cultures, values and traditions. All of them gave an affirmative answer. The most common comments were: If this type of content is proposed to them; Students are receptive, only their interest has to be awoken; It depends on the form; Teachers of religion confirm that students have a lot of questions and little
knowledge. They want to know, if the information is presented in an interesting form; Students know that it opens them up to the modern world.

**Forms of intercultural learning**

Interviews with management helped to establish that intercultural education in urban and rural schools is taking place in the classroom, as well as during various school activities. Schools provided us with the documentation relating to multiculturalism. Hence, following documents were subjected to analysis:

- the plans, the resulting selected school subjects (history, civics, geography, Polish language, foreign languages taught at various schools, music, art, technology, religion),
- copyright curriculum (Belarusian language, biology),
- work plans for the class teacher or class plans for educational work,
- educational programs for schools,
- documentation of extracurricular activities (plans of extracurricular activities, reports of extracurricular activities, work plans or programs of extracurricular activities),
- schools’ statutes,
- school newspaper,
- documentation of educational projects implemented at schools.

In those documents, I was looking for any information directly related to issues of cultural diversity, but also paid attention to any issues that may have an indirect relationship with it. I paid attention to the idea of regional education and various forms of its realization. Indeed, as we know, Podlasie is a very specific area of cultural heritage, formation of which was influenced by many cultures. Analysis of plans for specific subjects helped determine that the content related to multiculturalism is provided by various school subjects.

I noticed a huge flexibility in the interpretation of main objectives and core curriculum. Frequently taught topics are about Palestine, the origins of Christianity, and the history of the Jewish people. Many topics are devoted to the Reformation in Europe. In some schools, attention of pupils is drawn towards the compatibility of religions, Protestant Church’s attitude towards the Reformation, and concepts such as tolerance, religious tolerance, racism. Poland is presented as a country of many cultures and religions, and culture is treated as a unifying factor in the nation. Teachers discuss such topics as: birth of totalitarian regimes in Europe, totalitarianism, fascism, Nazism, the swastika, anti-Semitism. Other examples of topics can be: Europe is united or divided (ethnic cleansing, ethnical conflict); the political and economic transformations in Poland after 1989 (the situation of national minorities).

Multicultural education has a high potential of teaching about society. However, it must be emphasized that among the surveyed schools are those, in which this content is limited to the topic of national and ethnic minorities. In most cases,
however, multicultural content appears in multiple topics, for example society and its structure; man as a social being; the State, nation and national minorities (nation, Polonia, immigrants, ethnic minorities, ethnic minorities, national symbols, national consciousness, national and ethnic minorities living in Poland, rights of the minority, nationality and citizenship, stereotype); features and forms of state; my region – the heritage and outlook; human rights (human rights, the most important documents on human rights, the concept of ethnic and religious minorities, the rights of national minorities). The plans are created on the basis of recent school curriculum, and appear in subjects such as: regions, Euroregions, and traditional ethnic structure – a chance for a world free of nationalistic bias; Are we tolerant? – My nation and other nations (concepts of national and ethnic minorities); What is home to you? (fatherland, patriotism, nationalism, chauvinism, xenophobia, cosmopolitanism, Polonia, refugee, political asylum).

In contrast, in geography classes pupils are taught about the world's population, demographic changes, migration of populations and its implications. Emerging themes are related to the role of international organizations in the world, primarily the European Union (stages of integration, symbols, benefits and losses resulting from Polish accession). Presented topics and explanations of various phenomena are related to the individual countries of the world, for example (among others: The problem of nutrition of the population of the world – Cambodia; Mountain economics – Switzerland). In most schools, in the final year of secondary school, geography lessons are devoted to Poland and Polish regions. Many teachers talk about issues of population, conditions for development of tourism, main tourist regions of Poland, Polish cultural potential, population, and cultural heritage (the impact of historical events on the shaping of national identity – ethnicity, the most important historical and cultural objects, the names of known people in the region, the seat of local government area).

In the canon of Polish language lessons, teaching materials presented in the core curriculum, there is no direct reference to the content of multiculturalism. Rather, they focus on introduction of students to the world the broader culture. This is possible mostly by means of analysis of school reading-matter, which allows presenting variety of cultural traditions, and nurturing understanding of various customs and rites. Among presented topics there are those related to human rights, development of respectful attitude towards oneself and others, non-discrimination, respect for cultural diversity, development of openness and dialogue, awareness of being European.

