The views of the young generation of a city as a common good

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Abstract: Alongside increasing urbanization, the city has become a particularly important subject of studies. Cities bear the brunt of the most intense indicators of civilization processes and social change. Simultaneously, the influence of the civilizing processes and the deepening of globalisation have both acted to reorient the approach towards local development. The aspiration of sustainable development requires us to resolve common problems and to recognize new perspectives. The trends of urban development determine the quality of life of an increasing number of city dwellers. Evolution of the paths of local development should be a response to the new needs of cities and their residents. Increasingly more attention is paid to such categories as the commons, social capital and the quality of life. Understanding the concept of a common good in relation to urban development appears to be a singularly topical issue. The aim of the article is to give an overview of the perception of the commons in the modern urban societies with an accent on the young generation. Do present-day young residents perceive the city as a common good? The article tries to give an answer for the above question based on theoretical review, worldwide surveys and an empirical studies conducted by the author among high-school students. It is a voice in an important debate on the commons showing the role of an education and the young in transformation of cities towards sustainability. Although the paper provides some insights for researchers and practitioners, some limitations of the findings should be mentioned. During the study, the judgmental sampling method was adopted, thus, the results cannot be generalized to the general youth population. Also the complex subject is not exhaustively described.

Keywords: common good, sustainable development, young generation, city

JEL codes: I125, P48, Q001

1. Introduction

Modern cities face conflicting processes which determine the basis for their operation. On the one hand, democratic values emphasize independence, individual and private property rights. Whereas, both within scientific discussion and in the public debate, there are more and more prominent

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voices highlighting the need to strengthen common values and those that are desirable from the point of view of the collective interest. A strong individualist movement observable in cities manifests itself, among other channels, through the increasingly visible fencing off of space, the preference for utilizing private means of transport, and the alienation of individuals in the comfort of their homes. At the same time the deficit of community initiatives is evident, as well as a lack of care for the common good in the everyday lives of city dwellers. Cities are losing vendor markets to shopping centers while the Internet is displacing direct contact among people and the city is losing its residents as a community. Negligence in the field of common goods is generating significant and multidimensional problems for our cities. There exists a variety of threats to the identity of cities, including the irretrievably lost of public spaces and the lack of social ties. That said, also noteworthy is a variety of grassroots movements being activated alongside political and legal actions which emphasize the importance of the value of the commons to all urban residents. Orientation among residents towards their community serves as an ally of sustainable development. It can be stated that a discussion on the recognition of the city as a common good is of particular importance in our present climate.

The analysis of the city as a common good requires regarding it as an integrated structure, without a rigid division into what is private and public, objective and subjective, quantitative and qualitative. The city as a complex structure is an area of a multilateral mix of many phenomena, motifs and contexts.

The common good is one of the basic economic categories. It is part of the scientific discussion in the field of local development and sustainable development. Common goods are goods that, irrespective of any public or private origin, are characterized by a binding destination and necessary for the realization of the fundamental rights of all people. These rights can be applied to global, national, regional or local level. The commons are the shared resources which people manage by negotiating their own rules through social or customary traditions, norms and practices. The common good may be defined as: "goods that humans share intrinsically in common and that they communicate to each other, such as values, civic virtues and a sense of justice" (Deneulin, Townsend, 2007: 19-36).

The commons often lead to a misunderstanding that 'common goods' are goods provided by the public. Public goods are considered to be more directly linked to public and state policy.

The common good is therefore inherent to the relationships that exist among the members of a society tied together in a collective endeavor. From this perspective, the notion of common good allows us to go beyond the limits of the concept of 'public good'. The notion of common good goes beyond the instrumental concept of the public good in which human well-being is framed by individualistic socio-economic theory. The concept emphasizes the participatory process, which is a common good in itself (UNESCO, 2015: 77-78).

The aspiration of sustainable development requires us to resolve common problems. City is a collective societal endeavor. It emphasizes a participatory and collaborating process in defining what is a common good.

