HIGHLIGHTING PLACE AND SPACE IN STUDIES OF YOUTH CITIZENSHIP IDENTITIES*

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This paper focuses on the importance of spatial perspective as a category of analysis within the field of citizenship theory and research. It draws upon theoretical and conceptual issues of qualitative research, which explored the construction of citizenship identities by young people (aged 15-18) living in two different borderland regions of Ukraine. Specifically, the paper provides a review of theoretical and empirical literature as well as relevant research findings to illustrate how aspects of place and space could be productive for research on citizenship identity and the problematics of belonging. Implications for educational practice are also explored with respect to the possibilities for place-based citizenship education.

Keywords: citizenship identity, place, space, young people, place-based education

Introduction

This article discusses conceptual aspects of research conducted with young people between the ages of fifteen and eighteen years in two borderland regions of Ukraine: Donbas, situated in its eastern part on the border with Russia, and Galicia, in the west of the country on the border with Poland. The study examined the central question: *how do young people understand and construct their citizenship identities?* Overall, citizenship identity was conceptualised as «practice of citizenship», that is, civic participation, and «individuals' self-understanding as belonging to a collectivity» (Donald, 1996: 172). This paper is concerned with the latter associational dimensions of

citizenship, issues of identity and belonging, as well as politics of citizenship. Locating research participants in two contrasting border regions, two connecting questions explored *how «place» is implicated in young people's conceptualisation of citizenship identities*, and *how young people relate their national and regional citizenship identities*. These secondary research questions were formulated on the assumptions (from literature discussed later in the paper) that we can understand more about citizenship identity by considering its spatial configuration. Thus, of particular interest here are the ways in which «space» and, particularly, «place» might intersect with the construction of young people's citizenship identities.

The inquiry drew insights, among other theoretical perspectives, from human geography and social constructionism. The notion of «place» is used in the research flexibly without any presupposition of scale to denote context-related localized human experience. In line with human geographers' view, I treat the concept of «place» as offering conceptual advantages over that of «district» or «region» «due to the association of "region" with governance/territoriality and the naturalized view of "regional" as a level between local and national» (Paasi, 2002: 806); «place», on the other hand, is understood as scale-free and subjective (i.e., denoting human attachment and experience). Importantly, for my theoretical framework, places are not only static physical settings but rather dynamic aggregations of social and economic flows, interactions, practices, identities, discourses and meanings, which young people draw on in their everyday lives and identity construction (Massey, 1993; Jess & Massey, 1995). In line with the social constructionist view, this study was concerned with the way that discourse makes, unmakes and remakes youth positions and identities (Burr, 1995).

While focusing primarily on conceptual issues of the research, this paper also outlines some research findings in ways that illustrate the theoretical issues under consideration. I start by explaining the premise of the study regarding why regions and local places are intricately related to citizenship identity construction in Ukraine. In the second part of the paper, I provide an outline of the ways in which «place» and «space» could be integrated into the analysis of citizenship identity by, in particular, concentrating on the issues of place-based exclusions. Research findings collected through group discussions with Ukrainian young people are then presented with the view to illustrate issues raised in the second part of the paper. Finally, I reflect on the educational implications of this research and on the relevance of the proposed theoretical conceptualisation for the development of place-based citizenship education, which, I argue, is able to accommodate intra-state diversity, mediate a more meaningful civic engagement of youth, and inform pedagogical practice.

Regionality and citizenship identity in Ukraine

My decision to bring place and space into the theoretical framework of the study of youth citizenship identities was dictated by the particular context in which the study was conducted as well

as by the geographical location of my informants on the two borders of the state. The assumption was that young people's citizenship identities were interrelated with «place» (in a multilayered and multipurpose conceptualisation of this word discussed throughout the paper) and were permeated by wider power structures and representations operating and undergoing renegotiation on local, regional and national levels (Hall, 1995; Jess & Massey, 1995). Examining the identities of places (or regions) as constructed out of wider historical and social relations was, therefore, one important step towards explaining the reciprocal relationship between people and places and the ways in which places become a «locus for [young people's] identity» (Hubbard, Kitchin & Valentine, 2004: 5).

