

Maria Mendel

University of Gdańsk

ORCID: 0000-0002-4022-5402

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Socialized school: between de-socialization and re-socialization Perspective of the pedagogy of the common place

ABSTRACT: The text is an attempt to describe the contemporary condition of a socialized school (community school). The frame for this description may be observed at present, concurrent processes consisting in its de-socialization – on the one hand – and socializing it anew (and new, in new contexts), on the other. This takes place in conditions in which, under the current increasing privatization of public good, “naturally” fragile, because they require constant reinforcement, the foundations of a socialized school seem to crumble in a way undermining its *status quo*. In such conditions weakened the values that strengthen the idea of universal and equal education, based on social justice and built in a strong relationship with the local dimensions of social life, understood as the basis for practicing democratic commonality, which is crucial for the socialized school. The text uses examples from American space and – in a perspective of the pedagogy of the common places – it leads towards sustainable development and policy of interruption, towards the points showing the importance of the activity of local communities. This meaning is important due to the urgent need for change today, both in the sphere of understanding of the school and the social environment of which it is a part. School, like the local community – connected in mutuality – requires empowerment.

KEYWORDS: Community school, sustainable community school, politics of interruption, democracy today, pedagogy of the common places.

Introduction

Focusing on the idea of a socialized school, in this statement I would like to develop the idea of trends currently visible among schools organized according to this idea or referring to it. On the one hand, we are dealing

with a process of “de-socialization”, linked to the progressive privatization of the education sector, with the result that schools are being taken away from their co-creating entities, such as students, their parents and teachers, as well as local, neighboring communities. On the other hand, the opposite trend is gaining strength, expressed in actions aimed at stopping privatization and again entrusting schools to the authorities socializing them (“re-socialization” socializing it anew). I will base my presentation of these opposition activities on fragments of analyses contained in the book on the pedagogy of the common place (Mendel 2017). The center of interest is the city and the school. In the perspective shaped by Ryszard Wroczyński, it can be said that this is a matter of environments: natural, social and cultural, which – never being isolated from each other – remain closely linked in the city and school (Wroczyński 1974). The place, which is the city and school, both together and separately, is – in Wroczyński’s language – the “closest territorial environment” and, at the same time, an essential condition for social life, the range of economic activity and the creation of culture (Wroczyński 1974, p. 327). In turn, the thing that in my analyses expresses the specificity of contemporary big cities maintains the importance of the typology of environments, as Wroczyński put it, i.e. with particular attention paid to demographic values. Wroczyński’s approach is undoubtedly represented today in the popular issue of the spatial polarization of poverty and abundance. It takes place as a result of endless flows of people and financial resources in connection with ubiquitous revitalization programmes, which are often an expression of the refinement of space (gentrification), which unfortunately benefits only the richer inhabitants of cities.

The thing that interested me in the city and school is their intertwining through the currently concurrent processes of gentrification (city) and privatization (education). It is possible to distinguish in this combination the de-socialization and re-socialization of schools as an expression of their socialization „anew”, in new conditions, and – gaining a chance of new perspective – to take a look at both tendencies through the prism of urban-school interdependence. This new perspective may result from the identification of a paradox in which the gentrification of estates and killing off of neighboring schools destroys the community tissue, but it provokes resistance and consolidation of grassroots movements, thus reviving the ethos of the local community. The question about “our city” and “our school” – the leitmotif in my book that I have mentioned – focuses in this statement on the school that is being de-socialized and re-socialized at the same time, in the context of the values and assumptions on which it is founded.

I present American examples, however the question of the condition of these foundations seems to be of particular concern today not only in the USA, when the diversification of education, being implemented to a great extent and generating various schools – not schools, “other” or “quasi” schools (as the researchers of Polish educational landscapes — Danuta Uryga and Marta Wiatr – 2015 — describe them), seems to be reaching its zenith.

