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The Role of Education in the Protection of Cultural Heritage (on the Example of the Project “Journey through Wooden Podlasie”)

ABSTRACT

Nowadays the issue of regional education is a very contemporary and necessary problem, seen as a future factor in cultural heritage, which can be treated as a contribution to preserving the continuity of traditional values. A look at how heritage can be protected using local perspectives in a globalized world through educational activities is also postulated by UNESCO’s global doctrines. In order to include this idea within the school education system, a certain transformation of the pedagogical reality must take place, which is a long-term process. That is why such projects are often carried out through non-formal education. Using the example of the project ‘Journey through Wooden Podlasie’, this study addresses the problem of protecting the cultural landscape and intangible heritage of Podlasie through education from an early age. Analysis of material collected, as well as the author’s own observations from the various projects carried out in the form of regional education, confirm the theory that there is a great need to implement programs of active heritage protection from scratch. Drawing inspiration from the past can be of great practical importance for future generations, and can serve to encourage children to be active participants in their environment.

Keywords:

education, protection, tradition, cultural heritage, Podlasie region

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INTRODUCTION

Today, when ideas about tradition are dominated by global patterns, and the sense of belonging, of connection to the place one inhabits, of ties to one's environment, are dying, it is ever more important to cultivate the idea of historical succession (Sulima, 2019, pp. 111–112). This is possible through an education program that focuses on hands-on activities and intergenerational dialogue, which can help younger generations form identities based in a local context.

Regional education, which is the subject of research in this text, in light of the assumptions of pedagogy and UNESCO's postulates, seems to be an important issue, a key to preserving knowledge about history for this and future generations. On the example of the project "Journey through Wooden Podlasie", which was carried out as part of the protection and promotion of the cultural heritage of the Podlasie region in Poland, the article emphasizes the need to conduct – from a very young age of students – creative educational programs using the socio-cultural potential and legacy of our ancestors. Drawing on the past and connecting it with a universal culture can be of great practical importance. On the one hand, it is "the most urgently desired educational goal, enabling reflection of place understood as *locus educandi*" (Copik, 2013, p. 189); on the other, it will certainly serve to prepare the youngest to be able to consciously function in the surrounding world, shaping their identity and pro-social attitudes.

CULTURAL UNIQUENESS OF PODLASKIE VILLAGES

Podlaskie Voivodeship, located in the northeast of Poland, is a region of extraordinary wealth in terms of material and spiritual culture. Due to its location on the borderlands, it has been a place where elements of Eastern and Western culture have mixed for centuries. It is one of the most diverse ethnic, cultural and religious regions in Poland. In addition to Poles, these lands have been inhabited by various nationalities: Lithuanians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Jews, and roaming Romanies. This cultural and ethnic mix is reflected to this day in the architectural forms of sacred buildings and places of worship of the various religions that have been practiced here, as well as the traditions, customs, language and cuisine that have survived over time. It is a place where Catholic churches, Orthodox churches, Tatar mosques, Jewish synagogues and Old Believer houses of worship can be found located next to each other. One of the elements distinguishing Podlasie from other regions of the country is its wooden architecture, with numerous buildings

making up the south-eastern belt of wooden architecture, located near the Polish border with Belarus (Bielsko-Hajnówka Poviats).



Figure 1. Location of the Research Area – Villages of Bielsko-Hajnówka Poviats (Municipalities: Bielsk Podlaski, Hajnówka, Czyże, Narew) within the Borders of Poland and Podlaskie Voivodeship

Source: drawing made by the author based on *Map of Poland...* (2015) and administracja.mac.gov.pl.

The spatial arrangement of the villages, which is characteristic of this area, is the result of the Voloč Reform [Polish: *pomiara włóczna*] carried out by Queen Bona in the years 1558–1561. This was a time of great reformation in property laws and agrarian relations, with the Queen implementing the so-called “Voloč Reform”, which resulted in the formation of terraced villages. A characteristic feature in these villages was the way of building with the gables of the houses (and from the interwar years, also the ridges) facing the road on both sides of the road, which formed the axis of the entire village. Located further, along each rectangular plot, were the livestock buildings and buildings closing the entire plot perpendicular to other barn buildings. This spatial arrangement, initiated in the 16th century, remained unchanged in eastern Podlasie until the mid-19th century, and in some cases to this day. Unlike the western part of the voivodeship, where the estates of royals and nobility were located, the eastern border contained “exclusively Ruthenian” (Jabłonowski, 1909, p. 49) peasant villages. As a result of relatively slow economic progress in the area, the agricultural economy in the form of a checkerboard of land and three-field farms survived without major changes until the end

of the 19th century. This translated into the cultivation of rich agrarian and family rituals over the years, drawing mainly from the native folklore (including Belarusian, Ukrainian and Russian influences), which has resulted in this area becoming a real treasury of spiritual culture, where one can experience many archaic and pre-Christian traditions (Sulima, 2014, p. 263, 2018, p. 37).