The history of complex national identities in Ukraine is usually explained by the borderland position of the country on the edges of various empires (such as Russian, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman) and is characteristic of historical ethno-religious diversity and the permeability of borders in Eastern Europe (Reid, 1997). As a result of having been part of different countries for centuries, Ukraine to date struggles with the formation of a common national identity for its citizens, this process being complicated by the regional polarization within the country usually ascribed to the existence of several distinct ethno-linguistic, cultural, political and economic profiles. Despite the effort of school textbooks and the general approach of the centralised (and described as «nationalising» – Wanner, 1998) curriculum in place since 1991, regional identity continues to be all-pervading in the lives of young Ukrainians.

Themes which surface through the research on identities in regions under consideration – Donbas and Galicia – particularly reflect how national identities are portrayed and structured in terms of internal cleavages; for example, people's geopolitical and cultural orientations regarding «West» and «East», and «Europe» and «Russia». Although disputed (Hrytsak, 2004), there is a persistent tendency to construct these regions as representative of «two Ukraines» (Riabchuk, 2000). In this case, Western Ukrainians from formerly Austro-Hungarian Galicia are depicted in public and political discourse as anti-Soviet, democratic, pro-European, aware of their own (Ukrainian) roots, and as possessing civic values inherited from their history within Central European states. Donbas residents are depicted as almost the mirror opposite to this image: Russian-speaking, and, therefore, they are thought to lean towards Russia (Ukraine's main «Other» in terms of the extent to which it figures in ideological debates), to be indifferent to Ukrainian national movements, and to be tolerant of «Soviet» culture which remains on public display, for example, in the form of monuments and street names.

The different identities are described as also rooted in the ethnic composition of the population: in the diverse, but mainly Ukrainian-Russian population in the Donbas, and the almost homogeneous (more than 95%) Ukrainian communities in Galicia. Galician youth, in this study, painted an image of an uneasy coexistence of Ukrainians and Russians in their place – a coexistence largely without mutual infiltration or mixing (see Hrytsak, 2004). In contrast, a good example of the ways in which youth in the borderland Donbas described themselves is that of a «melting pot» in which people mix and, in so doing, almost lose their individual cultural features, even-

tually creating new and different kinds of heterogeneous communities. Ethnic minorities in the Donbas did not just feel they belonged there or simply felt at home there, but rather that they were the same as «local» people.

These regional differences exist on the background of state ideology, which, as in many new states, made an issue of its particularism, searching for the roots of a new national identity in its traditions, culture and national character (Wolczuk, 2000). With regard to the research question guiding the study, particularly with respect to the role of place in shaping youth citizenship identities, we can begin to hypothesize that in Ukraine places might be unequally linked within the state. And, further, that there is a considerable power disparity which invites identifications both with and against those places perceived as different (Rose, 1995), and, in some ways, causes a fair amount of struggle to belong to the collective «we» (Arnot & Dillabough, 2000).

Conceptualising citizenship identity

The theoretical work for this study sought to account for how young people living in a transitional time and certain places might negotiate their belonging to the nation in light of the problematic relationship between citizenship and nationhood, their position on the borders of the nation-state in distinctive regional and local places, and the tension between the inclusionary and exclusionary nature of citizenship. The study partakes of the research tradition that has increasingly defined citizenship in «generous» and «general» terms, rather than with narrow reference to questions of legal status and entitlement. Hall, Coffey and Williamson (1999: 504) describe the horizon of this tradition in setting out an understanding of citizenship as «a normative ideal, incorporating [a] central notion of membership and evoking a host of other related themes – belongingness, independence and equality, responsibility and participation, and shared existence and identity». In this respect, I endorse Webner and Yuval-Davies's (1999) claim that citizenship and national identity are more intertwined than implied by the earlier liberal and political science literature. These authors dissent from the liberal-formalist viewpoint in defining citizenship «as a more total relationship, inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices and a sense of belonging» (*ibidem*: 4). Although scholars are correct in claiming that ordinary people do not (always) relate to the abstract political term citizenship, the issues identified above as pertaining to citizenship are frequently matters of personal concern. By convening theoretical literature and relevant empirical research on the topic, the rest of the section demonstrates a number of ways in which the discourse of citizenship is engaged in categorizations of self and others, and the construction of in-groups or of relations belonging with others (Arnot & Dillabough, 2000). The spatial position of individuals in particular places adds another dimension to the issue of symbolic inclusion into/exclusion from the national citizenship space.

