Zbigniew Rykiel

Spatial indoctrination and symbolic violence in the post-communist city (1)

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MUZEUM HISTORII POLSKI

ZBIGNIEW RYKIEL

RZESZÓW UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT. In humanistic geography place is contrasted to space. Meaningful, magical and intimate places were conceptualised in this context. Homeliness was identified as a characteristic of place and a contrast to placelessness. On this background, the concepts of perceptual chaos, territorial indoctrination, spatial indifference, symbolic profanation, semantic usurpation and symbolic violence are developed in this paper. The empirical analysis is concentrated on Warsaw, Poland as an post-communist city. The evolution of the administrative structure of Warsaw is analysed. The notion of the administrative district of the city is contrasted to 'organic' district. The municipal information system is analysed in terms of the municipal spatial indoctrination system. Possibilities to increase the limited social integration in the post-communist city is discussed.

KEY WORDS: perceptual chaos, territorial indoctrination, spatial indifference, symbolic profanation, semantic usurpation, symbolic violence.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

This paper refers to the well grounded literature on space and place, conceptualised by Tuan (1977). In this context, space is seen as boundless and refers symbolically to freedom. Place, on the contrary, is seen as familiarised and humanised space, referred to residence, affection, individualism and security. A place is one part of space big in sense (Madurowicz, 2002). The sense of place is therefore an important part of human experience (Buttimer and Seamon, 1980). Spaces are said to get their individualism from places (Heidegger, 1949).

The meaningful place is a special humanised reference point, distinguished by intensive affection (Libura, 1990). Pawłowska (1996) points to magical places as special cases of meaningful places. It can be added that the magical place is one not only related to sentiments but also to the creation of myths. Intimate places form another category of meaningful places. The intimate place is understood as a private recess, not only granted by memory but also sanctified with memory (Tuan, 1977), i.e. one in which human memories are cultivated to give names to the recesses (Madurowicz, 2002). In this way Arcadian private homelands are being created as landscapes of original loves (Tuan, 1974).

Generally, the notion of place is related to that of homeliness, understood as the feeling of being at one's own place and among one's folks (Pawłowska, 1996). A lack of homeliness results in a lack of human relations with a place, social disintegration and alienation, and leads to placelessness. As Relph (1976) indicated, placelessness is not merely a lack of homeliness and any meaningful relations with a place but also a cultural uprooting and an amalgamation in an undifferentiated meaningless pseudo-universal culture. If placelessness is understood as a general term of a social process, its local results were referred to as atopia (Madurowicz, 2002). The latter is represented by a fragment of space which concentrates no feeling of belonging nor provides orientation. Both atopia and placelessness can be interpreted as death of places (Libura, 1990) and sterilisation of places from values (Madurowicz, 2002), providing landscapes of fear (Tuan, 1979). The skeletons of dead places, plundered of their meanings are said to change in tourist objects (Relph, 1976).

The aim of this paper is to analyse the process of placelessness in the post-communist city, with Warsaw, Poland taken as an example. Within the provided conceptual framework, spatial indoctrination and symbolic violence is of special interest. An analysis of the transformation of the socio-spatial structure of the post-communist town is made in the context of its potential to increase the homeliness.

BASIC NOTIONS

A perceptual chaos seems a precondition of placelessness. It is referred here to a lack of a dominant in a given culture mode of perception of spatial reality. This notion and phenomenon should be considered on the background of the equivocalness of different divisions of the same area (Rykiel, 1999b). Different divisions of the area in question, designed for different purposes, as well as different spatial patterns developed in different circumstances, produce a chaos that is desperately tried to be controlled mentally and emotionally. Especially, a divergence of sentimental and behavioural spatial patterns in the same area is

frustrating. Suggested unequivocalness of the spatial patterns is therefore easy to accept, especially in non-pluralist societies, including communist, in which homogenisation of social, and thus also socio-spatial, structures seem to be a norm, and the aspiration for the social order includes spatial order.

