

GHENT UNIVERSITY

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# Public pedagogy as public togetherness: the city as a shared room



UNIWERSYTET GDAŃSKI

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# Agenda

- Pedagogy of common place
- Research project(s)

presented in a context of pedagogy of common place and

1/ Biesta's question: *how public sphere ,takes place' – both metaphorically and literally (the public sphere is spatial) (2012: 684)*

2/ Biesta's thesis: *becoming public is about the achievement of a **form** of human togetherness in which „action is possible and freedom can appear“. Becoming public is also the creation of public sphere (a **quality** of human togetherness) involving the educational agent who interrupts via staging dissensus which means „to introduce an incommensurable element – an event, and experience and an object – that can act both as a test and as a reminder publicness“ (2012:693)*

- Questions, discursive issues

M.Mendel: *Pedagogika miejsca wspólnego. Miasto i szkoła*  
[*Pedagogy of Common Places. The City and the School*],  
Gdańsk: KATEDRA 2017

**THE CITY**  
**as pedagogical place**  
*khôra of democratic koinopolis*

**COMMONALITY**  
**the driving force of the pedagogy of common places, while place is the field of its practice**

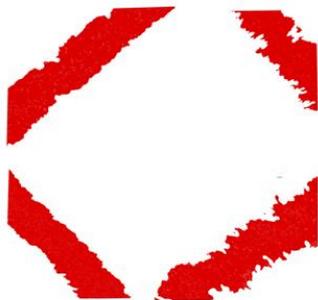
- epistemological foundations (in the anarchistic climate of Paul **Feyerabend's** thought),
- conceptual grounding (following Jacques Rancière and Gert **Biesta's** understanding of dialogue and spatial democracy, spatial justice in educational contexts)
- methodological considerations leaning towards Michael **Burrawoy's** organic public sociology and intersectional studies.

**Specific FEATURES of pedagogy of common places:**  
**radical, critical, pragmatic and sustainable**

(marked with **indignation, solidarity and sensitivity to ethos** carried by philosophy and culture of given communities).

**The PEDAGOGUE of common places as an ally of their communities**  
*(dissensus and interruption, le partage du sensible)*

WSPÓLNY  
POKÓJ



GDAŃSK

„Wspólny Pokój Gdańsk: Ku miejskim *modi co-vivendi*”

[“Shared Room Gdańsk: Towards an Urban *modi co-vivendi*”]



# „Shared Room” (1)

## BASIC CONCEPT

The project assumed this new urbanity will have a civil character and will be realized within **the city understood as a *common room***;

within the space shaped on the basis of a uniquely municipal version of education;

spatial (place-conscious) citizen education.

**All city users,  
irrespectively of their cultural provenance or social status,  
can equally negotiate with each other  
while sharing municipal space.**

**And - just like inmates in one room –  
they can make it their own at the same time remaining ready to change it accordingly to other  
people’s needs,  
being ready to share the place,  
to give it up,  
to make it available for others,  
etc.**

## „Shared Room” (2)

The *shared room* is a metaphor taken from Jacques Rancière:

when writing about *the sensible*,  
a load-bearing category that expresses the unity of  
what's sensual and what makes sense,

the author associates it with such a distribution of  
people in their life spaces that is a commonly shared  
and accepted order.

# „Shared Room” (3)

## *DISTRIBUTION of the SENSIBLE*

*The formation of collective speakers who throw into question the distribution of roles, of territories, of languages – on short, political subjects who upset an established sharing and division of the sensible (Rancière, 2007)*

This notion and - in particular - the question of social equality involved in it, can be well expressed by comparing it to an act of **co-habitation in one room**. Equality and social justice are more of underlying assumptions here, rather than goals or final results of the actions we take.

Having assumed that we are all equal, we can create a just world as we go about our daily lives. This assumption usually causes the inmates to **negotiate** with each other in such a way as to not devastate their sense of justice, when at a particular moment in time certain elements of space are used by one inhabitant, rather than by two of them simultaneously.

## Urban *modi co-vivendi*

in a centre of research project

The urban *modi co-vivendi* can be defined as „*the achievement of a form of human togetherness*” and „*the creation of public sphere*”,

changeable over time and space mutually satisfying ways of taking advantage of culturally diversified urbanised spaces (Mendel, 2015).

They formed the purpose of this part of the project’s studies which was oriented for implementation, animation and education (*dissensus - interruptions*).

Methodology of research descriptions  
of Gdańsk's *modi co-vivendi*

(starting point to our „interruptions”)

*Critical Thirthing-as-Othering* (Soja 1996)

A method which allows us to step outside the rigorous binarism and to create new ways of representation, new policies, etc. („philosophy of research”)

*Critical City History*

A research method based on Christine Sleeter's *Critical Family History* (2008): genealogy and contextualization.

# Findings: 17 research works about...

- Gdańsk's corridors and their modernizations after WW II
- Gdańsk tourist guides: what they tell whom and why this in that place/time?
- Gdańsk Policemen in the XIX century (how they influenced *co-vivendi*)
- Gdańsk that disappears (Gdańsk Shipyard and other disappearing places)
- Danzig Jews' autobiographies
- Polish-Lithuanian people's presence in Gdańsk
- Gdańsk Art. Galleries and their social meanings
- Common walks phenomenon in Gdańsk
- The reconstructivists. Fighting for peace

## *Illustrating* the findings...

[selected results of the individual research: Miłostawa Borzyszkowska]

The analysis was focused on the autobiographies of Jewish residents of Gdańsk published after 1945 and it aimed at reconstructing the mental maps related to their lives in Gdańsk before and during WW II.

