

Emotional space. Home Vs institutionalised space. Kindergarten, as a meaningful place for six-year-old children

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Why home and kindergarten, these meaningful places, are such different worlds? Why are there different meanings attached to meaningful places? And why do two places have absolutely different meaning to a six-year old child? What does the social process in the places look like, and how is this influenced by 'meaningful others'? These questions are the core of my paper. Such different spaces also: people such as 'meaningful others', child, his/her parents and peers make a child become a part of a society. And the way in which the space influences the child, depends on his/her socialisation process. Through the semiotic analysis of children's drawings I am going to show how the emotional level connects with places and people, that I selected. I am going to characterise these places, that is: home and kindergarten, but also I am going to show that these places are not empty. They are full of people, who are more or less meaningful to the child.

Home space

A child's first space, which constitutes the outset of the child's biography and acquaints his or her with the essence of being, is the child's immediate surrounding territory it means the child's family home. Considering the meaningfulness of the 'home' concept, it is said that home indicates 'safety, durability, shelter, a place of one's own, family, family nest, kinship, dynasty, universe, fount of wisdom, hospitability' (Kopaliński, 1999, p. 69).

The natural explanation concerns the emotional relationship with a given place and with one's meaningful others, the closest persons. The issue of how and to whom a child presents home is quite significant. Psychology literature offers a wide range of tests as: 'my home, my family', 'my ideal home', 'my dream family', which examine the child's emotionality and family relationships etc., having been described on numerous occasions by writers such as, among others, Krazuze - Sikorska, 1989; R. Fleck- Bengert, 2002; Ligęza, 2000; Frydrychowicz, 1984; etc.

What makes it interesting is the fact that all the representations of home are drawn according to a specific scheme. When I was a child, I used to depict a small white house with a red roof and chimney blowing grey or blue smoke and strangely narrow path leading to the front door with the handle. The description of this specific scheme is significant since I used to follow this pattern either when I lived in a similar house or in a block of flats. What is more

I found comparable home representations in the drawings of the children I have examined. Home has been a sort of conventional code, drawn invariably as a kind of matrix.

1. Drawing (six-year old girl)

It is also worth mentioning that children all over the world draw houses with a triangular roof. Rotha Kellog analyzing about one million drawings made by children from 4 to 8 years old who come from California, London, Paris, Amsterdam, Sweden and other countries, noticed that children depicting their homes use basic geometric figures such as: rectangle, triangle, oval, oblique and rectangular cross, all except the circle (Kellog, 1969). Which makes all homes similar and based on a particular scheme (Kellog R., Analyzing Childrens'Drawings).

Recently, however this code has been changed. Other representations of family home, such as a block of flats, have appeared. The conventional code has thus turned into the meaningful code, i.e. an individual code, less frequently encountered. Such a situation may result from the spread of the 'block matrix' in books, schoolbooks, television cartoons, computer games, as well as other visual messages, which surround children in their every day life.

3. Drawing (six- year old boy)

Nevertheless home – no matter what it is presented like in a drawing – remains the child's closest sphere and closest territory. It reflects everything accepted, known and giving sense of security. Where all existing rules are established by the child or collectively with parents or other family members. Therefore home is the space of putting down roots. A child grows up here and shapes his or her identity as a 'homo domesticus' (Legeżyńska, 2002). However this sense of home fulfilment has a dual character. On the one hand, the child in order to get to know him or herself needs the family affiliation, identity and dependence however on the other hand in order to establish own identity a child has to "cross the border" of the home (Nowak – Dziemianowicz; Mendel, 2006) and enter the public sphere where roles and rules are different.

Institutionalized space – kindergarten

Kindergarten constitutes an important and meaningful space of a child's world. As a public place it influences child's socialization and prepares him or her to be a member of a larger social group. Going to a kindergarten a child undergoes rite de passage (Leach, Grimas, 1989) to the public sphere. This passage constitutes a first difficult step because in this moment a child becomes a member of a larger social group ruled by specific principles of 'being into a group' (Zwiernik; Mendel, 2006). The change of the status from a child to a pre-student (i.e. not a student, but rather an individual preparing for being a student) requires the crossing the borders of two social micro systems namely, home and school. As M. Mendel notices: It seems that in our everyday life it proceeds to some extent 'naturally', irrespective of current redefining concepts such as school and education (Mendel 2006, p. 180).

Generally speaking, kindergarten can be defined as a nursing home, i.e. 'an enterprise licensed to take professional care about children over the defined period of time and in places designed and modified specially for these purposes' (Bańka, 2002 p. 342). Kindergarten is usually associated with fun, a big number of peers and varied didactic and artistic activities. Kindergarten's rooms are spacious and equipped with numerous toys and educational games. Ornaments, pictures, toys all create a kind of visual chaos. Floors are covered with colorful carpets or fitted carpets. Everything is adjusted to the child's size: basins, chairs, tables, shelves, seesaws, climbing frames in the yard (Karczmarzyk, Lewandowska- Walter, 2007).

However, nursing homes differ from one another considerably and affect an individual child differently. Most children come to a kindergarten with pride and curiosity, but just over the threshold the place brings about some

unrest – either smells or acoustic space differ here from those at home, besides regulations and principles are also different (Zwiernik; Mendel 2006). 'The change of social surroundings including new unknown people is an absolute novelty for a little child. Stranger – either other children or adults such as exchanging teachers, technical staff whose roles are difficult to detect, headmaster, administrative staff' (Zwiernik et al, 2006). This variety of 'others' seems to be a big problem for little children.