This development opens a field for a territorial indoctrination. The latter is an intention to overthrow, or the overthrow of, an image of the socio-spatial structure recognised as desirable for ideologically or politically dominant group or class (Rykiel, 1999a). The aims of the territorial indoctrination are basically non-spatial but it produces spatial results. The methods of the indoctrination should be succesful rather than subtle. Semantic usurpation and symbolic violence are two main methods to achieve this. The former is a special case of using euphemisms; it cosists in a capture of names positively coloured for a given community or society for acts of the state compulsion or their results. The symbolic violence, in turn, is an overthrow of a social or spatial structure, including that of the city, which is inconsistent with or contradict to values and symbols internalised by a given community or society. The symbolic violence may be, and often is, related to semantic usurpation.

The territorial indoctrination is achieved when the subjected community or society is indifferent to the overthrown changes, and the indoctrination is completed when they are convinced of the legitimacy of the changes. The indoctrination is reinforced by an institutionalisation of the changes that are intended at the petrifaction of *status quo* (Harvey, 1973). Symbolic profanation is a special case of the symbolic violence. The former is a de-sanctification of symbolic, magical and, especially, intimate places.

DISTRICT OF THE CITY

On the intra-urban scale, it is the district of the city that is felt the lair of homeliness (Pawłowska, 1996). It is referred here to what was categorised as the organic district (Park *et al.* 1925) or basic district Piotrowski (1966), and opposed to the administrative district (Rykiel, 1999b). As the lair of homeliness, the organic district is an urban homeland. As such, it is multifunctional, with a necessary minimal set of functions, yet determined by the residential function, and is of the optimal size from the point of view of the local self-government. Socially, the organic district, identified with the district in general, is owned – materially, legally and symbolically – by a local community, having a manager, understood as a set of physical or legal persons, institutions and organisations with a legal right, executive power and support of the inhabitants to represent their interests (Pawłowska, 1996). Physically, the organic district is a result of a territorial expansion of the city by the amalgamation of individual urban or rural

places. Functionally, the district is a result of a functionalisation of the city, i.e. its spontaneous division in specialised parts as basic socio-spatial units of the city (Dziewoński *et al.* 1984).

On the contrary, the administrative district is an important instrument of a disintegration of the urban community in centralist systems. As a bureaucratic tool, the administrative district is designed in a way convenient for governance rather than social integration, arbitrary boundaries being obvious results of this. While in centralist systems the disintegration of the respective local communities is merely a by-product of the centralisation, in totalitarian systems the disintegration is intentional as one part of its *raison d'être*. This goal is achieved by a semantic usurpation and symbolic violence. A perceptual chaos is an obvious result of this as an initial stage of the territorial indoctrination.

The semantic usurpation is aimed at using the term 'district (of the city)', which has organic implications, for the administrative district as a tool of the state compulsion. The perceptual chaos, which results from this, is based on the fact that some names of organic districts are used for larger administrative district while many names are not used. Two categories of the names of the administrative districts can be identified from the spatial point of view, viz. (1) the terminological centre extended up to peripheries and (2) terminological peripheries intruding the centre. In the former case, peripheral lower-class local communities may feel appreciated by joining them symbolically to the centre. In the latter case, on the contrary, the workers' districts, covering symbolically one part of the centre, is to maintain the communist ideology based on the supremacy of the working classes. Non-territorially, one goal of the indoctrination is to invent a workers' tradition to basically outcasts' districts.

Interestingly in this context, giving numbers rather than local names to the administrative districts in non-totalitarian centralist systems is not an indoctrination, even though it still is a symbolic violence. The latter is manifested, in any centralist system, in the delineation of the districts' boundaries, which divide local communities and separate them from their meaningful magical places or symbolic objects. This kind of symbolic violence drives at a territorial indoctrination by the superimposition of desired spatial structure as a framework of behavioural space. This development reflects a struggle for space, in which two stages can be identified (Bauman, 1998). In the first stage, a cartographical representation of space is superimposed that is clear for administration, even though inconsistent with local practice and values. In the second stage, a physical transformation of space is implemented in accord with the very cartographical representation.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF WARSAW

The totalitarian legacy of Poland's capital city of Warsaw consists of two unequal parts. Under the Nazi occupation of 1939–44/5, the city was zoned, cleansed and destroyed. The zoning embraced the establishment of the German district in *les belles quartiers*, the walled Jewish ghetto in the city centre, and the Polish background. The cleansing included the liquidation of the ghetto in 1943 and the expulsion of the Poles in 1944. The destruction, apart from the liquidated ghetto, consisted in the systematic demolition of the city centre and some outer districts in 1944. Under the communist regime of 1944/5–1989, in turn, which evolved over time from totalitarian to authoritarian, the city was rebuilt and developed in a way that reflected the changing political, social and urban doctrine.