Foundations

A socialized school in its essential sense is an expression of democratic commonality practiced in physical space; it is an incorporated commonality. As Leszek Koczanowicz writes, following in the footsteps of John Dewey: “democracy has its beginning in the bodies, it is always embodied” and thus always takes place as a form of everyday communication, the parties of which, while maintaining their individualities, provide a common meaning (Koczanowicz 2015, p. 50). A socialized school is such a place. Julian Radziewicz described it as a community of different environments, more specifically, the ones creating their own culture of students, teachers and parents separately shaping their own culture, oscillating in their specificity between them and wider socio-cultural influences (Radziewicz 1983, 1992). The school community, being an expression of difference, stabilizes itself as a full of diversity, the local unity. It is not about the unity resulting from the use of ideological tools and inscribing it in the party’s programme (as it was attempted in the times of the People’s Republic of Poland, when in order to be able to develop their concepts of an open school – “our”, socialized one – researchers had to declare full functionality of such a school towards the system – see, for example: Wołczyk, Winiarski 1976). The unity in question stabilizes on the local ground, within the community of neighbors, with all its social, cultural and historical heritage – full of differences – and complex ethos and often extremely complex, albeit strongly integrating, common identity.

As such, it is a grassroots-formed structure based on ties built up in a democratic “cycle”, as Pierre Rosanvallon names this kind of ties-creating processes. In the light of the current crisis of democracy, the author calls for a shift towards its foundations and the development of what is common – in favor of “commonality” – in the space of social exchange. According to Rosanvallon, the common, as a cycle, is the production of public welfare, which takes place almost by chance, not very intentionally. According to him, the co-creation of *publico bono* is a division of the space in which our more or less “brief” contacts, various forms of meetings and communication take

place, in which “unwritten forms of courtesy” occur, experienced in public transport, in a shop, on the street (Rosanvallon 2016, p. 32). The school belongs to this kind of space. It can be called socialized when it cultivates the common as a cycle, showing concern for the conditions for the possibility of co-creating the public welfare. Rosanvallon points out that its characteristic feature is “fragility” (Rosanvallon 2016, p. 32). Therefore, in such a socialized school, this concern should occur on a daily basis and permeate the life of the school in each of its spheres. This approach is in direct proximity to John Dewey’s thesis, for whom school is the form in which the democratic character of social life manifests itself (Dewey 1963). It can therefore be concluded that the foundations of a community school are democratic values practiced locally by its co-creators, in particular those which are described by the idea of public welfare (equality and social justice, solidarity, etc.).

When asking about the current condition of these foundations, I will firstly present the context, which is the destruction – established in market-oriented systemic solutions concerning education – of the socialized school as an expression of the idea of public education, generally accessible, based on the principles of equality and social justice. I will use the American examples in this regard, where, at present, in the struggle for such a school, a response to the question raised results in polarities.

Destruction of foundations

What kind of struggle is it all about? In the USA, virtually every public school in its budget – in addition to public funds – also has funds coming from other sources. However, as a result of the progressing privatization of education under the guise of the need to diversify it, schools, turned into profitable enterprises by corporate operators, have developed on a huge scale. In cities overwhelmed by global urbanism (subordinated more to financial markets than to the interests of their inhabitants), the processes of gentrification, “refining” of their space, have been intertwined with the progressive privatization of the education sector, the planned closure or relocation and transformation of schools, which is tantamount to breaking of existing neighbors’ communities (Buras 2015; Lipman 2010, 2013). We can speak of the phenomena, occurring together with these processes, of killing of the public welfare and, at the same time, the American tradition, which since the times of Dewey, Brameld and other philosophers of democracy who identified its practice with the school community, has resulted in a plethora of varieties of social schools, in the

communitarian, social sense, co-created by the local community and serving it as a form of local democracy closest to the citizen.¹

Diversification, together with the changes in American public education taking place in the direction of privatization, causes the outstanding achievements of this system to be put aside, and the „end of public education and school” is announced so often that it has become a common practice also in everyday communication and knowledge (Hursh 2015; Giroux 2015; Uryga 2017 et al.). This is hardly surprising given the current political climate. The elimination of social functions from school, going beyond the narrowly understood class interest of the privileged tiers, and the farewell to the idea of universal education, common in the media, expressed at least in an effort to make it equal in quality and accessible to all, in accordance with the constitutions of democratic countries, is becoming the norm. In the USA, under the government of Donald Trump, the multimillionaire Betsy DeVos, who claims with pride that she has never attended a public school, has never benefited from state support for her education, and her passion is to help parents find alternatives to „traditional” public education, among others through education vouchers, was appointed to the position of the Minister of Education.²

In the past, Americans were proud of their schools, focusing on community life understood in communitarian terms (communitarian schools), as well as schools, in the Polish understanding municipality schools, co-created by the local community (community schools). I have observed them and wrote about them, when they were still functioning in such a formula (see, among others, Mendel 2001). Today, however, even this register of names is becoming obsolete, and probably only few people know the difference between a communitarian school and other schools, and community schools, due to the emphasis they have to put on social justice and equality – in the light of the current conditions – add “sustainable” to their name. A key role is played by parents, without involvement and social activism of whom these sustainable social schools would simply not exist.