Bringing in space and place

Space and place are two interconnected but different concepts. While space is abstract and detached from material form and cultural interpretation, place is filled up with people, objects, practices, meanings and representations (Gieryn, 2000). Critical human geographers (e.g. Massey, 1993) conceptualise places as localised spaces, i.e., a meeting point of global and local spatial flows, sociocultural, political and economic relations (see also Appadurai, 1990). For Massey (1993: 66), «the uniqueness of a place (…) is constructed out of particular interactions and mutual articulations of social relations, social processes, experiences and understandings, in a situation of co-presence». Hence, places saturate social life and matter for the social analysis of emplaced inequality, difference, power, identity, collective action, memory, history and the like (Gieryn, 2000).

While places are dynamic and productive, they are still specific and particular (Massey, 1993). Being made up of the unique mix of narratives/discourses, places ground individual's identity and constitute, as for example in Eglinton's youth study conducted in an area of New York City, «what it is to be poor, Puerto Rican, and/or "a man"» (2008: 56). Consequently, it is difficult to separate the construction of identity from the locality in which it occurs:

> Locality is certainly central to identity. It is almost the first thing asked about when people are introduced for the first time. Knowing where others are from makes it possible to *place* them. This is not simply a case of getting a fix on other people in a geographical sense. That a person is from London or from Rhondda valleys *means* something. (…) To be from somewhere is to be implicated in a certain indexicality – a body of shared understandings and assumptions premised on a sharing of the same (cultural and physical) space. (Hall *et al.*, 1999: 509, emphasis in original)

Reay and Lucey (2000) demonstrate in their research with working-class children living in council estates in London how children's experience of inhabiting places is shaped by broader social relations, namely of class and race. Thus, places are social constructions filled with ideologies, and, as urban research particularly demonstrates, the experience of residing in the White suburbs or the Black inner city shapes cultural identities.

Particular national and regional spaces are marked by ideological projections of social inequality in a similar way. The analysis of the meaning particular sociological categories take on in particular localities can offer a unique spatial «lived» account of identity. For example, Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox and Grancea's (2006) ethnography of a Transylvanian town shows that, although the assumed boundaries between the key residential groups – Romanians and Hungarians – are much sharper than between, say, Russians and Ukrainians in my study, in reality even these have been made porous and ambiguous due to mixed marriages, bilingualism, migration, the attendance of Hungarian children at Romanian schools, intergenerational assimilation, and simply by people's indifference to the claims of ethnocultural nationality. The rest of the section, then, illu-

minates how locality, identity and politics form a network of power relations in local places, as well as in national borderlands, that is, in the areas where my study was conducted.

Relating place to citizenship identity: issues of power and difference

Attention in theoretical writings about place is currently turned to how global connections can create new social movements and (alternative) forms of citizenship. By constituting places at all scales, global connections can, in theory, «combat localist or nationalist claims to place based on eternal essentialist, and in consequence exclusive, characteristics of belonging» and citizenship (Massey, 2004: 6, cit. in Desforges, Jones & Woods, 2005: 443). Globalization notwithstanding, the nation-state continues to play an important role in shaping political identities and ideologies. Penrose argues that «because socially constructed nations rely on social constructions of people and places in order to be seen as legitimate, inequalities based on social constructions of people and place will be perpetuated *within* newly empowered "nation-states"» (1993: 34, emphasis in original). Those «individuals and places which do not fit into the newly recognized nation's self-construction will continue to be marginalized» and pressured «to conform to the definition» (*ibidem*: 34). Thus, different places/regions may be linked together within the state in an unequal way due to economic, cultural, ethnic and other relations. In the process of challenging hegemonic identity narratives, place-based identities often become political. In such circumstances, identification with place may be related to sharpened definitions of cultural and political identity among local inhabitants.

In terms of belonging academic literature usually speaks in the context of various forms of exclusion (Crowley, 1999). In relation to exclusion, Yuval-Davies, Kannabiran and Vieten suggest that «all signifiers of borders and boundaries», including «citizenship and identities», as well as «cultures and traditions», play central roles in discourses of the politics of belonging (2006: 3). On the subject of exclusion and the construction of differences within the same state, Glaeser's (2000, cit. in Lamont & Molnár, 2002) study of police unification in Berlin discusses how the disappearance of the border between West and East Germany left the divide between people in the respective parts of the country almost intact, as people went on differentiating themselves from one another according to Cold War stereotypes and apparent mindsets. Another example of «othering» is offered by Hörschelmann's study (2001) of the symbolic marginalisation and exclusion of East Germans in (post)unification society. The author analyses how media discourses and popular responses to them construct East Germans as second-class and subordinate citizens, attributing to them derogatory characteristics when set alongside the «normal» people from West Germany. The paper suggests that the conflict in unified Germany (still described as «divided within itself») results from the sense of «placelessness» of East Germans after they have lost their «politically bounded place» (GDR) only to find themselves «reconstituted in the (symbolic as well as socio-economic and political) margins»

of a new nation (*ibidem*: 984). In order to stop East Germans feeling «out-of-place», the author suggests a more inclusive national space has to be constructed, possibly with the help of the media.