The administrative structure of Polish cities evolved under communism towards a growing centralisation. Territorial self-governments were abolished after the second world war. After the considerable territorial expansion of Warsaw in 1951, the city was divided in eleven administrative districts with arbitrary boundaries and no local governments. In 1960 the number of the districts was reduced to seven units in dysfunctional boundaries. After the collapse of communism in 1989, local self-governments were restored in 1990 merely on the communal level. The seven administrative districts in their dysfunctional boundaries were given self-governments as communes-districts obligatory associated in the Capital City of Warsaw. In 1994 Warsaw was transformed in an obligatory association of eleven communes in more reasonable boundaries, including the Commune of Warsaw-Centre, divided in seven administrative districts with their dysfunctional boundaries kept. In 2003 the city was reunited as an entity divided in eighteen administrative districts, i.e. the ten outer ex-communes, seven inner administrative districts and one ex-town amalgamated while boundaries were not changed. Generally therefore the administrative boundaries delineated for areas in the centralist system under communism were kept as ones between what was declared local communities. Obviously, the dysfunctionally delineated districts can hardly fulfil the need of homeliness.

THE MUNICIPAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

In 1996 the Municipal Information System (MIS) was introduced in the Commune of Warsaw-Centre, then expanded over the whole city. The commune was divided in 45 'areas' of quasi-historical names and boundaries, as much as the dysfunctionally drawn administrative districts allowed. Much (six and half times) more numerous than the administrative districts, the 'areas' were formally

delineated merely for information purposes, even though they clearly relate to the traditional divides of the city that still function in human minds. The number of the organic districts was, however, reduced in the system and their boundaries simplified. Their names given are doubtful or inconsistent in places and include: (1) traditional names commonly coined, (2) traditional names rarely coined, (3) artificial organising names not coined, (4) historically nonsense names, and (5) commonly coined names not used in the system. The names of the fourth group were used because the respective traditional names coined had been used for the administrative districts for which they are traditionally inconsistent in places. An unclear presumption that the 'areas' are to be of comparable size resulted in the names of the third and fifth groups.

The very system petrifies the socio-spatial structure of the city, designed under communism. The petrifaction applies to the semantic usurpation, social disintegration, territorial indoctrination, stabilisation of the post-communist centralist spatial divides and symbolic violation by the administrative boundaries dividing local communities. Three cases of the territorial indoctrination can be pointed to in this context. These include: (1) a toll-bar as a centre of an 'area', (2) the oldest part of the ex-town of Praga (the royal charter of 1648) referred to as New Praga in the system, and (3) the Mirów Covert Market outside the 'area' referred to as Mirów in the system.

THE MUNICIPAL TERRITORIAL INDOCTRINATION SYSTEM

There are good reason to maintain that the Municipal Information System (MIS) is in fact, intentionally or not, a Municipal Territorial Indoctrination System (MTIS). The mechanism for the territorial indoctrination seem to stem from the allotment of spatially fixed public services. These latter, provided 'free of charge', are distributed within the spatial divides not only delineated officially but even so named. In totalitarian systems the divides were highly related to the administrative units, which names and ranges were necessary to know in human behavioural space. This system, by abstracting from local traditions, involves a bureaucratisation of spatial divides and terminology. Even though some social groups contest the bureaucratic terminology, the system, supported by the state apparatus, develops and diffuses both socially and spatially (Rykiel, 1999b).

The perceptual chaos stems from the divergence between the structure of, culturally underlain, sentimental micro-regionalisation and that of, supported by the state apparatus, behavioural micro-regionalisation. The latter must have dominated in the tendency to overcome the chaos by a homogenisation of the lived space. This applies to both the local terminology and extent of the spatial units. The territorial indoctrination is therefore petrified by the institutionalisation of

the prevailing socio-spatial structure of the city, intended before. The MTIS is one element of this process.

