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The Level of Knowledge About the University Building Among the Academic Community in the Context of Place Attachment

Abstract

This paper presents the issues of place and attachment to place. The aim of the article is to determine the level of knowledge among the academic community of the university building in which they study or work and its surrounding area, in the context of place attachment. The cognitive component – one of many aspects of identifying with a place – was examined. With limited knowledge about the building in which the study population spends time, calculated in months or years, it is difficult to determine place attachment, identification, or experience. The research method applied was a diagnostic survey, a questionnaire consisting of questions designed by the author. Both students and academics were surveyed. The results showed that students have limited knowledge of the building where they attend classes. The university building appears to be more of an anonymous non-place, without deeper symbolic or social meanings, than a place with which the academic community identifies itself.

Keywords: place, non-place, place attachment, academic community, identity

Introduction

Human beings usually seek to identify an area of their own in any space, which is why place attachment is one of the most important human traits. As Lewicka (2012) pointed out, the literature contains such terms as place attachment, place identity, sense of place, place dependence, insideness, embeddedness, rootedness, appropriation, belongingness, residence satisfaction, and topophilia. Today's mobility – taking the form of laptops, mobile phones, airports, etc. – has significantly changed the understanding of rootedness. Modern people are increasingly often not connected to a place by any sentiments, emotions, ties, or people (Paprzyca, 2015).

Place attachment is the cognitive and emotional bond between people and places (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). This people–place bond emerges from people's interaction with a place and their social interactions that occur in that place (Scannell & Gifford, 2014). Residents develop an attachment to their residential environment or neighborhood and tourists can become attached to a tourist destination (Eisenhauer et al., 2000).

The aim of this article was to determine the level of knowledge among the academic community of the University building in which they study or work and its vicinity, in the context of place attachment. The cognitive component – one of many aspects of identifying with a place – was examined. Knowledge – unlike awareness (feeling, being conscious of events, objects, thoughts, emotions, or sensory patterns) – consists of facts, information, and skills acquired through experience or education. If the study population spends time calculated in months or years in the university building and have limited knowledge about it, do they have place attachment, identification, or experience? Theoretically, the university is the ultimate example of an institution which builds its identity through a strong connection with tradition. Employees and students shape their academic identity by referring to characters and events from their past, among other things.

Places have many dimensions and meanings for people, organizations, and institutions (Massey, 1995). A place can be simply defined as

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the sum of three components: its physical location, the meanings that are assigned to it, and the activities (actions) that take place there (Bańka, 2002; Bierwiaczonek, 2018; Gnieciak, 2013). The roots of our understanding of a place lie in our background and experiences, as well as in the language: "our home," "our room," "our street," "our city," or "our neighborhood" (Dymnicka, 2011). A place is an essential space for humans, transformed by the meanings assigned to it (Chmielewski, 2010). Böhme (2013) claimed that landscapes, parks, cities, and buildings, as well as people and artifacts, "influence us." Idealizing distinctive places based on locality and familiarity may, however, lead to praise for provincialism, intolerance, or a dangerous isolation from intercultural exchange (Seamon & Sowers, 2008). In the collection of texts that define the concept of a significant place, one may find the books *Key Texts in Human Geography* (Hubbard et al., 2008) and *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* (Hubbard et al., 2004). Other researchers who define space and rely on individual experiences and social interactions include Tuan Yi-Fu (1974), Edward Relph (1976), and Anne Buttimer (1980).

An increasing part of space in the modern world is occupied by non-places, because the highway, hotel hall, and airport hall are identical no matter the city, country, or continent (Głyda, 2013). The dichotomy of place/non-place (*non-lieux*) proposed by Augé (2011) is supported by a number of other dichotomies of terms, providing room for evaluation: familiar/foreign, named/anonymous, static/dynamic, permanent/ephemeral, specific/general, etc. Examples of "non-places" known from the literature are airports (Wróbel, 2018; Varley et al., 2020), roadways (Merriman, 2004; Spinney, 2007), gas stations (Cwynar, 2017), cemeteries (Fabiszak & Brzezińska, 2018), food courts (Karpińska, 2007), traffic islands (Roberts, 2015), hotels (McNeill, 2009), docks, and areas such as banks, stations, and hospitals (Urry, 2007), etc.