2. The paths of development

We live in a connected world. Global awareness means thinking about interdependencies that exist throughout the world and the sense of living in a global community. We need to think of the others and even of those who have not yet been heard. This is a core of the thinking of a paradigm of sustainable development. Such attitudes can enlighten us in our collective quest for well-being. At the same time the mass media create the picture of the world that doesn't promote a common vision. Individualism and consumerism seem to be the ideas they take to be the driving forces of transformations in contemporary cities. Their impact on the urban commons is very crucial as they reduce social awareness of a city as a common good. This is an aftermath of a neoliberal rhetoric and a cult of free-markets indicating that people should act like utility-maximising rational egoists. Individualism and values of market rationality seem to supplant collective and public values. In connection with a strong neoliberal movement in the developed countries these attitudes have influenced the social changes important for the development of cities. A pure neoliberal attitude reduces democracy, public life, values of egalitarianism and solidarity. It argues that markets and other economic relationships are 'socially constructed' (Barnett, 2016). Unfortunately, within current neoliberal approach has a catastrophic impact on our relationship with the world, especially in terms of environmental and social conditions.

"We live in a society which encourages you to think of your own ambition, and maybe your family, but not society or community" (The Guardian, 2013). The importance of communing resulting from the nature of the commons affects many aspects of the functioning of the cities.

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Communing regards fundamental categories related to self-governance, citizenship and public space. The actions of residents therefore should not be limited solely to the achieving of their own individual interests. A sense of community awareness among residents is conducive to sustainable development.

Social capital, that is stimulating in the process of communing, have a proved impact on the economic development of a community. Thanks to trust, solidarity, engagement, responsibility and other civic virtues among others it facilitates negotiations, lowers transaction costs, shortens investment processes, reduces corruption (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2000). However, the advantages of social capital go beyond economic effects as they touch the broad meaning of quality of social life.

A humanistic approach takes the debate on civic education beyond its utilitarian role in socio-economic development. Education alone cannot solve all development challenges. However a humanistic and holistic approach to education can contribute to achieving a new development model. In such a model, economic growth must be guided by environmental stewardship, concern for the common good, solidarity and social justice.

In Poland social capital is assessed as very low. As the 'Social Diagnosis'[1] shows half the questioned citizens were indifferent in the respect of sensitivity to harm to the common good (Czapiński and Panek, 2013: 17). In 2013, over 40% of Poles declared that harm to the common good is either of no interest to them at all or is largely of no interest. What is more, in general sensitivity to common good is 10-15% lower in younger groups than in the older ones (Czapiński and Panek, 2013: 28, Czapiński and Panek, 2015). Only 15.2% of respondents were involved in any activities for the benefit of the local community (Czapiński and Panek, 2013: 291). As it is stated in Social diagnosis 2013: "We live in a country of increasingly effective individuals and a continuously ineffective community" (Czapiński and Panek, 2013: 315).

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[1] 'Social Diagnosis" is a multidisciplinary research conducted regularly from 2000. The Diagnosis is based on institutional indicators with comprehensive data on households and the attitudes, state of mind and behaviors of their dwellers. It is a diagnosis of Poles' living conditions and quality of life as they report it themselves.

3. The young[2] as a key stakeholder of civic movement

The cities and the young generations are the future. Also the future of cities depends on the future of the young people. It is not a platitude, it is our reality.

According to analysis of the British Social Attitudes (from 1983-2010) today's young adults feel less connected to society than their parents once did (Park et. al., 2013). This difference of view on whether the journey through life is less a group adventure than a solo voyage is a worldwide social change. Other research show that the average American teenager spends more time alone than with family and friends (Schneider, Stevenson, 1999: 192). Books such as Robert Putnam's 'Bowling alone' have highlighted how younger Americans are less inclined to the society than the former generations. A popular mindset of today's youth 'every man is an island' stands in opposition to an idea of the common good.

Today's young people are the first generation born in a globalized world of global dependencies. Thanks to the Internet and an increase in mobility they feel connected to the whole world and have a global consciousness. Global meanings are mediated by a local cultural context. A Robertson's concept of glocalization show that what is global, localizes – and what is local, globalizes. Young consumers do not have an established identity and are therefore susceptible to the influence of both global and local practices and values. Global and local values can exist side by side and permeate each other to form a new glocal identity.