The return of communitarian schools, the representation of American „New Upbringing” as well as educational and social pragmatism – Dewey’s „educational and leisure facilities” – already in the late 1990s, was requested

¹ I use excerpts from my book – more information on these and on other issues specified further on can be found in: Mendel 2017, p. 153–163.

² <http://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/2/7/14529608/betsy-devos-defense-critics-wrong-public-schools> (download date: 12.12.2018).

by critics of the educational reforms of that time, including Daniel J. Brown. In the analyses of a huge number of statements by the parents-volunteers, Brown discovered the image of the returning to life ideal of a small, local institution, which each surveyed inhabitant of the town described as „our school” (Brown 1998, p. 93). The current – also already at the end of the 1990s. – need to work for preservation of such schools, using examples from New York, Philadelphia and others, is described in the context of society of risk and Francis Bacon’s and John Dewey’s ideas: „knowledge should serve the individual and the community, benefiting and profiting in shaping and understanding their lives” (Dryfoos 1998, p. 66).

The reference to the understanding of the relationship between school and society, democracy and upbringing and, in general, Dewey’s „pedagogical credo”, which is a presentation of his idea of a democratically functioning local community as well as local and community education, which co-creates and strengthens this community (Dewey 2005/1897, p. 15, 17, 21–30), may today constitute a criterion in the description of a diversified school, making it possible to distinguish between elements of divided public education. Dewey’s thought is clearly present among the supporters of universal education and public, generally accessible local school. However, it is more difficult to find it on the side of the public education, which is represented, for example, by the rapidly growing number of charter schools.³ In their focus on the task of attracting students, on which their stable and profitable functioning⁴ depends, they bring together students from various districts and outskirts of the city. Therefore, they are not „fused” with the neighboring community and – at the same time – they are not involved in its life, as was the case, for example, with communitarian schools. They also do not do this when they bring together the local environment. Researchers point out that they do not show much interest in strengthening the local community, or democratization related to its life or the operation of the school. They describe, among others, their suspension of participation in basic forms of local democracy, seen as a characteristic

³ Charter schools, a formation on the way towards privatization of public education in the USA; schools operating based on a special status, which – according to American law – makes them public and maintained out of public funds, but practically free from the public control traditionally exercised by local authorities. See, among others: Potulicka 2014, p. 431–432.

⁴ In the light of legal regulations, charter schools can be closed for three reasons: 1/recruitment of insufficient number of students (in relation to the number required in the statute, conditioning the maintenance of the institution), 2/failure to provide a stable place for the school, 3/financial insolvency. See: data on the official website of this type of school: <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/seven-facts-about-charter-schools/> (download date: 12.12.2018).

feature of charters, e.g. through the lack of representation or notorious absence in local school boards (Local School Boards, or Local School Councils) – elected and representing parents, teachers and directors as well as neighboring communities (Lipman 2010, p. 440). It is also written about by the comparative researchers comparing the features of diversified public schools in the USA (Potulicka 2014; Ornstein et al. 2011; et al.). Presented as a corporate model of school management, charters are characterized, according to them, by, among others, „insufficient planning time for management, directors and staff, which results in management and communication problems” (Ornstein et al. 2011, p. 210). These schools are not interested neither in their democratic participation in local government nor, on a micro scale, in their co-management and development by students, teachers and parents who form their community.

Dewey’s „litmus paper” may be – as we can see – helpful in identifying the phenomena of de-socialization and re-socialization of schools; in acquiring an orientation of a diversified public education, sensitive to democratic values and practicing community. It probably works not only in the USA...