A sense of place, therefore, is not just one person's feeling about a particular place – as such feelings are interpreted socially, and articulated through various sites of representation, including the system of education. Indeed, identifying the «Other» can be the basis for constructing national, regional or any communal identities. Emotions interlock with power and allow for the marginalization of those perceived as «Other» on the basis of their particular identities – for example, identities of ethnicity, class, language or place of residence (Rose, 1995).

Borders of nation, state and identity

The ways in which geographic locations intersect with identities, norms, social practices and structures are particularly apparent in places like national borders. Recent work in the social sciences and humanities has seen a significant interest in the hybrid cultures, identities and various ways of life and resistance that occur on the boundaries between different nation-states (Donnan & Wilson, 1999). Within this framework of state borders, boundaries are most intensely studied as expressions of nationalism (i.e., nation-building), as points of conflicts or as contact and cooperation, and as contexts for the formation of cultural identity (Morehouse, 2004). By focusing «on the place and space of visible and literal borders between states, and the symbolic boundaries of identity and culture which make nations and states two very different entities» (Wilson & Donnan, 1998: 2), scholars gain conceptual access to «the ways in which individuals and communities symbolically construct the links to the nation» (Lamont & Molnár, 2002: 183). In my study, «borders» were understood first in a geopolitical territorial sense, as specific sites of research based on the frontier areas of Ukraine, and second in a metaphorical sense, as markers of the hybrid and liminal subjectivities of people who have opportunities to socialise into more than one culture and thereby capable of multiple national identifications and of flexible forms of negotiating their ties with the larger national polity and with people across the border.

Researchers' empirical and theoretical analyses have noted the significance of national borders in nation-building problems and the construction of people's political identity. Within borderlands, national identification becomes questionable for many reasons. According to Törnquist-Plewa (2007: 103), «[b]orderlands show that people are capable of becoming culturally polyvalent (…) that they can identify with more than one nation, and (…) that they under certain circumstances can choose their national identification». This is the case when mixed marriages, emigration and cultural interchange between societies produce a range of creolised, hybridised and multiplex identities. As illustrated by a wide range of research on the border between the US and Mexico, identities such as «Mexican-American», «Chicano», «Latino», and «Hispanic» go beyond the more stable cat-

egories of «Mexicans» and «Americans» (see Lamont & Molnár, 2002). Such identities form a crucial component of people's ethnic, self and border identities, implying «a presence of a divide, or identities that are either/or, always with a possibility of conflict» (Isin & Wood, 1999: 18).

«Borderlanders» have been criticised for their rootlessness by citizens in national centres who regard as «unnatural» a situation where «people who live in the same territory as we do and who even may speak our language (…) identify with a completely different nation, or (…) claim they have a double national identification» (Törnquist-Plewa, 2007: 105). Even people of titular nationality from the national periphery can be perceived negatively by their fellow citizens, prompting feelings of rejection and solitude. The people of borderlands stir up suspicion and fear while themselves becoming oversensitive about their national identity. This is because, Bauman argues, «the thought of "having an identity" will not occur to people as long as "belonging" remains their fate, a condition with no alternative» (2004: 11-12). Only the denial, or threat of the withholding, of identity in Bauman's own past moved him to reflection on the problem: «I do not remember paying much attention to the question of "my identity", at least the national part of it, before (…) my Polishness was publicly cast in doubt» (*ibidem*: 12).

Basing my research in two border areas shed light on the issues of place and belonging and revealed young people's unique construction of links to the nation. Although both regions in my research were located on the borders, only the Donbas region in the East shared the characteristics of the traditional borderland outlined thus far; in particular, with respect to cultural hybridity and undecidability as regards people's identification, as well as rejection and suspicion on the part of other countrymen. Due to the particular history and «authentically» Ukrainian cultural aspects of their place, the location of Galician youth on the geopolitical border of the state did not inspire uncertain border identities in the metaphorical sense of a feeling of falling between two national cultures. After providing a brief introduction into research design, the next section illustrates these problems and theoretical concepts using young people' voices.