Gates and doors are frequent motifs of such maps, and three chief representations of them were identified:

- the door of the Jewish house, or apartment, also as the symbolic representation of the distinction between the private (Jewish) and the public (Christian, German) spheres
- The Great Synagogue Gate with a square before the building as the center of the Jewish community's life and as its icon visible to the Christian majority
- The *drama* gateway as the threshold of identification, as in Frank Meissler's text (a gate erected by a Hitlerjugend pack with two doorways 'For Jews' and 'For the Aryan race' through which pedestrians were forced to pass and thus declare their identity) – an expression of the dramatic 'choice' between denouncing one's identity and risking life

The **GATES** thus described are *loci communes* (common places) fundamental for the creation of the *modi co-vivendi*, when the gate appeared to be not only for 'these' or 'those', but for 'these' and 'those' and 'the other ones as well'.

# GDAŃSK GATEWAY



Thursday 24th July 2014, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

## Welcome to *The Trail of Gdańsk Gates* – **Gdańsk Gateway!**

On 24th July 2014, we invite you to walk our *Trail*, developed as an accompanying event to *the Shared Room Gdańsk Conference. Towards Urban Modes of Co-vivendi*, preceding the World Congress of the Citizens of Gdańsk in 2014. On this day, at each of the marked gates, every hour from 11:00 to 15:00 – our animators will talk about the history of Gdańsk gates, both existing and metaphorical which allow or prevent access to the city. No matter at which point you start, be sure to reach the destination. At the end of the journey, Gdańsk will offer you a part of its experience. *Gateway* is a gate, but also transition, transformation and a *passage*. The gate opens and closes the city, can transform a simple visitor into a guest or even a family member. It is the possibility of Shared room; threshold of community, which – while maturing – invites you. Come to *The Trail of Gdańsk Gates* – Gdańsk Gateway welcomes you!

**Gates:** Upland, Golden, Green, Bread Sellers', St Mary's, Holy Spirit, Crane, St John's, Vendors, Tobias

Dofinansowano ze środków Miasta Gdańska



**GDAŃSK**  
miasto wolności



AKADEMIA  
SZTUK  
PIĘKNYCH  
W GDAŃSKU



Muzeum Historii Miasta Gdańska



IV Świętowy  
Zjazd Gdańszczan  
25-27 lipca 2014



WSPÓLNY  
REGION  
GDAŃSK

detailed information: [www.gtn.gda.pl](http://www.gtn.gda.pl)



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**The guides**

Confereeing in the passage,  
on the pedestrian crossing, the pathway...







We start in the typical conference room...











Towards spatial justice  
*via* „doing something that interrupts”  
in the gates, the passages, and in the corridors?

Soja deciphers the notion of *spatial justice* in a spatial way. It is arrived at using practices well established in trialectics and associated with critical attitude, distancing yourself from the issue, and asking questions.

Both symbolically and in the physical sense these practices provide the third dimension to our otherwise bivalent actions.

Indeed, they work because they overcome the limitations resulting from trying to grasp the reality in dualistic terms and from subsequent attempts to change it.

Soja argues that justice is always *somewhere*, has a specific location in space (its ontologies could not do without places), and that it can be successfully analysed and - at the same time - achieved.

It can occur if a three-dimensional beam of trialectically overlapping approaches exists, within which justice is 1) a theoretical concept, 2) an empirical examination and 3) a strategy of public and political action.

(Soja 2010).

# Appealing for keeping ignorance; the *ignorant citizens*?

As part of an analogy with Jacques Rancière's thoughts, Biesta developed a concept of *ignorant citizens*:

“[t]he ignorant citizen is the one who is ignorant of a particular definition of what he or she is supposed to be as a *good citizen*. The ignorant citizen is the one who, in a sense, refuses this knowledge and, through this, refuses to be domesticated, refuses to be pinned down in a pre-determined civic identity”  
(Biesta 2011: 152)

It can be a challenge...

# “Identity and locality: Gdańsk, Pohulanka 1946. Building on the (non)memory”

- The research project was carried out in 2009–2010 by the team of 11 researchers at the University of Gdańsk (Mendel, Zbierzchowska, Eds., 2010).
- Biographical narrations obtained during interviews (i.e. among students of the University of the Third Age and native Gdańsk citizens), presented on publicly available Internet forums, during surveys of professional groups, e.g. tourist guides, and literary narrations, written microhistories.
- The analysis of narrations recalling the execution of eleven persecutors of the Stutthof concentration camp publicly hang on 4 July 1946 in the place known as Pohulanka (street including a big square).
- Interpretation aimed at describing the process and the structure within which the post-war identity of the new population of Gdańsk was shaped since this symbolic date of passage.

# Pohulanka

## July 4th, 1946



# Pohulanka

## July, 2015



# Knowledge to refuse

“The ignorant (Gdańsk) citizen” - this idea is to read Gert Biesta’s, Rancière-inspired thoughts about producing *good citizen* through education in the context of local identity and knowledge (memory). Peculiar as it is, Gdańsk citizen’s ignorance becomes the knowledge which makes a human-subject autonomous. It becomes the **knowledge to refuse.**

E.g.: Barbara Piórkowska, ~30 years-old Gdańsk citizen and participant of „Pohulanka” research:

in her book on Gdańsk she ignores the problem of German presence / absence in Gdańsk, although she is not indifferent to it; this may be understood as a refusal to position herself in the pre-defined space of identity... (Piórkowska 2010).

But...

what to do with the memory which is not welcome HERE?

The intervention: Michał Łagowski, 2013

*Greetings from Pohulanka*



***Thank you for your attention!***

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