I call American community schools, which are strongly connected with the local community, social schools. I refer in part to Polish „social schools”, i.e. non-public schools established within the framework of the political transformation, which – unlike private schools – were run by associations, for example parent-teachers’ associations, such as the Civic Educational Association (Społeczne Towarzystwo Oświatowe); non-profit schools, often with an extensive social self-help system and functioning with great sensitivity to the local community and its needs; strengthening community ties in educational undertakings going beyond the school walls; „transparent” (as I called them once) schools, as they do not have secrets and do not hide from the environment, but – on the contrary – with activities visible to all, encouraging them to participate.⁵

I also use the name „social/community” in connection with the important Polish etymology of the word, which brings to mind the idea of acting jointly and together. This is what the American community schools,

⁵ Allow me to make a contextually important, albeit quite personal “side” note here: I have been a member of this association since the very beginning of its existence. Within its structure I co-founded and ran for years, first as the director, then as the president of the local STO unit, one of the first non-public schools in Poland – a „social school” – as it was called at the time, in 1989. Such a nomenclature continued until the introduction of the Act on the Education System in 1991, stabilizing the school system after the People’s Republic of Poland and distinguishing between public and non-public schools.

being the subject of discussion, identifying the welfare of the school with the welfare of the community and have their co-creators in the local community, are all about. Therefore, in these schools one can see the continuation of the first settlements. According to historian John Rogers, the Chicago Hull House of 1889, founded by Jane Addams, may be the first model of such a school. Working in various forms, it always shows sensitivity to social inequalities occurring both in the local community and „inside” itself, and the heterotopic nature of its constituent places (what in the morning is a kindergarten room, in the afternoon becomes a youth club, and in the evening turns into a club for adults) and the multitude of functions and services (apart from education – social assistance and support, culture and art, recreation and sport) makes a community school a settlement school (Rogers 1999).

However, according to researchers of American education and its historical determinants, the concept of community school developed much later, when, in the 1980s, the school started to be seen from a new, automatically cross-linking perspective, which means – as one of the educational agendas – institutions and places for learning – many of which are in the local community (Ornstein et al. 2011, p. 219). Within the framework of such thinking, the school becomes a partner or coordinator in securing this community of educational, health and social support, as well as providing resources and services in the field of family assistance, recreation and culture. It does so because of the intention of the best achievements of their students who are at the center of various partnerships, established “around them” and for them (a student in this new thinking is perceived as a member of the local community, which completely changes the perspective of both the teacher’s and the school’s work in relation to them, their parents and the environment in which they live⁶). As part of the agreed action plans, the community school shares its staff, facilities, aids, etc. with other partners who support the community, including universities and companies, public benefit organizations and business activities. In return, it expects to be able to use the goods being at the disposal of all of them (Mendel 2001, p. 65–67).

A theoretical background for such a paradigm can be Joyce Epstein’s theory of overlapping spheres of influences of the family, the school and the local community (Epstein 1995, p. 701–712), about which I wrote a lot, interpreting it in Polish contexts and perceiving it as an important contribution

⁶ I have described the paradigm of a student as a member of the local community in more detail, with development of an issue of the new meanings of the relationships mentioned here. See: Mendel 2001, p. 65–67.

to my own conceptualization of relations between the parents, the school and the community.⁷ The author places the student in the center of the model and sees it as a hub that not only connects school, family and local communities, but also makes their mutual influences permeate each other.

A sustainable social school as an expression of socializing it anew

Neoliberalism is in crisis and has long been proclaimed in social sciences (Peters 2009, p. xxxvii–xlii). No one doubts, however, that this crisis has not reached the ideological level at which it is always doing well permanently, permeating all emerging trends (like various versions of today's ubiquitous neo-conservative ideology). In any case, before the eyes of the growing social protest movements, the main tools of the system working in a neoliberal format – among others, the „machines” of education commercialization, destroying the social school – are clearly crumbling. Pauline Lipman, an American school ethnographer and urban activist from Chicago, observed this, noting the increasing number of successes and the growing importance of social movements working for the city and for „our” local school remaining under public control (2013).

