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Places of remembrance in citizenship education

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PLACES OF REMEMBRANCE IN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The text starts with a short introduction. Then the concept of place is defined and its inherent characteristics are described: its symbolism, multi-sided nature and multidisciplinary connotations. Afterwards the principles of place-based pedagogy are presented and its eclectic character is pointed out. Then, attempt is made to explain the idea of the places of remembrance from the standpoint of history and pedagogy. In the final part the author relates to educational potential of places of remembrance and takes a stance on the role of places of remembrance in citizenship education.

Key words: place, pedagogy of place, places of remembrance, citizenship education, civic competences, historical thinking.

Global Man is centred on himself, stubbornly seeking his identity, more and more often he forgets about the community and is far from choosing questioning of the state/private dichotomy as his priority. The catalysts for this type of behaviour are attributes of the present: "immediacy", changeability or relativism (Melosik 2001, p. 31-47), that lead to "privatisation of life" (Bauman 2012, p. 17) and favouring social alienation and individualisation leading to egotistic care about his own comfort even if it is at the expense of others. In this context it is important to bring to an individual's attention that they are a part of a larger whole, an element of a democratic system, which requires from citizens an engaged attitude and making of conscious choices. It obliges them to generate within themselves a sense of responsibility for the common good.

The objective of this article is to present the possibility of using places of remembrance in citizenship education understood as a process of delivering essential knowledge, shaping valuable attitudes and equipping with abilities which allow efficient operation within the democratic society (Simlat 1996, p. 68). This subject seems especially significant when taking into consideration the problem of the deficit of civic virtues in Poland (Przyszczykowski 1998, p. 125; Solarczyk-Szwec 2007, p. 185).

The text presents definitions of the place and relates to the category of the place in a pedagogical discussion. It also presents a stance towards crucial assumptions of pedagogy of place, at the same time emphasising its multidisciplinary, empirical and experimental character. An attempt has been made to explain the notion of a place of remembrance, as well as the educational contexts in which places of remembrance function are presented. In the final part of the article the subject of educational potential of places of remembrance for shaping social competence are analysed.

A PLACE IN PEDAGOGY

One can regard the words of Yi-Fu Tuan, equating a place with safety which we are attached to, and the space with longing freedom, as an aphoristic definition of the notion of a place based on the oppositional quality towards space (Tuan 1987, p. 13). Maria Mendel (Mendel 2006, p. 26) refers to it in her discussion and so does Henryka Kwiatkowska, according to whom "the place (...); is an organised structure of meanings. In other words »places are not neutral and objective segments of physical space, but they are a territory of specifically human engagement«. (...) Places are a gift, a refuge especially for difficult times, they are the source of sense" (Kwiatkowska 2001, p. 64).

Not only for H. Kwiatkowska a place is a fragment of space, which an individual identifies with by way of reflective interpretation. Also Ewa Kurantowicz, according to whom a place is "(...) realised and experienced space" (Kurantowicz 2003, p. 96), notices this characteristic.

The above presented definitions oscillate around two imminent properties of a place remaining in an inseparable relation with each other: symbolism and mutual influence of places and individuals, which give them meaning (Hall 1978, p. 148; Mendel 2006, p. 9-10; Sagan 1995, p. 147). They also emphasise that the feature decisive in isolating a certain place from spatial boundlessness is its multi-faceted nature. Because a place is not an exclusively material element of space, but most of all, it has a semiotic dimension, which can be investigated both at the level of an individual and a society (Jayanandhan 2009, p. 104). The mentioned features of a place are in support of the thesis that a place can "(...) spur real passion for pedagogical activity" (Mendel 2006, p. 26).

M. Mendel notices that "pedagogy of place creates, together with ontological thinking about a place, an infinity of educational possibilities. Possibility of affecting not only the pupils »directly«, but also engaging them in educational interactions by places where they occur" (Mendel 2006, p. 26). According to the researcher, the process of creating a place where the educational act occurs has all the hallmarks of education. She also claims that a place can be understood in a subjective way, it can be assigned the role of a teacher "(...) and one can talk about »an educating place«" (Mendel 2006, p. 26). Paraphrased words show that a place can be an active participant and even an originator of education. An individual that finds himself at a place with certain properties can experience a peculiar *catharsis*, verify former system of values or consolidate it. Therefore, pedagogical discussion about a place should go beyond identifying it with a silent witness of educational actions.

Theoreticians of pedagogy of place emphasise that the understanding of this sub-discipline of pedagogy emerges from individual attributes of place anchored, among others, in: geography, history, sociology, or ecology. They emphasise the interdisciplinary, empirical and experimental character of the discussed knowledge field, not forgetting that it refers to the problem exceeding education orientated towards the labour market (Gruenewald 2003, p. 7; Woodhouse, Knapp 2000). This means that pedagogy of place is characterised by theoretical eclecticism and reflectiveness. Those characteristics allow for an insightful analysis of the educa-

tional potential of the place, which was noticed by Aleksander Nalaskowski, who maintains that in discussions on the process of learning one cannot pass over the place where it occurs (Nalaskowski 2002, p. 9) and Roman Schulz, who takes the view that "(...) semiotic analysis of architecture of educational buildings would contribute to our knowledge on education more than a few contemporary pedagogy books" (Schulz 2003, p. 47).