Foreign languages are another group of subjects, within which multicultural content is present. In the surveyed schools, there are following language classes: English, German, Russian, and Belarusian. Pupils primarily develop and improve their grammar skills. However, surveyed documents have clear references to culture of countries, in which those taught languages are used. Students learn elements of those cultures, what usually includes information about everyday-life of people (city and its monuments, places of work, jobs, etc.). Cultural issues are often dis-
DISCUSSED HERE IN REFERENCE TO COMPARING ELEMENTS OF TRADITIONS: ENGLISH, GERMAN, RUSSIAN, BELARUSIAN, AND POLISH. MOST CONCERN HOLIDAYS, FAMILY CELEBRATIONS, WEDDING CEREMONIES. MUCH ATTENTION IS PAID TO CHRISTMAS AND EASTER. HOWEVER, IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES STUDENTS WILL ALSO LEARN THE NAMES OF VARIOUS COUNTRIES AND NATIONALITIES (OFTEN IN THE FORM OF VARIOUS COMPETITIONS AND QUIZZES AIMED AT DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CURiosity ABOUT OTHER CULTURES. NATIONAL COSTUMES AND HOLIDAY CELEBRATED IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES ARE ALSO DISCUSSED.

AN ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL DOCUMENTATION HELPED TO ESTABLISH THAT RELIGION CLASSES ARE ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT CONTENT RELATED TO CULTURAL DIFFERENCES. IN SOME SCHOOLS, BOTH IN CATHOLIC AS WELL AS ORTHODOX RELIGION CLASSES, MUCH ATTENTION IS PAID TO FAMILIARIZING STUDENTS WITH THE HERITAGE OF RELIGIOUS RITES AND INTRODUCING TRADITIONS OF BOTH RELIGIONS. THERE ARE ALSO LESSONS ON THE TRADITIONS OF CHRISTMAS, EASTER.

IN THE AREA OF MUSIC, MANY SUBJECTS CONTRIBUTING TO THE CONTENT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY CAN BE FOUND IN DOCUMENTATION OF THE SURVEYED HIGH SCHOOLS. THESE ARE TOPICS SUCH AS: MUSIC IN THE HISTORY OF CULTURE; DANCES OF DIFFERENT NATIONS; MUSIC OF NATIONAL MINORITIES: JEWISH, ROMAN, TATAR, LITHUANIAN, BELARUSIAN, UKRAINIAN, CZECH, AND SLOVAKIAN SONGS; NATIONAL SCHOOLS (POLISH, CZECH, RUSSIAN, NORWEGIAN, FRENCH, SPANISH). IN MOST SCHOOLS, IN MUSIC LESSONS REGIONAL EDUCATION IS ALSO CARRIED OUT: SONGS FROM THE REGION; MY LITTLE HOMELAND” (CULTURAL SPECIFICITY OF MY REGION – LISTENING TO RECORDINGS OF REGIONAL FOLK SONGS, FOLK DANCES OF PODLASIE, THE MUSICIANS OF THE REGION WHO HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE ARTS); MUSIC IN OUR REGION. REGIONAL ISSUES ARE OFTEN COMBINED WITH THE TRADITIONS OF CHRISTMAS, E.G., TRADITIONS OF CHRISTMAS IN A POLISH HOME – CAROLS, PASTORALS, REGIONAL CAROLS. MANY SCHOOLS EMPHASISE ANALYSIS OF POLISH TRADITIONS AND RITUALS ASSOCIATED WITH CHRISTMAS AND COMPARISON OF POLISH CUSTOMS TO THOSE THAT PREVAIL IN THE REGION. PUPILS LEARN CAROLS SUNG IN CATHOLIC AND ORTHODOX CHURCHES.

NONE OF THE SURVEYED SCHOOLS HAD ART CLASSES WITH CONTENT RELATED TO THE SUBJECT OF MULTICULTURALISM. HOWEVER, ONE OF THEM JUST ABOUT TO ESTABLISH A COURSE MODERN POLISH ART – SCULPTURE SHOWING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIGENOUS CULTURE AND OTHER CULTURAL CIRCLES. IN ALMOST ALL SCHOOLS, LINKS BETWEEN POLISH AND MEDITERRANEAN CULTURES ARE EMPHASIZED.