Historical, socio-cultural, economic and environmental factors have also contributed to the emergence of certain differences in the art of building in north-eastern Poland, when comparing how buildings were constructed in other parts of Poland. This does not only refer to the visual layer, but also to the way the buildings were constructed and the arrangement of the interior of wooden huts (Sulima, 2014, p. 266, 2018, p. 73). It was commonly believed that using lumber from the nearby Białowieża Primeval Forest guaranteed a solid structure that would “survive a hundred years” (Chwaszczewski, 2000); therefore residential buildings were built of pine wood from the primeval forest, while other farm buildings were built with lumber from farmers’ own groves.

Another distinguishing and unique feature of houses in this area is the facade ornamentation. This feature is not seen anywhere else in Poland, and takes on exceptionally decorative, carved forms. It can be seen on residential houses, Orthodox churches, roadside chapels, and even on small architectural structures, such as bus stops or beehives. The elements were made with laymen saws, the same ones used to cut wood. They are referred to as Russian or Belarussian layman’s ornamentation in Podlasie (Szewczyk, 2006, p. 136). The phenomenon of decorating huts in this way started on a massive scale after World War I and lasted until around 1960. After 1920, almost all architectural elements of the building were decorated, especially the wall facing the main road, including windows, shutters, corners, eaves, gables, porches, and verandas. Two characteristic features were their symmetry in relation to one another and their coloring. Apart from the architectural value of this form of ornamentation, which makes it a distinguishing feature of the rural landscape, there are underlying symbolic messages in this architectural form, closely related to the “local” worldview, largely based on Orthodox traditions. The decorative motifs appearing on the facades of houses in the form of twigs, leaves, birds or hearts were inspired by the surrounding world, taken from the local fauna and flora. According to folk beliefs, apart from their function of “embellishing” the hut, the ornamentation was supposed to ensure happiness and prosperity for the household.

The colors and details visible on the outside are also continued in the interiors, where the most important place is occupied by sacred images, i.e., icons, decorated with linen towels, curtains (so-called aprons) or flower crowns that hang in the cor-

ners of the rooms, in the so-called holy corner, which is the most important place in the cottage. The decorative role is also played by fabrics, in particular tapestries, which still adorn the walls of rural kitchens, as well as tablecloths, napkins, pillows, bed sheets and bedspreads embroidered by housewives (Sulima, 2014, p. 268).



Figures 2–3. House in the Village of Czyże; Orthodox Church in Parcewo; Chapel in Kojty; Icons in Stare Berezowo; Embroidered Dish Towel in Stare Berezowo; Tiled Stove in Plutycze; Tapestry in Kojty

Source: Author’s own collection.

The cultural landscape of the villages of East Podlasie is therefore a very broad issue, being an example of a temporal continuum, both in spatial and spiritual aspects. On the one hand, there are rural layouts from the 16th century that have survived to this day, as well as the religious architecture of Orthodox churches, wooden houses and farm buildings. On the other hand, there is a wealth of spiritual culture that exists here, i.e., the intangible treasures of the countryside. The rural Orthodox communities inhabiting these areas, whose perception of the world is largely based on symbols which words cannot do justice (Evdokimov, 2003 as cited in Sadowski, 1991, p. 133), over the years have created a specific type of

culture (Pawluczuk, 1999, p. 41) manifested in traditional values, passed down from generation to generation. These are customs, beliefs, rituals, verbal and musical folklore, which are a manifestation of the strong cultural identity of the local inhabitants and the relationship with their small homeland, religion and roots. Undoubtedly, all this was influenced by the Orthodox Church which was, and continues to be, a dominant force here, whose followers can be associated with the “pan-Rus cultural tradition” (Sadowski, 2001, p. 68).

All these factors are also recorded in architectural forms: buildings, ornaments and decorations. They also show how broad and multidimensional the issue of wooden architecture is, which over the years has become an exponent of the cultural landscape of eastern Podlasie and gives indisputable proof of the existence of *genius loci* (Sulima, 2019, p. 105).