Pedagogy of place is a relatively new pedagogical sub-discipline. However, the subject of place was present in discussions of educationalists for a long time, which is proved by the fact that its assumptions are present in other educational conceptions. According to David A. Gruenewald the objectives and practice of education oriented at a place can be connected with experimental learning, problem learning, non-school education (outside school premises), environmental and ecological, contextual learning, bio-regional education, democratic education, multicultural education, education oriented at the local community and other currents concerning context and the value of learning of specific places, as well as cultivating them as well as local communities or regions (Gruenewald 2003, p. 3) According to the opinion of Małgorzata Zielińska the presented list needs to be supplemented with "(...) learning by the place biography by E. Kurantowicz (2003), regional education or any other education to localness" (Zielińska 2009, p. 360). An analysis of the quoted words allows to conclude that in the case of pedagogy of place, which deals with a very wide and significant research field, practice anticipates theory.

Concluding the discussion so far, the multidimensional character of a place needs to be emphasised, which thanks to its complex nature can be both an area of formal and non-formal education, education oriented not only at children, but also at adults. Most of all, the symbolic nature of a place can become an inspiration for auto-reflection, an impulse for further search and self-education (Mendel 2006, p. 27-28), which assumes a special meaning in democratisation of social life. Janice L. Woodhouse and Clifford L. Knapp emphasise that the reason for developing the perspective of education based on a place is an effective way of supplying knowledge and experience necessary for active participation in the democratic process, the possibility to use it for the purpose of citizenship and ecological education (Woodhouse, Knapp 2000). Therefore, pedagogy of place, which originates from the need to systematise and develop the knowledge on the subject of place accumulated so far, is characterised by inclination towards society.

THE PLACE OF REMEMBRANCE IN HISTORY

Historical literature contains numerous attempts to define the notion of place of remembrance, which suggest multi-aspect nature of the discussed issues. Beata Pinkiewicz-Gara perceives a place of remembrance as "(...) a military grave or cemetery, fixed property or a civil structure or its estate, commemorating figures or events significant for the nation, especially monuments, a roadside cross, a small chapel, a mound, a commemorative plaque" (Pinkiewicz-Gara 2009, p. 154). Joanna Górńska expresses a view other than the traditional one citing the thought of Pierre Nora: "(...) places of remembrance are elements present in collective memory,

which create a group's identity and at the same time they are crystallisation points of groups' auto-definition" (Górska 2009, p.184). An ideological place of remembrance can be considered tradition understood both in the context of a region, a professional group, a family, and "(...) small, often unnoticeable events, which with the passing of time acquire some significance (...)" (Unger 2009, p. 197). The common feature of the definition of a place of remembrance is understanding it as a symbol consolidated in collective and cultural memory as bonds of a given society (Roszak 2009, p. 7). Tomasz Kranz emphasises that places of remembrance "(...) function as carriers of the past, components of the remembrance culture, subjects of historical communication and centres of social influence" (Kranz 2009, p. 38).

Understanding places of remembrance in this text goes beyond the products of material culture. Its background are transcendental, universal values, which are a counterbalance for factors disrupting the process of forming a democratic society, which is an opposition for so called "slyness" (Siemieniecki 2010, p. 27-28). Places of remembrance can include: geographical and architectural places, authentic and legendary characters, songs, watchwords, symbols, literary works, holidays, ceremonies, or events (Górska 2009, p. 184). Places of remembrance interpreted this way are peculiar warehouses of remembrance, which can be used by the conception of citizenship education, whose job is to encourage an individual to subjectivity, which means "(...) forming oneself for something, not against something" (Wagner 2009, p. 13).

Places of remembrance not only allow for direct feeling and experiencing history, culture and the broadly understood Other (Panas 1997, p. 22) – which teaches tolerance and empathy, but also allows for a reference to native/local heritage, which in the words of John Paul II does not have to restrict, but can facilitate understanding and acceptance of others, it can clear the way for participation "(...) in a situation of a huge human family" (Maliszewski 2010, p. 24). Places of remembrance can be an impulse for multicultural dialogue free from prejudice and ethnic stereotypes, a dialogue based on principles of values exchange and readiness to accept otherness (Kranz 2009, p. 62; Theiss 2006, p. 71). The more important places of remembrance allow for attempting a multidimensional look at a historical fact: from the perspective of people, who commemorate a given place; from the perspective of commemorating individuals – individuals responsible for the form and to some extent the content of a place as well as a contemporary man – the receiver (Ziębińska-Witek 2004, p. 5). A place of remembrance is a denominator, where diverse interpretations meet made by people from different social groups, generations, nationalities, which in consequence can help an individual understand the heterogeneousness and contextuality of the world and the necessity to verify received information, which in a skilful manner needs to be obtained from different sources (Barwińska 2007, p. 261; Naumiuk 2003, p. 113).