A LOT OF CONTENT RELATED TO MULTICULTURALISM ALSO APPEARS IN WEEKLY CLASS MEETINGS. MANY TOPICS ARE DEVOTED TO CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS OF YOUTH, SUCH AS: CLASS: OUR SMALL COMMUNITY – THE ART OF BEING IN A COMMUNITY OF TOLERANCE FOR OTHERS, CHANGING SOCIETY, HOW WE ARE SEEN BY OTHERS; ME AND OTHER PEOPLE – SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US, WHAT IT MEANS TO BE TOLERANT; HUMAN RIGHTS. IN ADDITION, IN MANY SCHOOLS, TEACHING ABOUT VARIOUS CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT TOLERANCE, PREJUDICE, AND STEREOTYPES. IN THIS CONTEXT, MANY TOPICS ARE ADDRESSED, SUCH AS: WHAT ARE TOLERANCE AND PREJUDICE; HOW TO BECOME MORE TOLERANT; TOLERANCE FOR DIVERSITY (NATIONAL, RACIAL, IDEOLOGICAL, RELIGIOUS, AND CULTURAL); SHAPING THE PRINCIPLES OF TOLERANCE (IN THE CONTEXT OF DISABILITY); RESPECTING DIFFERENCES, SHAPING TOLERANT ATTITUDES TOWARDS OTHER CULTURES; I AM SHAPING THIS COUNTRY’S FUTURE; THE
concept of tolerance – positive and negative aspects of tolerance, examples of different tolerant behaviours, tolerance is a desire to understand another human being, limits of tolerance.

Intercultural education is carried out also during a variety of extracurricular activities, as shown by my analysis of documents such as: extracurricular work plans, reports of extracurricular activities, programs or extracurricular work plans, reports on the work in school’s common room, reports of students. Of course, the activities of students in all schools are very dynamic and diverse; they are distinguished by great successes of individual schools in different areas. Those activities are mostly in the area of sports, but also voluntary work and specific activities related to certain school subjects. Evidence indicates that the extracurricular activities are an opportunity to promote cultural values of their region, as well as cultural diversity in general. We can enumerate student associations operating in following areas: regional (tourism, sightseeing, geography, historical), European (Young European), musical (school band, choirs), visual, theatre, language (Belarusian, Russian, German, English), scouting, school council.

Another group of classes granting great opportunities for understanding cultural diversity is created by schools’ various educational projects. It should also be noted that these projects are funded from different sources, hence their presence in schools is often associated with both efforts, ingenuity, and innovation of teachers and students themselves, and activities of certain management institutions. These projects are an opportunity to obtain financing, interesting and modern teaching aids. Projects are very diverse, and although they mostly deal with the promotion of health, ecology, or specific content in question, they are also associated with multiculturalism. Such actions include the following programs: “Uczniowie adoptują zabłąki” (“Students Befriend Monuments”), “Sokrates Comenius” (“Socrates Comenius”), “Szkola marzeń” (“School of Dreams”), “Cudze chwalicie, swego nie znacie” (“The Grass Is Always Greener on the Other Side”), “Tradycje Podlasia” (“Traditions of Podlasie”), “Poznając przeszłość, odnajdziesz siebie” “In Learning about the Past You Will Find Yourself”, “Mój dom, moja przystań” (“My House, My Harbour”), “W stronę Cultury”, (“Towards Culture”), “Przywróćmy pamięć” (“To Bring Memory”), “Howorymo po swojemu” (“My Language Is My Own”).

Implementation of projects is an excellent opportunity for students to collaborate with various local organizations, which include: Association of Ukrainians of Podlasie, Belarusian Cultural Society, Podlasie Heritage Association, Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage PAUCI, Circle of Rural Women. Many schools also run youth exchanges with schools in Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia, Ireland, England, Holland, Germany, and France.
Implementation of the content on multiculturalism as seen by teachers and students

The vast majority of teachers, regardless of place of work (urban school, rural school), notes the need for content related to cultural diversity in contemporary schools (42.80% respond “rather yes” and 27.12% “definitely yes”). Details are presented on the graph 1.

Graph 1. Do you see the need to teach about cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity in contemporary schools?

[Graph showing survey responses for town and village, with percentages for each category: definitely not, rather not, hard to say, rather yes, definitely yes.]

Source: own research.

Implementation of the content of this type is also confirmed by a very high percentage of respondents. 78.75% of educators working in rural areas and 75.0% of those working in the city answered “definitely yes” and “rather yes” (graph 2).

Graph 2. Did your school implement multicultural education?

[Graph showing survey responses for town and village, with percentages for each category: definitely not, rather not, hard to say, rather yes, definitely yes.]

Source: own research.
Teachers asked how to implement the content of multiculturalism often indicate lessons devoted to exploring history and traditions of neighbours (68.16% – “definitely yes” and “rather yes”). School events grant such a possibility according to 67.26% of respondents, and 53.53% pointed to implementation of cultural diversity content in classrooms. Random events also facilitate this (such as during break times) according to 51.73% of educators working in urban areas and 38.03% of those working in rural areas. 42.03% said that implementation of intercultural education takes place during interschool exchanges (teachers from urban and rural environments answer in the same way).