Non-places are negative spaces; they are anonymous and stripped of identity, increasing the feeling of rootlessness and alienation. They are spatial signs of contemporary spiritual emptiness and existential alienation (Augé, 2011). The condition for a connection between a person and a non-place is, for example, showing a valid ticket (air, train, bus, highway,

parking lot, etc.), having a passport or driver's license, or having a payment card accepted by a terminal (Cwynar, 2017). Educators define and consider the concept of "location without place," for example, in a kindergarten (Kurcińska, 2018) or orphanage (Kurzynoga, 2012). Zygmunt Bauman (2004) wrote that people in these public places do not create a shared presence. Non-places do not necessarily need to be part of dilapidated spaces; they undergo various transformations. Smagacz (2008) wrote about the strategy of taming non-places and used the example of young people, emphasizing that although a shopping mallcan be superficially tamed by young people and can become a "place" for them, it is certainly not so for the other users, who perceive it as a transitory space.

In the case of universities, although they are not organizations with particularly high customer acquisition costs, research into student loyalty to universities is needed and beneficial (Hall, 2015). The modern university is increasingly described as a social institution that provides services – a knowledge factory (Melosik, 2002). Students no longer regard their time at university as an act of belonging to the academic community, but more and more often as a visit to a huge department store (Knasiecka-Falbierska, 2014). An analysis of the expectations of contemporary students towards universities can be found in the work of Wroczyńska (2013). When choosing a place to study, students behave like customers looking for the best-quality goods; three dominant attitudes can be identified among them (Zakowicz, 2013):

– a specific client – a student who knows why they have chosen a specific university and why they are studying there; their main goal is to get a job in the profession they have learned and consider interesting;

– a hesitant client – one who does not have precisely defined educational and professional plans and who needs help choosing their activity; and

– a minimalist client – one whose main principle in studying is the "3 Zs" (in Polish: *zakuj*, *zdaj*, *zapomnij* [study, pass, forget]), with the aim of graduating quickly and with reasonable ease.

In addition to a wide range of studies focusing on marketing activities and the image of universities (Drapińska, 2006; Iwankiewicz-Rak, 2004; Krzyżak, 2009; Stachura, 2006), a separate group of studies concerns the place of origin and decision-making process of university candidates (Borowiec, 2006; Gąsiorowska, 2004). Baruk (2016) focused on the hierarchy of associations, with the university as a workplace. The strong link between students' satisfaction with their studies and their loyalty and between their loyalty and their willingness to recommend the university was confirmed by Stach and Bąk (2009).

This study is also an attempt to validate the conclusions resulting from the observation made at various levels of the academic life of Nicolaus Copernicus University students (Majchrzak, 2013). It was shown that the majority of the students considered the university to be a "non-place," a space they thought of as "terminals," as in the case of an airport, a railway station, or a doctor's office. They considered it a "service provider" and "production site." The research carried out at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń showed that students did not feel connected with the university and their classmates. In their free time, most of the respondents distance themselves from the university, not because of an aversion to the Nicolaus Copernicus University, but rather because they chose other activities related to their private interests (music or sport) (Bielska et al., 2015). However, they declared an interest (mainly through groups on Facebook, etc.) in what is happening at the university – scientific and cultural events. They expressed positive opinions about the University, satisfaction with the city and their studies, and a willingness to learn about the University; nonetheless, these factors did not translate into knowledge about the University. One in five respondents did not know who the dean was, half of them were unable to indicate the name of the rector, and on average they knew the names of six out of 17 departments/institutes (Bielska, et al. 2015).

Materials and Methods

The research method used in the study was a diagnostic survey, a questionnaire consisting of 15 questions designed by the author. The survey of students and academics was designed to determine their knowledge of the history and current events related to the main building of the Pedagogical University in Krakow, at 2 Podchorążych Street, among other things. The topics concerned the geological past of the area around the University (two questions), its history (four questions), figures associated with the Pedagogical University (two questions), the location and names within the main building (one question) and other university-related facilities (three questions), nearby sports clubs (one question), and the structure and authorities of the Pedagogical University (two questions).