As I have mentioned, today American social schools are also being called “sustainable”, and more importantly, they are becoming such. They are described mainly in the materials of consolidating and growing social movements, which can be said to work for – disadvantaged, based on various criteria, including racial ones – and most often pauperized environments. They do so in a characteristic manner with a strong focus on their civic activation and the resulting activity in creating conditions for fair redistribution and equitable, fair education (sustainable education), as well as in establishing and participating in the life of social schools (sustainable schools), operating „in”, „with” and „for” local communities.⁸ The movement is developing and the interest in social schools, which put an emphasis on social justice, is growing. Emphasis expressed in the paradigm of sustainability, i.e. – as in the concept

⁷ For example: „community cooperation” and “animating community cooperation” – in urban and rural environments, with the category of “educational partnership” of key importance for this type of animation; parents and teachers as “allies”.

⁸ In this context, it is worth to read the materials of the Coalition for Community Schools association, e.g.: Blank, Melaville, Shah 2003; and materials of the American Federation of Teachers, e.g.: Successful and Sustainable Community Schools. The Union as an Essential Ingredient, New Jersey: AFT 2017.

of sustainable development – duration and growth in the welfare developed by everyone and covering everyone in harmony and equality. The term „sustainable” stresses the social character of both the process of establishment and functioning of these schools.

Sustainable social education and a sustainable social school is seen today by many educational leaders in the USA as a viable alternative to various forms of intensely diversified public education. As a result of this diversification, as I have mentioned, the privatization of public education and the devastation of communities is progressing. Lipman speaks of a „hydra of educational reforms”, which clearly serve this purpose, and at the same time emphasizes the importance, in such reality, of grassroots, civic activities, which see an opportunity to create justice together in education and school.⁹

Similarly, sustainable social schools as local and democratic alternatives – especially to charters – are presented in research reports, including those that disseminate the coalition of community schools: Coalition for Community Schools (CCS).¹⁰ This means that the trend of sustainable development is not only noticed by American community schools, but also widely supported. Reports that reliably show the democratic process of establishment (often as a social neighborhood project) and functioning of sustainable schools are prepared by participatory researchers, e.g. from Research for Action association, and parent organizations, including for example the campaign: Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform (Gold et al. 2002; Death by a Thousand Cuts).

The Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS) is probably the biggest ally and promoter of sustainable schools. This is a strong association of entities working to „reclaim schools”. It is described further in the paper in more details. Most importantly, this relationship arose in the conditions of a growing determination to fight against the progressive pauperization and loss of local heritage and, as a result, local identity, which coincides with the loss of schools close to the place of residence, „our”, socialized ones. The common

⁹ For example, Lipman mentioned it in the following plenary lectures, attended by several thousand participants of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Public Scholarship To Educate Diverse Democracies, Washington, 8-12.04.2016: 1/ Urban School Closings: White Supremacy, State Abandonment, and Accumulation by Dispossession, 2/ Social Movement Activist Research in the Struggle for Education Justice and the Right to the City.

¹⁰ On the website and in the materials of the association we can read the motto: Great Public School for Every Child, which is also the aim of these defenders of public schools, combined with a common goal and belief that it can be great. See: <http://www.communityschools.org/> (download date: 12.12.2018).

diagnosis that gives rise to this determination is based on the widely proven privatization of public education and, as I mentioned earlier, on gentrification that takes the form of „chartering”, among others, i.e. flooding cities with charter schools and a deep, privatization-oriented transformation of public education in the USA (see, among others, Buras 2015). AROS focuses on the development of a model of sustainable school and education; a model presented as competitive to the „corporate model of educational reforms”.¹¹ A sustainable social school is organized as a part of a system of publicly funded, equitable and democratically controlled public schools. Unlike charter schools, which often prefer to save on the profit of their operators and offer low salaries for teachers and other school staff, sustainable schools rely on highly qualified teams; at the same time, on good initiatives and programmes that are not only educational, but also social, health and medical care-related, caring, recreation and sports-related, cultural, etc.¹² My analysis shows that these schools really do have the chance to become competitive and thus, in the spirit of democratic change, to develop schooling and public education. For example, the arguments for such a thesis are presented in the data included in the materials of the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform (Gold et al. 2002) and others.¹³

AROS is an alliance working to „reclaim” the public welfare and restore schools to communities, local communities, in other words, to re-socialize them. The organization is currently made up of ten American organizations, representing more than 7.5 million citizens, the majority of which are parents organized in various associations, the most often organizing the cooperation of local communities (secondly teachers, represented by a federation of teacher’s trade unions: American Federation of Teachers, and youth). AROS is an expression of cooperation between parents and other stakeholders interested in „reclaiming schools”, including researchers (such as Pauline Lipman 2010, 2013). It is also a kind of a platform on which their experiences have met, thus allowing – from the grassroots, organically, in small communities – to formulate national goals and strategies of the coalition. AROS declares to build a national movement for justice and equality of educational opportunities

¹¹ http://www.reclaimourschools.org/sites/default/files/AROS%20Community%20Schools%20def_1.pdf (download date: 12.12.2018).