Any changes in the territorial structure of Warsaw would involve costly changes in the MIS. To change the 'areas' in self-governmental districts would even increase those costs, which might, however, be accepted if it were a political will. The MIS turned out therefore to be a Trojan horse of MTIS of the antagonists of the swing to the liquidation of placelessness of the city. The changes introduces by the MTIS, inconsistent with, or even contradictory to, the local tradition are difficult to change while institutionalised because of the costs involved.

This development is reinforced by public para-educational systems, especially the media – highly susceptible to bureaucratic language and loyal to their political disposers rather than the truth or the reader/listener. Two examples of the resulted spatial indoctrination in Warsaw can be pointed to. The millennium of the fifteenth-century borough of Praga, celebrated in the 1970s is one example, the other being the 80th anniversary of the amalgamation of the district of Wola, celebrated in 1996 in an local administration office located in Muranów, which was joined in 1770.

The question of the reasons of MTIS must be asked. Most obviously, those interest groups to whom to keep the communist spatial divides in the city is essential must be pointed to as the main actors on the municipal political scene of indoctrination. In searching for a deeper reasons of the development, three points can be suggested, i.e. (1) to deaden Warsaw's *genius loci* by frustrated provincial politicians in central government, (2) to bring down the symbolic city, and (3) to control the richest Polish commune. The administrative structure of post-communist Warsaw is under permanent changes while stability is necessary to develop homeliness.

Generally, the MTIS seems to reflect the prevailing administrative territorial structure of Warsaw with her placelessness while, on the other hand, it is one reason of the petrifaction of placelessness, which is manifested in town planning, social structure and local toponymics. Obviously, it makes the development of homeliness impossible, even though a growing importance of a cosmopolitanisation under globalisation should be stressed.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOCIO-SPATIAL STRUCTURE OF THE POST-COMMUNIST CITY

The totalitarian legacy was suggested in previous sections of this paper as one reason of the placelessness of the post-communist city. A limited social integration of urban communities, characteristic of the totalitarian societies,

might be one reason of this development. It was, however, indicated that spatial indoctrination, if not symbolic violence, still applies to the city after the transformation. A question therefore arises to what extent changes are possible in the post-communist town to increase the social integration.

Generally, the possibilities stem from a non-applicability of most reasons of the disintegration and a conversion of the prevailing trends. As was, however, indicated elsewhere (Rykiel, 2000) and illustrated in Table 1, some reasons of the limited social integration on the micro-scale, inherited after the communist system, did not change under the transformation or can even be reinforced.

Table 1. Possibilities to increase the limited social integration in the post-communist city

| CAUSES | METHODS OF CHANGE | POSSIBILITIES | | |
| | | | DE FACTO | |
		THEORETICAL	IN THE TOWN	IN THE CITY
Atomisation of society	freedom of association	unlimited	little	minimal
Considerable share of newcomers	economic preferences of dwellings allotment	big	considerable (if applies)	limited
Alienation of dwelled environment	dwellings ownership transformation	limited	limited	little
A lack of *de facto* owner of houses	dwellings ownership transformation	big	big	limited
Anonymity of social relations in blocks of flats and large housing estates	change in size of houses	minimal	does not apply	minimal
Heterogeneity of blocks of flats and large housing estates	homogenisation of large housing estates	limited	does not apply	limited
No choice of dwelled social milieu	economic stratification	big	limited	differential
Underdeveloped social infrastructure in housing estates	privatisation of commerce and services	big	limited	big
Underdeveloped transport infrastructure	central (local?) investment projects	limited	considerable	little

Gradation of terminological categories: unlimited, big, considerable, limited, little, minimal

Source: Rykiel, 2000.

PRACTICAL USEFULNESS

The practical usefulness of the analysis can be concluded as follows. There are no places without homeliness; there are only tourist objects instead, based more on placelessness than homeliness. The latter in the city is related with a limited spatial scale, multi-functionality, a dominance of the residential function and a local self-government. There is no homeliness of Warsaw without places in Warsaw. The city is ungovernable under the dysfunctional power structure and within the dysfunctional spatial divides; the two are strongly interrelated. Identifiable interest groups exists related with keeping the city dysfunctional and placeless, as well as the urban community in perceptual chaos, territorially indoctrinated and disintegrated.

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CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Zbigniew Rykiel
Instytut of Sociology
Rzeszów University
e-mail: gniew@poczta.onet.eu