The study covered a group of 102 students and 47 academics of the Pedagogical University of Krakow. For the group of students, the the auditorium questionnaire method was used and was carried out in the main building of the university. For the group of employees, a questionnaire set in a Google form was used and a link to it was included in an e-mail. The questionnaire was completed by 66.2% of the employees to whom it was sent. The students of first-cycle studies represented the following faculties: "tourism and recreation," "geography," and "historical tourism and cultural heritage"; the second-cycle students represented the faculty of "tourism and recreation." All the respondents had either conducted or participated in at least 75% of their courses at the building at 2 Podchorążych Street in Krakow. The survey was conducted for students between November 2019 and January 2020, and for employees in July 2020.

Among the surveyed students, 72% were women; the average age was 22 years; and 19% were from Krakow, 29% from other cities, and 60% from rural areas. Among the employees who completed the questionnaire, 40% were women; the average age was 41 years; and 28% were people from Krakow and 36% from other cities and villages.

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In the initial assessment of the survey results (Table 1), a low percentage of correct answers from the student group is noticeable. Only two questions had over 50% correct answers. In the group of University employees, only six questions had a high percentage of correct answers (over 70%).

In Question 1, concerning the geological past of the area, the correct answer was that at the end of the ice age (the Pleistocene) the area was overgrown with tundra vegetation and resembled today's areas beyond the Arctic Circle; this answer was selected by almost 1/3 of the students and 3/4 of the employees. The most frequent answer from the students (33.8%) was that the area was covered with a thick layer of ice and a significant number of answer (30.7%) concerned the bottom of a deep sea where ammonites, belemnites, and sponges lived.

In Question 2, half of the respondents gave a wrong answer, denying the fact that the first people who settled today's Hill of Blessed Bronislava, 3 km from the University building at 2 Podchorążych Street) were looking for mammoths. Today, mammoth bones are hanging on chains in front of the entrance to Wawel Cathedral. Only 26.5% of the students surveyed correctly answered that the first people who settled today's Hill of Blessed Bronislava could have been building Gontyna to honor Salwator, which attracts tourists today. In the employee group, as many as 29.8% of the respondents selected the option "Don't know" and only 1/3 gave the correct answer.

Table 1. Percentage of Correct Answers to the Survey Questions

	Employees	Students, by department					
		[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	Total
Question 1	**74.5**	23.1	42.9	27.3	38.6	23.7	30.7
Question 2	36.2	15.4	33.3	36.4	21.1	26.3	26.5
Question 3	31.9	46.2	28.6	27.3	15.8	39.5	31.5
Question 4	**89.4**	23.1	23.8	**54.5**	**68.4**	**55.3**	45.0
Question 5	23.4	38.5	42.9	45.5	5.3	34.2	33.2
Question 6	**91.5**	**53.8**	47.6	**81.8**	**68.4**	**65.8**	**63.5**
Question 7	**53.2**	**84.6**	19.0	45.5	42.1	31.6	44.6
Question 9	42.6	**61.5**	38.1	**54.5**	21.1	39.5	42.9
Question 10	**80.9**	46.2	47.6	27.3	31.6	44.7	39.5
Question 11	–	30.8	**57.1**	27.3	21.1	10.5	29.4
Question 12	**83.0**	**84.6**	19.0	**72.7**	**89.5**	**81.6**	**69.5**
Question 13	**80.9**	30.8	23.8	**72.7**	36.8	23.7	37.6
Question 14	**63.8**	15.4	14.3	27.3	5.3	5.3	13.5
Question 15	**53.2**	38.5	4.8	45.5	47.4	34.2	34.1

1 – 1st year of studies, first-cycle studies "tourism and recreation"

2 – 1st year of studies, "historical tourism and cultural heritage"

3 – 3rd year of studies, first-cycle studies "tourism and recreation"

4 – 3rd year of studies, first-cycle studies "geography"

5 – 2nd year of studies, second-cycle studies "tourism and recreation"

Note: Questions with more than 50% correct answers are presented in bold.

Only 1/3 of the students thought that the building called Podcho-rążówka, which has functioned since 1918 as the Infantry Cadet School (Cadet Institute) in Łobzów, does not belong to the Pedagogical University (Question 3). The remaining respondents were not aware that the name of the street on which the main building of their university

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is located (Podchorążych Street)is connected with the building opposite the main building's entrance. Importantly, less than 1/3 of the university employees chose the correct answer to this question as well.