¹² <http://www.reclaimourschools.org/about> (download date: 12.12.2018).

¹³ Descriptive material can be found in the appendix „Sustainable School Success in Action”, which is part of the report: Death by a Thousand Cuts. Racism, School Closures, and Public School Sabotage. https://www.j4jalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/J4JReport-final_05_12_14.pdf, p. 29–32 (download date: 12.12.2018).

and to shift public debate towards education and the necessity of transforming American education away from a corporate model that promotes liquidation rather than development of schools¹⁴. Fighting for the recovery of public education and schools, it sees in them a necessary condition – sine qua non – of strong democracy as well as racial and economic justice. In principle, all its objectives are focused on the implementation of the idea (and the model at the same time¹⁵) of sustainable community school (SCS), which is opposed to the creation of the „corporate model of educational reforms”. The sustainable community school is promoted by AROS in a system of publicly funded, fair and democratically controlled public schools. It is generally described as a place of democratic social practices, finding support in qualified teaching staff, an adequate curriculum and the availability of social and medical-health services¹⁶.

Many examples of such places – sustainable community schools – are described in reports and other materials published on their websites, which show, on the one hand, the drama of the struggle and, on the other hand, consistent democratic participation, as if aimed at creating new practices of everyday life of both schools and the local community, which are becoming routine¹⁷. When looking at the records and photographs, the impression that the fight with the use of democratic means (demonstration, announcement of claims in media, etc.) intertwines with pragmatic construction (programmes, land development plans, coalitions) and social-educational, recreational and sports, cultural activities (classes on school campuses, gathering children and young people as well as adult local residents together) intensifies. The Little Village Lawndale High School in Chicago provides many examples in this field, the brief overview of which can be found at the end of this text¹⁸. Generally speaking, it can be stated that this involves a kind of pedagogically implemented policy aimed at breaking oppressive realities and at the same time – with a constructive look towards the future – creating new solutions; a new and better quality of life and the condition of social coexistence.

¹⁴ <http://www.reclaimourschools.org/about> (download date: 12.12.2018).

¹⁵ See, among others, a summary of the corporate and SCS models: http://www.reclaimourschools.org/sites/default/files/AROS%20Community%20Schools%20def_1.pdf (download date: 12.12.2018).

¹⁶ <http://www.reclaimourschools.org/about> (download date: 12.12.2018).

¹⁷ Descriptive material can be found in the appendix „Sustainable School Success in Action”, which is part of the report: *Death by a Thousand Cuts. Racism, School Closures, and Public School Sabotage*. https://www.j4jalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/J4JReport-final_05_12_14.pdf, p. 29-32 (download date: 12.12.2018).

¹⁸ More details about daily life of the Little Village Lawndale High School Campus can be found on this website: <http://www.lvlhs.org/> (download date: 12.12.2018).

Between de-socialization and re-socialization: the perspective of a pedagogical politics of interruption

The Little Village Lawndale High School in Chicago was created in opposition to the plans of the municipal education authorities which offered the local community a high school of a charter type. Its design followed the dramatic resistance, but within the framework of an extremely meticulously and collectively prepared undertaking free from excessive emotions, initiated by parents and grandparents of the students. It has consolidated a numerous group of people and communities interested in the school. Its course was described in detail by the researcher and socially engaged ethnographer – David O. Stovall, who interpreted them in theoretical meta-reflection as an expression of a „politics of interruption” (one of their forms); in this case, the interruption means disruption of the continuation of a detrimental, socially unjust state of affairs (Stovall 2016).