Illustrating theoretical themes: young people's voices

The theoretical and conceptual issues discussed so far informed the methodological framework and design of the study. This qualitative inquiry was conceived as a multi-sited case study of youth located in two contrasting border regions of Ukraine. I argue the chosen regions would offer an opportunity to learn about the complex and contested nature of citizenship identities in Ukraine, as well as the role of place in shaping such identities.

The data collection took place in 10 schools and spanned eight months during 2005-06. Within each region, schools were selected with a view to including young participants from a variety of backgrounds, namely girls and boys from urban and rural settings, and majority and various ethnic

and linguistic minority students. A total of 190 research participants were students of the final, 11th grade, averaging 16.4 years. The project employed group and individual interviews with young people, and coupled these with classroom observational work, interviews with teachers and analysis of student essays. The data reported in this section comes from the analysis of 56 group discussions, schedules for which were designed with the view to dismantling the category of youth citizenship identity by encouraging respondents' reflections on the nation, regions, belonging to the nation/region/locality, while integrally enquiring how these feelings and meanings are infused with wider socio-political processes and school messages. The main theoretical aspects I would like to illustrate with the data here are: (1) the politics of representation in relation to place; (2) the youth identity-making processes as place-specific.

«I feel more Ukrainian than if I lived (…) elsewhere»: place and national identity in Galicia

People, as Rose (1995) argues, identify both with and against aspects of place, constructing boundaries to establish insiders and outsiders and learning to sift out those types of people who are not like «us» (also Reay, 2000: 152). I suggest that the main strategy Galician youth employed to define their national identity and concept of belonging was that of establishing a contrast with other people and places, of «identifying against the place», that is, by «contrasting themselves with somewhere they feel is very different from them» (Rose, 1995: 92).

When describing their community, Galician youth forged a strong link between locality and the nation. Despite living on the border with Poland, and thus having historical and cultural influences from there, inhabitants of Galicia are often constructed as authentically Ukrainian particularly in comparison to people living in other regions. I asked young people whether they felt their place of residence made them more or less Ukrainian, and discussions on this topic supported the idea that youth felt more rather than less Ukrainian. Students suggested that cultural elements pertinent to Galicia, such as Ukrainian language, customs and traditions, made them feel more Ukrainian.

Most participants felt an especially strong emotional attachment, it seemed, towards Lviv (the main city in the region) as a place where Ukrainian culture is preserved and lived on a day to day basis. As Halyna, an urban female participant, put it in two different ways in the context of a discussion on the importance of being from Lviv, «You really feel Ukraine here», «Maybe it's just that all Lvivians are from Ukraine, because Odesa, for example, does not sound like from Ukraine». In the following example, to soften her otherwise straightforward statement about the ways in which one's degree of Ukrainianness is based on one's place of residence, Nona uses the term «desirable»:

A.T.: Does living in Lviv make you more or less Ukrainian?
Nona: Well, it's desirable that people in any part of Ukraine could feel Ukrainian, but I think that now Ukraine is indeed divided into two camps and I think that in Lviv people are more Ukrainian.
Solomija: I feel more Ukrainian than if I lived in the Crimea or elsewhere.

While girls quoted above imply the local qualities associated with culture, boys in the following exchange discuss this more specifically.

A.T.: Does living in Lviv make you more or less Ukrainian?
Pylyp: It [Lviv] has been considered as an example for…
Yosyp: For Ukraine.
A.T.: In what sense?
Pylyp: Even in religion.
Yosyp: Because I even saw on TV that those families [Eastern] did not even know our traditions, nothing at all. This year our [people] took their children to homes and taught them.

Through identification against other places and people (who were claimed not to belong to Ukraine in the same way as people from Galicia because they spoke in Russian, neglected Ukrainian ethnic culture, and the like), young people established a positive regional identity for themselves and their place, simultaneously claiming the superior position of their regional group within the national space. In doing so, they drew on familiar wider and local narratives of place and, further, on school messages. Through History lessons, school taught students that «Galicia was the first to start fighting for the independence of Ukraine», and, therefore, youth tended to conclude, «we are a bit more Ukrainian». As elaborated in the extract below, the struggle for the independence of Ukraine, in addition to the preservation of culture, was an integral concept within local youth's constructions of their Ukrainian identities:

Mykola: It's established like that… Western Ukraine always had OUN [Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists] and there was UPA [Ukrainian Insurgent Army] organization here, which always wanted Ukraine to be an independent state, there was always language and Ukrainian culture here… and teachers teach us, writers write books or autobiographical novels, memoirs showing how things were here.
Orest: That regarding schools and churches there, in the East, more Ukrainian churches were destroyed than in the West, and we always maintained more Ukrainian schools.
Dmytro: Lviv and western lands were always a driving force, when those eastern provinces were losing hope western provinces were always fighting.
Mykola: Yes, it shows that they [Western Ukrainians] are true Ukrainians, they are always trying to achieve their goal, they want to achieve it under any circumstances.

This section implies the belief that Galicia has a quintessential relation to Ukrainianness through forms of culture that the other regions do not carry. What Galician youth started to suggest regarding the presence in Ukraine of place-based (geographic) stereotyping and symbolic exclusion was confirmed and elaborated by Donbas youth.

«[T]hey wanted to isolate us»: the discourses of exclusion

The identities of the Donbas youth in Eastern Ukraine seemed to be strongly permeated by the real geographical borders, bi-cultural histories and identities of their places, and were shaped more so than in Galicia by the possibilities of cross-border interaction with Russia, two-way migration, and cultural interchange. However, it is not just these young people's position on the borders in a particular sociocultural space that produces problems and an uncertainty of identity, but rather it is the feeling of rejection and their continuous need to negotiate and defend their national identities that made them somewhat sensitive about their identities. However, the «informal criteria of belonging» (Crowley, 1999: 18) and the instances of exclusion that youth highlight throughout are ambiguous; that is, unlike racial, ethnic, gender or class segregation and denial of legal citizenship, they are less noticeable in daily life.

Engaging with the widespread regionalized discourses (already highlighted by Galician youth above), students uncovered the «boundaries» within the nation that, they imagined, emerged to separate the «good» and the «bad» regions. Talking about the «bad» and «good» regions, the Donbas was named as having a bad reputation in the eyes of other Ukrainians. Young people attribute this to people speaking in Russian and voting the wrong (i.e., pro-Russian) way. However, between the lines, Donbas youth suggest that such an image is not merely the result of cultural, socio-economic and historic legacy but rather «the stereotypical representations of others which inform social practices of exclusion and inclusion» and «at the same time, define the self» (Sibley, 1995: 5).

> *Kristina*: We probably have always had this because compared with the rest of Ukraine Donetsk and Luhansk speak in Russian, sort of don't respect anything [Ukrainian], and maybe because of the proximity to Russia.
> *Olya*: They always saw us as more like Russians (…).
> *A.T.: Okay, and which are good regions then in Ukraine?*
> *Kristina*: Kiev
> *Natasha*: Western ones.

«We feel this way because we're being segregated», said Olya as she summed up a discussion on subnational differences in the country. For example, a regional Donbas identity was talked about as being enforced by political exclusionary discourses surrounding a political event called the Orange Revolution, which occurred in 2004 during the presidential elections and particularly divided the country. Regional identity then, it seems, was constructed as a consequence of wider political events.

> *A.T.: Have you ever felt strongly like being from the Donbas?*
> *Ksenia*: I haven't.
> *Ira*: No, but…
> *A.T.: Any situation.*

Ira: I felt insulted during the elections.
A.T.: *Why?*
Ira: When they wanted to isolate us. They said that we…
Ksenia: Yes. As if something unnecessary.
Ira: We were treated as if…
Masha: Wanted to circle us with barbed wire.
Ira: That's when it was insulting.

Although many students thought that «those stereotypes appeared probably after that revolution» because «before everybody lived equally, and nobody knew that in the West they consider themselves so Ukrainian» (Roman), research conducted before the Orange Revolution showed that East Ukrainian schoolchildren were well aware of the regional differences (Rodgers, 2006). Rodgers found that in 2003 youth from the Eastern borderland of Ukraine were eagerly involving themselves in the renegotiation of the relations of symbolic domination and subordination inscribed in the new (post-independence) order of Ukrainians/non-Ukrainians. In short, students always felt the need to prove their right to belong to Ukraine due to their «subordinate» Russian speaking status. My research echoed that finding, and, thus, the other way in which youth talked about exclusion from the national space was more conventionally linked to the issue of language ideology. The centrality of the power of negative representation is apparent within the following extract from a group discussion with boys. Here Stepan makes links between the use of language in geopolitical exclusionary discourses and the implications of this for people's regional sense of belonging:

A.T.: *Have you ever felt like you are from the Donbas rather than Ukrainian?*
Stepan: Of course.
A.T.: *When and how?*
Stepan: This is manifested even in the fact that Russian language, all this stuff… [they] start to criticize us, saying «You are not Ukrainian; you are Russian because you speak in Russian». All this, I think that all this… influences our psyche. Well, influences in what sense? Influences in a sense that people start to have doubts about themselves.
Misha: They do not trust in themselves, but what's the difference where you are and what language you speak? The important thing is to speak correctly.