Generation Y (born 1977-1995) numbers approximately 1.5 billion. They have great influence on purchasing decisions in the family. They are also a powerful group of consumers in the market. Their characteristic feature is an ease in using modern technologies. Young people in developed countries are constantly connected to the Internet. What is interesting, generation Y is also described as interested in environmental issues. In this case, however, differences resulting from the consumer's country of origin can be observed. This is due to the fact that some of the values depend on the economic situation of a country (Kacprzak, Dziewanowska, 2015: 47– 61). Along with economic growth, a value approach transforms from traditional through materialist, to post-materialist. Roland Inglehart explains that this shift in priorities results from survival values to self-expression values. Nevertheless it should be stated, as this reflects both subjective and objective factors, that there is no one-to-one relationship between socio-economic development

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[2] In the article 'the young' are recognized as people under 35.

and a value approach. "One's sense of security is shaped by a society's social welfare institutions as well as its income level, and is also influenced by the general sense of security prevailing in one's society. Furthermore, people's basic value priorities do not change overnight: the scarcity hypothesis must be interpreted in connection with the socialization hypothesis" (Inglehart, 2008: 132).

Beside many positive aspects of technological progress, attractions such as television, video games, and computers are accused of dropping out the young generations of a civic life. The socio – economic context within which young people now find themselves in is one in which humans have created a separateness between ourselves, the world and the consequences of our actions (Vanderburg, 2000: 7).

It is not merely civic indicators that are down. Young people are far less likely to seek and find social capital in informal settings, such as in the family home or the neighbourhood, than were young people a generation ago. Surveys show that the major forms of family togetherness are all in decline. The basic practices such as the family meal is quickly becoming a thing of the past. As Putnam has noted: "Since the evening meal has been a communal experience in virtually all societies for a very long time, the fact that it has visibly diminished in the course of a single generation in our country is remarkable evidence of how rapidly our social connectedness has been changing" (Putnam, 2000: 100-101). The end of the family meal is only one of many ominous indicators. Among families with children aged 8 to 17, there has been a drop of roughly 20-30% over just 20 years in the fraction of people who vacation together as a family, watch TV together, attend religious services together, and just sit and talk together (Putnam, 2000: 100-101).

"As the primary arenas where the socialization process takes place, these are places where young people can first internalize the values of democratic participation, individual responsibility for the public good, and civic engagement" (Golombek, 2002: 68). Schools are a vitally important community and educational system has a key influence on a mindset young people represent. However schools cannot create social capital without the cooperation and involvement of the families. The family is the most important incubator of social capital. It is in families that young people learn to share, cooperate and contribute to a common good. Having parents who participate is one of the best stimulus of whether a young person will go on to vote, join community groups, or otherwise participate in the community. Lack of bonds between the family members means poor bonds in a society and poor social capital. In consequence this destroys our cities.

Experiences with civic activity has proven to be beneficial in creating communities that are cohesive and offer stability both for the citizens and for the cities. There are many cities with good practices in attracting young people and providing them with influence in their city.

Young people should be regarded as the key assets of the cities. They should, and what is very important they want, to be taken seriously. They should have an important contribution in local development. The concept of the 'City Youth Councils' is one of the ways of ensuring that the youth voice is heard. Many good examples of how creativity and entrepreneurial spirits among the young have been nurtured show that the combination of education and local self-government activities can give important incentives of change[3].

Some research show that young generation and the seniors represent different patterns of civic attitudes. Young generations want to be a part of civic activities, but in different ways than previous generations. They want a better organized public debate. What is very important - they want to be a real partner. They want to be talked with, not at.

While the younger citizens are more interested in real activities ex. NGO's projects, local bottom-up initiatives, the seniors recognize civic virtues more like a responsibility and their share in public poll is relatively higher (Bukowska, Wnuk-Lipiński, 2009: 32). According to analysis of the European Social Survey 2002-2010, Generation Y is significantly less likely to identify with a political party than the older generations (European Social Survey).

Indicator of civic attitudes, show that young adults are tuning out of civic affairs. In the late 1990s fewer than 30% of college freshmen rated as very important civic-minded activities such as keeping up with politics, being involved in community action, or helping to clean up the environment. Young adults have also become much less likely to trust other people, less likely to support charities, less likely to vote, less likely to attend community meetings, less likely to attend houses of worship, and less likely to keep up with public affairs (Putnam, 2000: 260-261).

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[3] The examples can be studied on 'My Generation' project co-financed by the European Regional Development Funds, through the URBACT II Operational Programme http://urbact.eu/my-generation

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3.1. Attitudes about city as a common good among students – empirical outcomes

The attitudes of young Poles seem to be similar to the young generations in other countries. It has been confirmed in the national survey of 'Social Diagnosis' and other small sample surveys. The survey conducted by the author can be also put on this list.