The Wawel sports club was correctly and most often indicated by the students (45%) and the employees (89.4%) as being closest to the Pedagogical University building at 2 Podchorążych Street.

Only one in three representatives in the student group was aware that there is no mound in the immediate vicinity of the Pedagogical University building. The question pertains to the Esterka Mound at the junction of Głowackiego and Podchorążych Streets, which was "dismantled" when the sports facilities of the Wawel club were constructed. An even lower percentage (23.4%) of correct answers was recorded in the questionnaires from the employees.

Both the employees and the students demonstrated their knowledge of the names of the streets surrounding the main building. Over 90% of the employees and 2/3 of the students did not correctly indicate in the names of the rector of the university in office at the time.

Approximately half of the students and staff had trouble identifying the plants in front of the main university building. The presence of splendid elm trees was most often explained by the respondents correctly, i.e. by the course of a section of a medieval King's Leat (Młynówka Królewska) leading the waters of the Rudawa to the town moat or incorrectly (41.5%) by the boundary line of the park palace in Bronowice.

In Question 8, based on the reconstruction of the palace complex in Łobzów, the correct contemporary location of the main building of the Pedagogical University was indicated by 29.8% of employees (Figure 1). In the student group, only 58% of respondents tried to indicate the location of the building, of which 29% located it correctly.

The location of Wawel, the old town buildings, the palace in Łobzów and the Esterka Mound shown on the map turned out to be insufficient. This finding is confirmed by the conclusions from the remaining questions in which these buildings appear.

**Figure 1. Students' (A) and Employees' (B) Indications of the Present
Location of the University's Main Building on the Background of
the Reconstruction of the Palace Complex in Łobzów**
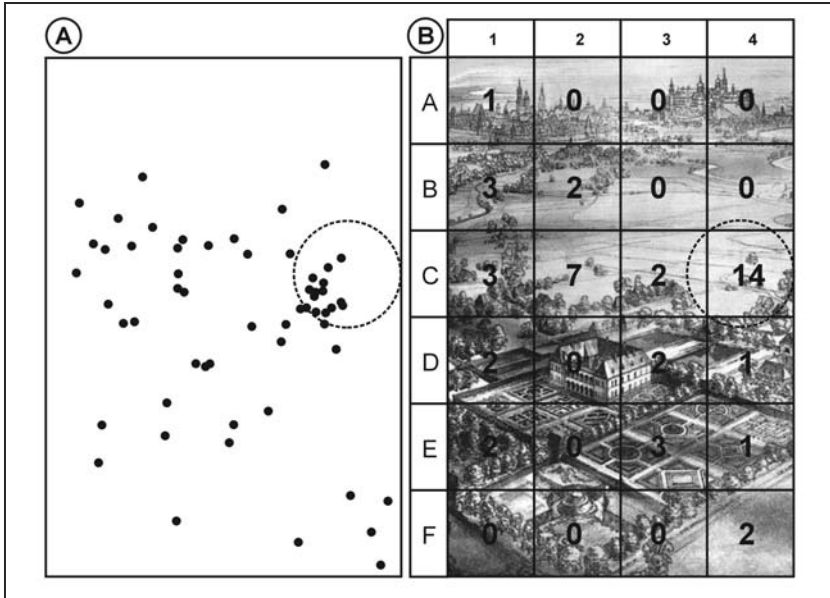
The image in Question 9, by Michał Stachowicz anddepicting ruins of the palace in Łobzów was correctly recognized by nearly 43% of the students and employees surveyed, indicating that it is not the current seat of the Faculty of Architecture at the Pedagogical University.

The following question concerned the institution after which the Pedagogical University (KEN) was named; the majority of the students (59.5%) indicated the wrong answer, claiming that it was the ministry responsible for science and higher education in Poland. The correct answer – i.e., the first secular educational authority on Polish soil – was selected by 8 out of 10 Institute of Geography employees.

In Question 11, only one in three students was aware of which fields can be studied at the Pedagogical University in Krakow.