The idea of interruption is the subject of the works of Jacques Rancière, whose philosophy of democratic discord (in which the category of dissensus is of key importance) is referred to by a leading representative of the pedagogical trend of reflection in which it is used, Gert J.J. Biesta (2012, 2017 et al.). I focus on his approaches in further analyses, but before I move on to them, I want to share my opinion on feminist thought, in which also a lot of this idea and a lot of interesting things from a pedagogical perspective can be found. Let us note, for example, the way in which Jessica Berman in her study of Virginia Wolf accurately expressed a narrative model of this thought, realizing a strong criticism of social and economic differentiation (and exclusion) on the genre background (Berman 2016, p. 203–216). The protagonist of Berman’s book elaborates a narration that interrupts the oppressive reality and, at the same time, is a kind of causative intervention into her own, subjective self, constructed by this interruption. In such an approach, interruption means both the politics and the representation of a subjective identity. Both these dimensions are the center of interest of pedagogy, including social pedagogy and its variations, such as, among others, the pedagogy of the place and the pedagogy of the common place, when it comes to the spatially understood, democratic condition of social co-creation of reality.

In this direct context, Gert Biesta seems to be developing his concept of interruption pedagogy (2013, 2017). Noticing the act of discord (dissensus) in teaching, in his book about its rediscovery, he emphasizes the role of interruption. The interruption is to be a sign of dissensus with regard to the „egological” version of being, focused on the individual self. What is extremely

important from the perspective of the pedagogy of the common space, the author describes this teaching – rediscovered and requiring redefinition – through the prism of the common good and social justice taking place within a space. For example, when answering the question about the meaning of the task of education, he focuses on being and resistance, one could say: „being-in-resistance”, which invariably runs „somewhere”, not „nowhere” (we are somewhere, not just anywhere), while the postulated, requiring an interruption „existence with the world and in the world is possible and literally takes place” (Biesta 2017, p. 14). According to Biesta, this seems to be one of the most important expressions necessary to „rediscover” the meaning of teaching. Developing his understanding of it, the author draws attention, among others, to dialog as a form of postulated existence. Its meaning, inscribed in the pedagogy of interruption, can be seen as a fundamental thesis of the pedagogy of the common place. Why?

A dialog for Biesta is a way of being together, which requires energy and constant attention that support it. As he writes, this „possible” and „literally occurring existence in and with the world” refers to dialog, if we do not consider it as „a conversation, but as an existential form, a way of being together that seeks to treat all partners involved fairly” (Biesta 2017, p. 14). Therefore, dialog is not a conversation, but a „way of being together”. The author further explains that this way of being together „cannot resemble a competition from which it is fundamentally different. The competition is an existential form aiming at selection of winners and losers. Moreover, the competition ends when someone wins, but the dialog is a constant and never-ending challenge. It can be said to be a continuous, endless ‚Aufgabe’ (task – MM). The competition involves limited energy, it is an outburst of it; while remaining in dialog requires constant and sustained energy, attention and commitment (Biesta 2017, p. 14–15). In practice, such a dialog seems to „automatically” interrupt situations of lack of justice, contesting such a reality and at the same time creating it as an area of justice. I have made this aspect of understanding dialog the fundamental basis and the main form of pedagogy of the common place; its theoretical category and at the same time the main operational concept (Mendel 2017).

Pedagogy and politics of interruption can find closely related representations in the pedagogy of the common place, perhaps constituting unity in it („political pedagogy of interruption” or „pedagogical politics of interruption”). They are connected with what characterizes both the pedagogy of interruption (for example, as in Biesta’s case, with “being in resistance” because of a dialog shaping the area of justice) and the politics of interruption

(among others, with the resistant and constructive narration towards a fair reality, presented by Berman). This „thing” means striving for equality, and at the same time, for doing (practicing) justice. It is that thing that gives ground to the commonality that exists while being practiced.