As the Ukrainianness of the Donbas youth, to use Bauman's (2004) expression, was «cast in doubt», and their place was continuously constructed as antithesis to everything Ukrainian, they suggested that they felt belonging to the region by virtue of perceived exclusion from the national space and the constant need to negotiate and defend their national identities, rather than due to their identification with cultural or other aspects of the region/place.

In sum, in the context of Ukraine, place appears to provide an important framework for divisions, exclusions, negative stereotypes and representations of people. As a way to address this problem, the next section argues for the importance of a place-based approach in education.

Implications for education

In conclusion, I outline the possibilities for place-based citizenship education, which is able to accommodate intra-state diversity, mediate a more meaningful civic engagement of youth, and inform pedagogical practice. I suggest that in developing citizenship education it needs to be taken into account that young people's concept of citizenship and their identities are significantly shaped by place and locality. A place-based or place-conscious education could therefore have positive implications for the construction of citizens in their spatial contexts and a pedagogical value. Recent international contributions to the field conceptualise place-based pedagogy not just as an alternative teaching methodology or novel approach to environmental education but as part of a broader social movement known as «the new localism» which aims to reinstate the significance of the local in the global age (see Gruenewald & Smith, 2008; Nayak, 2003).

Connected to citizenship, a place-based education enhances understanding of global issues that shape local lives as well as global interdependence implying ethical living and ethical choices. It also provides opportunities for learners to practice democracy and develop readiness for social action in their local community. Furthermore, place-conscious education is experiential and, as such, can help youth to appreciate and connect to local social diversity in their environment (see Osler & Starkey, 2005). It can be argued then that place-based citizenship education «might have some direct bearing on the well-being of the social and ecological places people actually inhabit» (Gruenewald, 2003a: 4). In fact, the tradition of democratic action research and a great deal of practice in citizenship education have already recognised the importance of engaging students in learning about the past and history of the community: investigating their familiar local places, identifying problems, analysing them, and then offering and implementing action (Gruenewald, 2003b; Osler & Starkey, 2005; Thomson, 2006; Hanh, 2006).

Importantly, Gruenewald (2003a) argues in favour of blending the mutually supportive traditions of «critical pedagogy» and «place-based education» into «a critical pedagogy of place». This new concept combines «the critical tradition that has historically been concerned with human oppression, difference, and radical multiculturalism with geographically and ecologically grounded (i.e., place-based) cultural experience» (*idem*, 2008: 149). Drawing on Freire's (1995) assumption that «people are rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark them, and which they also mark» by reflecting and acting on their situation, Gruenewald (2003a: 4) argues that critical pedagogy is inevitably concerned with space, or place. A critical pedagogy of place, akin to critical pedagogy, aims to make learners aware of social, political, and economic contradictions as well as act with respect to injustice in particular places. For example, based on an empirical project with youth conducted in Northeast England, Nayak (2003: 163) describes the potential of a «pedagogy of place» (focused on migration, hybridity and different family histories and geographies meeting in one place) in critically engaging with and deconstructing Whiteness, and thus challenging racism.

At a time when curricula in all countries focuses on standardization and quantitative or measurable outcomes, such a critical approach could help forge connections between schools with social, cultural, political, economic, and ecological dynamics of places or, at least, ground the debates over standards in the lived experiences of young people and the contexts of their lives (Gruenewald, 2003a; Jennings *et al*., 2005). The study outlined in this paper has started to do this by at once bringing into focus the world youth live in and highlighting young people's visions on the disparities between homogenised school messages and their lived experiences. It argues that a place-based approach to education can offer a way forward in the Ukrainian context (and in other geo-culturally diverse countries) for the creation of a common citizenship identity that respects rather than negates particular local histories, memories and everyday experiences, and thereby balances unity and diversity.

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