Places of remembrance, by being rooted in the past, initiate cause and effect thinking and teach responsibility for one's actions. It is very important, because "(...) a man devoid of traditional background, unreservedly plunged in the present, with an exclusively actualistic approach, will not be able to reasonably plan (or even not able to imagine) the future (...)" (Szkolūt 1997, p. 4). Communing with a place of

remembrance can inspire an individual to historical thinking, "(...) which helps us not only move in the historical space, but also see contemporary events in a wider time perspective, in all their complexity" (Kranz 2009, p. 62) Because, as Norman Davies rightly notices "(...) the present is the creation of the past, and the past will become the continuation of the present. (...) Nobody can begin pondering events to come if they don't memorise the past events vividly" (Davies 2006, p. 1140).

A POTENTIAL ROLE FOR PLACES OF REMEMBRANCE IN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Taking into consideration the educational potential of a place and the fact that it can be investigated both at the level of the private area and the public area, one can conclude that it is possible to utilise the assumptions of pedagogy of place with a special consideration of places of remembrance – so far connected, most of all, with historical education – in citizenship education, whose task is to make an individual aware that "(...) they do not live in isolation, they have historical past and have both their rights and obligations" (Cylkowska-Nowak 1998, p. 171).

Places of remembrance, which are excellent impulses for multicultural discussions based on the principles of substantive dialogue (Kranz 2009, p. 69), can inspire the development of civic competences. They can help the contemporary man, who always struggles with establishing his identity, who is oriented at consumption and individualism (Bauman 2007, p. 52; Cybal-Michalska 2007, p. 126-127; Giddens 2001, p. 117-118; Jaworski 2007, p. 477; Melosik 1997, p. 164), to develop the sense of community. They create conditions to equip an individual with the ability to critically evaluate the multitude of received information, without which it is impossible to make objective decisions (Bauman 2000, p. 23; Hoszowska 2009, p. 20; Kawiecki 1997, p. 140; Morawski 1997, p. 29). Places of remembrance also favour the shaping of responsibility for the common good and acceptance of the broadly understood otherness.

Citizenship education based on a place of remembrance is a part of a conception of citizenship education proposed by Zbyszko Melosik, which "(...) without resigning from national and state values, could place them in a context (...) of global cultural tendencies" (Melosik 1998, p. 65). It can stimulate a man to effective functioning in reality permeated with information pluralism, in a heterogenic world practically without borders, where one can observe intensifying processes "(...) of dismantlement, destruction, breaking of traditional, culturally uniform models, principles, axiological orientations and styles of activity" (Drózka 2001, p. 183).

Dorota Barwińska emphasises that discussing the issue of educational potential of places of remembrance "entails the necessity to connect historical, social, ethical knowledge concerning what was, what is and what could be, talking about the world of values and anti-values, reflection on the future, with actions for the benefit of the future, dealing with representatives of different nations, religions and traditions. Educating in places of remembrance is closely connected with the past, which there is no escape from, which can prove helpful though. This help explains »where we come from and where we are going«, but it also tells us about

what the barriers and obstacles are on this way and what makes it easier to surmount them" (Barwińska 2007, p. 267).

Therefore, places of remembrance possess educational potential, which cannot be wasted but must be used in a skilful manner for shaping citizenship competence. Most of all, they are a point where individual interpretations meet the meanings developed by the community. The presented characteristic allows for realising one of the basic objectives of citizenship education, which is "(...) to combine personal development with shaping attitudes desired from the perspective of the society" (Kranz 2009, p. 60). places of remembrance are carriers of cultural remembrance, which oscillates around universal values, therefore it is an appropriate starting point for having a dialogue devoid of aggression and aiming at developing common conclusions. Thus, places of remembrance favour the exchange of opinions based on respecting the heritage of other cultures, empathy and the culture of mutual acceptance, which can help with encouraging an individual to take actions of utilitarian nature and to participate in community life. Whereas understanding places of remembrance based on historical knowledge and connected with rational cognition teaches respect for the truth, which should be a fundamental value in the process of building a civil society (Siemieniecki 2010, p. 8).

Correctly conducted citizenship education at places of remembrance, based on activating methods and learning through actions, can result in preparing an individual for effective functioning »in democracy and for democracy« (Kubiak-Pokrzywniak 1998, p. 237). However, persons who undertake this task cannot forget that the education process at places of remembrance characterised by the episodic nature and emotionalism which is oriented at learning can also bring the result opposite to the intended result. An encounter with a place of remembrance can result in a change or strengthening of feelings, ideas, experiences and attitudes of positive nature – commonly socially accepted, but also "(...) it can (...) result in strengthening the previous prejudice" (Kranz 2009, p. 64-67). Places of remembrance are inseparably connected with factual knowledge, information of rationalistic character, but they also influence the affective sphere and it cannot be unambiguously predicted what feelings and impressions they will evoke in individuals who commune with them.

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