When asked if extracurricular activities are more conducive to the implementation of content related to cultural diversity than the classroom lessons, majority of teachers provide affirmative answers (58.98%). However, majority of respondents note intercultural education within the regional education (52.70% respond “rather yes” and 24.48% “strongly so”). The same is true of the classes with a class teacher – 63.68% of teachers said that the subject of multiculturalism is present there.

Teachers were asked, to what extent the fact of multiculturalism influences educational planning. It turns out that its greatest influence is related to the need to improve and get information on multiculturalism (45.23% of responses). The various components of the educational process, such as: objectives, content, methods, or teaching aids, have a similar meaning in this context. Detailed data are presented graph 3.

Graph 3. Multiculturalism in educational plans

Source: own research.
Description: 1 – goals, 2 – content of education, 3 – methods of training, 4 – organizational forms, 5 – teaching aids, 6 – perfecting.
As the graphs 4–6 show, many teachers claim considerable knowledge of the issues of multiculturalism. The highest percentage of teachers claims high degree of knowledge of cultural diversity in their own town – 79.75% of teachers from rural areas and 70.89% of the city.

Graph 4. Assessment of teachers’ knowledge and skills related to cultural diversity in their own place of work

Source: own research.

Many respondents claim high knowledge of multiculturalism in the region (66.24% of total). As indicated in graph 5, in the context of the region more people assess their knowledge at a medium level than in the context of their place of work.

Graph 5. Assessment of teachers’ knowledge and skills related to cultural diversity in the region

Source: own research.
However, the case is different with knowledge and skills of our multicultural country. 48.12% of all respondents assess their knowledge as high. It should be noted that both of these levels in the evaluation of city residents are very similar (47.17% – medium, 44.65% – high). Among teachers working in rural areas, more identify their knowledge and skills as high (55.0%), and less as an average (35.0%).

Graph 6. Assessment of teachers’ knowledge and skills related to cultural diversity in the country

Source: own research.

Students gain knowledge about other nationalities, religions, and creeds from many different sources. The most popular source for both students who attend urban schools and those from rural areas is the school (49.42% and 53.33% respectively). However, for students from urban schools television serves the same function in almost equal measure (49.14%). Internet is next (43.68%). Students from rural schools often receive information about cultural diversity from their grandparents (51.48%) and parents (51.11%). For the smallest number of respondents from both groups colleagues are such a source (18.39% of the students from the city and 14.07% of the students of high school in the village).

Students were asked to determine the frequency of the multicultural content appearing in their schools, 39.93% of respondents answered “often”. Rural residents are more likely to choose that answer (45.0%) than city residents (36.07%). The opposite tendency applies to the category “rarely” – it was indicated by only 9.62% of pupils attending rural schools and by 23.17% of students of urban schools. Details are presented graph 7.
Graph 7. How often different cultures, nationalities, religions, and faiths are discussed in your school

![Graph showing discussion frequency by location]

Source: own research.

Situation described above, may be confirmed by students’ responses to the question, whether the subject of multiculturalism is present in a sufficient degree. Positive opinion (“definitely yes” and “rather yes”) was expressed by 46.30% of students from the village and by 36.50% of students from the city (graph 8).

Graph 8. Do you think that your school provides you with sufficient amount of information about other cultures, nationalities, religions, and faiths?

![Graph showing information adequacy by location]

Source: own research.

Students were asked to indicate by what means the information on multiculturalism is relayed to them in the process of education. In their view, it is most often re-
lated to learning about history and elements of culture of various neighbours (53.29% responded “very frequently” and “often”). At similar levels were: various school events (34.70%), interschool exchange (34.22%), and specific subjects of multiculturalism discussed in class (33.17%). Interestingly, in the opinions of students extracurricular activities (22.77%) and a variety of random events occurring during school breaks (15.31%) are less conducive to that purpose. Evaluation of these proposals by students attending schools in rural areas and urban areas were very similar. An exception, however, is the perception of multicultural education in the various school events that take place on school premises (37.78% of students from rural schools responded “definitely yes” or “rather yes”). Details are presented on graph 9.

Graph 9. Implementation of intercultural education at various school events, in the opinion of students

![Graph 9](image)

Source: own research.

**Summary**

Presented results reinforce the belief that multiculturalism in schools is being talked about. The importance of these issues is appreciated in both urban schools and rural areas. Presented fragment of the research raises many questions, mainly related to the shape of intercultural education. Of course, to determine the extent of the demand for multicultural education, thorough analysis of all the schools operating in our country is needed. It is certain, however, that our society needs to acknowledge the necessity of it because of cultural heterogeneity. It is important that all “educational agents” (teachers, parents, students) have this discussion. Intercultural education placed among compulsory subjects would certainly fulfil this role. Only then can implementation of the content of multicultural education be directly observable.
Intercultural education in urban and rural secondary schools

References