Coming back to the above-mentioned example of the politics of interruption, David Stovall presented it in the perspective of Paulo Freire’s critical thought, conceptualizing both social and his own individual experience of co-creating the Little Village Lawndale High School in Chicago. What was politically and – according to my thesis, as above – also pedagogically interrupted and what did it mean; how did it happen? Parents, members of the African-American and Latin American community, teachers and students as well as researchers who have united in their resistance to the neoliberal urbanism of the Chicago ‚Renaissance 2010’ policy, which was a brutal expression of accumulation through expropriation and was leading to the physical and mental deprivation of poor district residents of their places and the liquidation of their local schools. Apart from Stovall, this case was also widely described by Pauline Lipman, a participant of the events, who stood for the people fighting against the de-socialization of local neighboring schools, which the „Renaissance 2010” policy turned out to be (see in Polish: Lipman 2010: 440–441, 446). The project team, consisting of parents, teachers, researchers and future school directors, in consultation with the education authorities of the city, was to prepare a proposal for a public community school. As a result of his work, a unique concept of a sustainable community school was developed as a group of four schools operating together with cultural, sports and recreation centers within a common campus. According to the program, the idea was explicitly in line with the idea of social justice and the concept – in the face of the reality in which its co-creators lived – strongly emphasized it, also in its name: Greater Lawndale High School for Social Justice.

The specific features of the pedagogical orientation of the politics of interruption are connected with learning and co-creation of knowledge, which, being dynamic in nature, enable the creation of new qualities, subjectivity and representation policies, desired in this policy. The common process of education firstly dares to interrupt the oppressive conditions in order to, in the further stages of politically far-reaching and implementing common goals conduct, provide the opportunity to design new solutions, separately from the limitations of the Freire’s culture of silence and other conditions of social inequalities, as well as subordination to the principle of injustice strongly embodied in the individual and social habitus of the inhabitants of disadvantaged districts, which hinder thinking and acting.

The team claimed to have learned a lot about society, freedom and democracy, and its contribution to the educational culture of the city proved to be significant, socio-political and empirical knowledge. As Stovall writes about himself, „thanks to being a part of the team, I slowly learned that solidarity is a disputable phenomenon and I understood that the community is above the individual's desire to tell the truth to the authorities” (Stovall 2016, p. 75).

However, the neoliberal policy of „Renaissance 2010” stood in the way of the project implementation (this policy, favoring charter schools, put emphasis on „choice” and „option”, possible thanks to their expansion, within the „educational market” – Stovall 2016, p. 85). However, in order for the local community project to succeed, the mothers and grandmothers of the young inhabitants of Little Village, who come from the Mexican immigrant community, went on hunger strike.

The strike was supported by Journey For Justice (J4J), a coalition of social movements defending the local and neighborhood public school; movements working towards its re-socialization. Through reports, J4J describes this event on their website, but devotes most attention to the success of the consolidation of efforts – assessment of environment, initiative, design work, project defense – for the creation of a sustainable community school, invented by the community and functioning in response to its needs¹⁹.

The authors of studies on efficiency such as the Little Village Lawndale High School, re-socialized schools, generally claim that, according to their founding idea, they are a kind of hub, offering a supportive environment in which and through which students and their families have access not only to education, but also to social, health care and other services. (Heers et al. 2016, p. 1018). In terms of learning outcomes, achievements of students in these schools are better than those of students in other schools, while in terms of risky student behavior and dropout, these schools are on a downward trend (Heers in. 2016, p. 1037). They are, in general, schools for the poor, and today this means high rates of crime, violence, etc.,

However, as the history of the Little Village Lawndale High School shows, the politics of interruption – in its pedagogical version extremely fertile for subjective identity and productive in the sphere of social change – opens up opportunities to change this situation. In the light of this description,

¹⁹ Apart from D.O.Stovall and Pauline Lipman the „case” of the Little Village Lawndale High School is described in the report: Death by a Thousand Cuts. Racism, School Closures, and Public School Sabotage. https://www.j4jalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/J4JReport-final_05_12_14.pdf, p. 29-32 (download date: 2.12.2018)

the politics undertaken and implemented in educational terms by parents and other entities and circles cooperating with them, may be a practice of community through which and in which changes are likely to occur. First of all, thanks to the community-focused form of the school, education of children can really become not so much a task for adults in relation to children as an expression of social interdependence and reciprocity, everyday life in a co-created neighborhood – in a common place. Secondly, the pedagogy/politics of interruption that accompanies resistance to the de-socialization of the school and its socialization in the current conditions can trigger chains of new configurations and dependencies (including economic ones) that offer an opportunity to improve the conditions and quality of life of the inhabitants of the poorest parts of cities where, as in case of the Little Village Lawndale High School, the construction of common spaces can take place every day.

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