It is possible that with the passing of time some of them would become 'meaningful' for a child and he or she would get accustomed to the crowd, tumult and rules existing in the kindergarten. Thanks to this place, however, completely different from the family home a child would be able to experience his or her exceptionality and individuality. Therefore a child would search for the possibility of separation from other children and would pay attention to 'here I am, and this is my family' for example in the drawing. Establishing those borders is connected with the appropriation of the public space by a child since 'the life in a public sphere depends on the "appropriation" of its fragments by the individuals and social groups' (Wódcz, 1989).

On the one hand it would be the search for a child's autonomy and on the other hand shaping own me. According to M Heidegger 'being by the world' is at the same time the immersion into the world (Heidegger, 1994, p. 77).

It is related to the recognizing of the external reality but also to the reflexive recognition of oneself.

'Meaningful others'

What is important for a child during his or her early years of living? As we know everything that helps the child to survive, especially immediate family who help the child to fulfil his or her physiological and psychological needs.

In the child's space those persons are 'meaningful' it means influencing his or her. Therefore meaningful others constitute mostly parents or other carers (Berger, Luckmann, 1996).

Not only family but also an immediate surroundings and its interpretation is imposed on a child. Observing everyday life we may often hear mothers saying to their children: 'Look! What a cute little dog! or Look! What a beautiful flower'. Meaningful others who mediate in the transmission of the outer world, change it during this mediation (Berger, Luckmann 1996). Therefore the way a child would think and function in future is connected with the 'primary socialization which takes place during the childhood and which assists the child in becoming the society member' (Berger,

Luckmann, 1996, p. 192). Parents inculcate the rules of social behavior into a child and according to their social class, experience the process of socialization proceeds differently. Another important factor is the emotional bond between child and the meaningful others, namely parents. A child identifies his or herself with them and follows their roles. This phenomenon can be observable in the early childhood especially during plays. Playing a family, a mother or a father, a kid acts his/her parents' behaviour by emulating them. It is a peculiar 'negative of reality' (Brzezińska, 1995) in which social behaviour is translated into the language of a play or the drawing. That's why, sometimes, we have examples such as the following:

4. Drawing (six-year old boy)

The son and his parent have the same colour of hair, the same clothes and similar ties. They are almost identical. Why? Because the son would like to be like his father. He starts to follow his father's behaviour. In this case learning is not limited to its cognitive character since through this kind of behaviour a child gets to know emotions and problems and gets to know him or herself better. In other words a child shapes his/her personality, behaviour and attitudes through the reflection of "meaningful others". "An individual becomes such a person as his/her meaningful others consider him/her to be. This kind of dialectics occurs every time individuals identify them with their meaningful others, it is a particular reflection in the individual life. (Berger, Luckmann, 1996, p.193). A person sees him/herself in the reflections of other people. We examine ourselves in other people reflections and in this way we shape our attitudes, activities and the images of the world as well as the messages send from this world.

Child - his/her parents and peers

It is proved that children despite the culture they come from, spend much more time with their peers than their parents. The company of peers has therefore an important influence on their behaviour and language (as well verbal as artistic). Some scientists for example Judith Harris and Steven Pinker proposed a controversial thesis that the whole process of socialization takes places mainly among the peer's group and that the role of parents had been overestimated (Schaffer, 2005, p.135). However this belief seems to be a bit exaggerated since during the infancy parents spend with their children a great amount of time. Moreover today, when the tendency to have only one child prevails, a child becomes 'the apple of his/her parents eye' and being pampered a child spends the majority of time with parents, playing with them instead of other peers. It is the kindergarten where a child can

join a larger group and starts a consecutive socialization. In the company of peers children learn new skills which cannot be obtained in the company of the adults namely: leadership, conflict and problem solving, subordination, dealing with hostility, intimidation etc. Children also learn new kind of communication including specific language and particular codes used by a group. 'Peers' groups tend to employ some procedures and customs which they have to follow' (Schaffer, 2005, p. 138). This is how a peers' culture emerges and its roots can be observable even during the infancy for example in the kindergarten. In the peers' group a child discovers which social role is the most suitable to accept – a leader, tyrant, victim, clown or an invisible person. All of those relationships influence and assist the acquiring different social skills and constituting own identity and the cooperation with friends helps in own development.

For a little child at the age of six, meaningful others constitute his or her parents and carers, therefore such a child depict them very often. However we may notice also other meaningful figures: kindergarten teacher or best friend. I think that those meaningful others – peers would become for a child a kind of trigger in the process of learning the world. However we should keep in mind that every six-year-old child who is being socialized by others is at the some time a person socializing others with his/her experience of family home, which influences the perception and interpretation of the outer world.

Results and conclusions

To sum up, I would like to say that these two places become meaningful not only by means of a building and an institution but also by means of the people presented in them. This is to say that the way children feature the space and close people seems meaningful, as well. In different a way a six-year old child will describe close persons, be it the mother and/or the father, who will often be drawn as copy of themselves, and in a different way - those persons who are not so close and meaningful for the family. In this way they describe them in a little further distance, and from a different perspective.

Similar attitude of a child towards a place itself become visible. Home can be seen as more close and sentimental. The home subject is popular of children's drawing, kindergarten on the other hand is presented in the pictures very rarely or never.

Because of fact that this subject is only a little part of my PhD dissertation, this article has presented my early stage assumptions which definitely are going to be developed later on. At the end of this paper, I would like to point out one more issue.

Places play a special role in children's socialisation's process. But without meaningful people in home or in kindergarten, socialisation process does not exist. Parents' coexistence and their cooperation with the public sphere or educational institutions make the socialisation process more successful.

Places themselves do influence the socialisation process as well, however raising and the process are only possible if in child's environment relations between them and other people can developed.

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