A sample of 69 students have been asked questions regarding their attitudes about civic responsibilities and the common goods. What is worth mentioning that these were students of 'Spatial Planning' who should be more oriented to municipal issues. The results present the following statements:

- How do you assess a process of local development of your city? (points low 1-5 high) – 39% assessed their interest as 3 points and 26% as 2 points;
- Are you engaged in local civic initiatives in your city? – 8% of the students answered 'Yes';
- Are you a leader of local civic initiatives in your city? – none of the students stated positively;
- Do you perceive your city as a common good? – 100% answered 'Yes';
- What does a common good mean for you in your city? - among the most common categories listed by the students were: public infrastructure with 57% indications, environment with 51% indications and public services indicated by 39% of the students.

The local policies and programs should incorporate youth as partners in community building. Achieving attitudinal change in the home and school environment is key. Among important suggestions about involvement of young people in local development the listed below are indicated as the most important (Engaging Young Generations, 2007: 3):

- Don't wait for them to come. Initiate their work and cooperation;
- Get them engaged in places they gather i.e. rather informal than formal places;
- Emphasize practical and cooperative problem-solving;
- Accent their role and indicated that they can make a difference in their community;
- Use interactive dialogue, rather than one-way messages;
- Show the so-far achievements in the discussed subject;
- Keep the contact regularly, not only on occasional basis.

4. Reorientation of education towards the commons

Humanity's unsustainable practices are evident. Realizing the challenges of the future world, it is increasingly evident that we need a fundamental shift in the way in which we view ourselves in this world. In the process of reorientation comes an important role of education. Nevertheless, the world is changing and education must also change. Education should help to weave together the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. This is a humanist vision of education as an essential common good. "Sustaining and enhancing the dignity, capacity and welfare of the human person, in relation to others and to nature, should be the fundamental purpose of education in the twenty-first century" (UNESCO, 2015: 36).

Some voices of criticism show that a current paradigm of education does not support the thinking required for a sustainable culture. "The current situation is marked by a fundamental paradox: whilst education is critical on realizing the more sustainable society, a good deal of a conventional educational policy and practice pays little role or no attention to the issues of sustainability that will dominate living in the twenty-first century. There is a significant gap between the powerful potential of education to advance sustainability, and much more current educational policy and practice, which can promote unsustainable rather than sustainable living" (Huckle, Sterling, 1996: 21). The above words were written twenty years ago but they seem to be still on time. Nevertheless, an assessment of educational approaches shows a consensus that education should play a vital role in a paradigm change. The system of education should provide social and civic competencies as a need of stronger inter-related, collective and networked activities.

The pop - mainstream culture and values are i.e. the sources of the modern crisis. In an opposition to them, education should give an adequate response and help to reorient to the common values. If the approach of an education system will be reoriented we can address: lifestyles based on economic and social justice, ecological integrity, sustainable livelihoods, respect for all life forms, strong values that foster social justice and cohesion, democracy and collective action and participation (UNESCO, 2009). In the light of today's problems, appears a question whether current education system, is capable to face an impending future. We need to diagnose what are the key directions of teaching sustainable patterns and awareness of the commons. What directions do we need in terms of the above changes? Among the many important steps the following seem to be crucial:

- Future thinking;
- Systemic thinking;
- Reflective thinking;
- Partnership.

As it is stated in UNESCO report: "What knowledge is acquired and why, where, when and how it is used represent fundamental questions for the development of individuals and societies alike" (UNESCO, 2015: 17). Formal education tends to emphasize certain types of knowledge to the detriment of others that are essential to sustaining human development. It affirmed that equal attention should be paid, in all organized learning, to each of the four pillars: (Delors et al., 1996: 20-22).

- Learning to know – a broad general knowledge with the opportunity to work in depth on a small number of subjects;
- Learning to do – to acquire not only occupational skills but also the competence to deal with many situations and to work in teams;
- Learning to be – to develop one's personality and to be able to act with growing autonomy, judgment and personal responsibility;
- Learning to live together – by developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence.

We need to invest in civic education i.e. creating civic skills, imparting civic knowledge, and developing civic values. Civic skills and civic knowledge are strong determinants of later civic participation; and while they can be learned by experience, both civic skills and knowledge can be taught. Civic-literacy programs provide young people with the knowledge and skills they need to be active citizens – and to have influence in community affairs. As they build these competencies, youth begin to think of themselves as partners and stakeholders in a society. They also acquire a sense of responsibility for the common good and internalize a positive attitude toward active citizenship.