The highest percentage of correct answers in the student group (69.5%) was recorded in the question directly related to the current location

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of the Pedagogical University buildings in Krakow – at Osiedle Stalowe (Nowa Huta) and Podbrzezie Street (Kazimierz). In the case of employees, one in five respondents gave an incorrect answer to this question.

In the question concerning a figure closely related to the University, Professor Wincent Danek, the largest group of students (37.6%) correctly indicated that he did not deal with astronomy, mathematics, and geodesy. A significant proportion (34%) was unaware that the figure after whom the hall in the main building was named used his position in the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) to contribute to abandoning the plans to liquidate the Higher Pedagogical School in Kraków and became its rector. Eighty percentof the employees gave the correct answer to this question.

Another figure, Jerzy Owsiak, most often mentioned by the student respondents (56.1%),was mistakenly indicated as a person without an honorary doctorate from the Pedagogical University; only 13.5% of the respondents indicated the correct answer, Stanisław Lem. The fact that the university honors the figure associated with the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity (WOŚP) functions in the consciousness of the group of the employees of the Pedagogical University (only 6.4% of incorrect answers).

The last question concerned the functioning of museumsin the main building of the Pedagogical University. The most frequent (34%) and correct answer among the students was the Handbook Museum, with a similar percentage of answers regarding the Museum of Tadeusz Kantor Documentation Center (33.5%). Only half of the Institute of Geography employees were able to correctly indicate the museum facility in the building where they hold over 75% of all their classes with students, use the administrative staff services, and have their staff rooms.

The student group did not show a strong correlation between the number of correct answers and the period during which the respondents were in contact with the university. Only in one question, concerning the location of the buildings of the Pedagogical University in Krakow, was the highest rate of correct answers given by students of the second year of supplementary MA studies. Comparing the answers of students in the first and third years of undergraduate studies, only in six cases did people who spent three years in the main building of the University provide

higher rates of correct answers than those studying less than one full academic year. The greatest differences in these two groups were found in the questions concerning the topography of the university and its surroundings (sports facility, museum facility, and auditorium). In the case of the surveyed employees, seniority was not a significant factor in the number of correct answers, with seniority set at a threshold of five years of employment at the Pedagogical University. Half of the questions were more frequently answered correctly by people with longer seniority. Similarly, the results of the survey were divided into graduates of the Pedagogical University and others. The first group indicated more correct answers in only half of the questions. Moreover, better knowledge of the location of university facilities in Krakow was demonstrated by people who had not previously been associated with the Pedagogical University.

On the other hand, significant differences in the number of correct answers were noted between the students from Krakow and those from other towns. The former showed better knowledge of street names, green areas, and hydrotechnical and historical buildings. Place of origin was not an important element in the correct answers provided by the employees.

Conclusion

This research is exploratory in nature and the conclusions cannot be generalized to the entire academic community of the university. The topic of attachment to place requires further detailed research, based on an analysis of non-cognitive components. They can answer the question of whether university buildings are non-places in contemporary discussions on space –along with airports, banks, department stores, and hotels. The results, showing that students have limited knowledge of the building they are attending, do not indicate attachment to place.

In the case of the University staff, correct answers were only prevalent in questions involving practical, organizational, and procedural information, as opposed to those concerning the history and current events related to the university's main building and its immediate surroundings.

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For example, 2/3 of the students and 2/3 of the employees were unaware that the name of the street at which the main building of their university is located is connected with the building opposite the main entrance. Half of the respondents had problems determining the course of the famous Royal Mill (Młynówka Królewska) in front of the main building of the University and identifying the museum on its premises. For 2/3 of the students and 2/3 of the employees, the palace building in Łobzów, currently owned by the Krakow University of Technology, remained undiscovered or was thought to belong to the Pedagogical University. The respondents in both groups were also largely unaware of the unique site, Esterka Mound, located in the immediate vicinity of their place of study and work, and the nearby Salwator area with Gontyna and the Salwator church.

The percentage of incorrect answers outlined above fits in with the conclusions resulting from the observation made at various levels of academic life of Nicolaus Copernicus University students (Majchrzak, 2013). The simplified image of the university is confirmed, where it is assumed that the student is a customer (recipient of services) and the university is a service provider.

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