Concluding: "Education is not only about the acquisition of skills, it is also about values of respect for life and human dignity required for social harmony in a diverse world. Understanding that ethical issues are fundamental to the development process can counter the current dominant discourse" (UNESCO, 2015: 37). The role of education is about developing the young people's

driving force, abilities and talents which is a combination of both benefits - for them individually and for the common good.

5. Conclusion

Children are the future and the future belongs to the youth are common phrases in a common discourse. It is popular to view youth as investments in tomorrow - a time when the young will take adults' place in working, supporting families, and serving their communities. This statements fails taking into account that in many countries, youth aren't much active public players and don't have a voice in their communities.

We cannot ignore the fact that young people are a reflection of who we are as a society and a portent of where we are headed. "A person who has become civically active as a result of the desire for the 'common good' of the community has come to an understanding of what it means to be a part of a community, and to take that claim a step further, a part of humanity" (Higgins, 2007). An increase of youth engagement and their active citizenship is beneficial for them and for the whole society.

In the process of socialization and education we should emphasize that the world is common to all people as part of a collective societal endeavor. The notion of a common good allows us to go beyond the influence of an individualistic socio-economic theory.

Directing cities towards sustainable development depends on no small part on the awareness of the importance of the commons in local policy. Orientation to the commons needs a shift our mindset away from an individualistic approach to one where we are collaborating. Citizen and stakeholder dialogue help to balance individual needs with the common good. It is vital, in the current context, to promote a more significant and more explicit role for civil society in education.

Education stands at the forefront and is impetus for the change. "To build a better future for all, founded on equal rights and social justice, respect for cultural diversity, and international solidarity and shared responsibility, all of which are fundamental aspects of our common humanity. This is why we must think big again and re-vision education in a changing world" (UNESCO, 2015: 4).

Social capital is recognized as a vehicle to solve collective action problems. At the same time we still underestimate the importance of civic virtues, mutual support and trust-based relations

in social and economic life. Youth need to gain competencies through civic engagement that will enhance their skills to contribute to the community's improvement and to facilitate their own involvement in it. A responsibility of local decedents is to look for the new ways to create social capital rich environments for young people. With the benefit of the whole society, we need to take a serious look at ways to increase the incentives for creating youth-oriented social capital and to remove the disincentives.

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Miasto jako dobro wspólne oczyma młodego pokolenia

Streszczenie

Wraz z postępującą urbanizacją miasto stało się szczególnie ważnym przedmiotem badań. W ośrodkach miejskich najbardziej widoczne są wskaźniki postępu cywilizacyjnego i zmian społecznych. Jednocześnie wpływ postępu cywilizacyjnego i pogłębiającej się globalizacji wpływają na reorientację podejścia do rozwoju lokalnego. Pożądany przez miasta kierunek zrównoważonego rozwoju wymaga rozwiązywania wspólnych problemów i rozpoznania nowych perspektyw. Kierunki rozwoju miast wpływają na jakość życia coraz większej liczby mieszkańców. Ewolucja rozwoju lokalnego powinna być odpowiedzią na nowe potrzeby miast i ich mieszkańców. Coraz więcej uwagi przyznaje się zatem takim kategoriom jak: dobro wspólne, kapitał społeczny, czy jakość życia. Istotne jest zrozumienie koncepcji dóbr wspólnych w ujęciu rozwoju miast. Celem artykułu jest prezentacja postrzegania miasta jako dobra wspólnego przez młode pokolenie. Czy współcześni młodzi mieszkańcy miast traktują miasto jako dobro wspólne? W artykule dokonano próby odpowiedzi na postawione pytanie w oparciu o pogłębioną analizę studialną, międzynarodowe wyniki badań oraz przeprowadzone przez autorkę badania empiryczne wśród studentów. Artykuł wpisuje się w ważną debatę z zakresu dóbr wspólnych ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem roli edukacji i młodego pokolenia w transformacji miast w stronę rozwoju zrównoważonego. Zaznaczyć należy, iż z uwagi na dobór celowy próby nie jest możliwa generalizacja uzyskanych wyników na całe młode pokolenie. Ponadto wielowątkowość podjętego tematu nie pozwoliła na jego wyczerpanie w ramach artykułu.

Słowa kluczowe*: dobro wspólne, rozwój zrównoważony, młode pokolenie, miasto*