PROTECTION OF PODLASIE’S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Today, as a result of civilizational and economic changes, the cultural heritage of these areas is being transformed, with irreversible consequences and degradation of cultural space. The modern world is trying to show that progress should be measured by looking towards the future, and rejecting the past. Many a time it is even believed that the necessary requirement for development is to retreat from tradition which is perceived pejoratively, in the context of poverty and backwardness (Misiejuk, 2013, p. 303).

The consequences of such thinking can be seen both in the non-material sphere, where many of the folk customs and rituals are being forgotten, passing away with the older generation or transforming into completely new customs; and in the field of material culture – in the settlement system and its architecture. Improperly understood progress even leads to the abandonment of one’s own cultural identity, patterns, or ideas (Samoraj, 1999, p. 299).

The reasons for the regress and blurring of patterns developed over the years are two-fold. On the one hand, when considering the demographic situation of the villages, one can observe that most inhabitants of these villages were born in the 1930s and 1940s. On the other hand, there can be observed a progressive globalization, which has led to the formation of a new type of personality, one which professes the ideals inherent in modern societies (Kwaśniewicz, 1979, p. 34). As a result, traditional rural buildings, such as barns, cowsheds or stables, lose their *raison d’être*, and as a result of modernization and renovation, houses are often discarded of decorative elements in favor of plain wooden, or other types of siding,

which are far from the traditional local patterns used in the art of construction. Through such activities, the countryside landscape is acquiring a foreign appearance and is becoming something culturally contradictory. The most unpleasant phenomenon, however, is the sight of abandoned homesteads and buildings of significant architectural value, which in the near future will face inevitable demolition, and will thus be forgotten (Sulima, 2011, p. 412).

Reduction can also be seen in the elements representing spiritual culture. Traditional content and patterns of behavior, passed down in families over generations, are becoming reduced or tinged with contemporary patterns. It may therefore turn out that in view of ongoing civilization transformations, the inhabitants living there today are the last generation representing the authentic culture of the countryside, and at the same time the last carriers of a living tradition. In order for it not to become anachronistic, with only a ludic and recreational overtone for future generations, this culture should be preserved at all costs (Sulima, 2016, p. 509). Protecting wooden architecture, and with it the cultural heritage of the local communities of the Polish-Belarusian borderland, is one of the key ways for preserving inhabitants' identity, and not only in human memory.

Despite the fact that the issue of protecting traditional wooden buildings is included in the activities of cultural institutions or the protection of monuments, so far few legally regulated activities have been undertaken. The debate on the protection of cultural goods and cultural heritage, both material and spiritual, which is currently taking place throughout the country, emphasizes the fact that such activities should be carried out in many different forms, through various entities, including conservation services, municipal and local governments, universities, with active participation of rural communities with practical experience (Sulima, 2019, p. 112). A common concern for heritage, however, apart from identification, documentation, research and promotion, also includes education, especially from an early age, implemented through cognitive revitalization projects aimed at tourists, formally and informally.

The issue of regional education is currently a very contemporary and necessary issue, where heritage is perceived as an important factor in building the identity of younger generations in the future, and not a burden hampering development (Rottermund, 2013, p. 15). Regional educational programs can be treated as a way to contribute to the maintenance of the continuity of tradition in rural areas. As Jacek Purchla rightly points out, monuments belong to the past, but cultural heritage, both material and spiritual, serves contemporary purposes (Purchla, 2013, p. 21). This is confirmed by Andrzej Rottermund, who states: "A modern approach to heritage consists in perceiving it as an important factor of develop-

ment, contributing, inter alia, to regional development, tourism development and, as a result, to the economic development of the state. In turn, on the scale of individual citizens, it serves in the process of acquiring cultural identity, to enrich the intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual sphere of one's life" (Rottermund, 2013, p. 15). Undoubtedly, regional education is a form of capital that may pay off for the general public in the future. The ability of future decision makers to make informed decisions about the built environment, including decisions about their cultural landscape, will depend on the knowledge they acquire through their education (The UIA Built Environment Education Network, n.d.; Sulima, 2020).

REGIONAL EDUCATION

From an early age, children are active participants of space and experience it within the context of the place they live in. Over time, they become researchers and explorers, and by getting to know the world around them, they build a mental map of their impressions. Their immediate surroundings, and then the neighborhood, begin to directly or indirectly influence their perception of space. Place attachment (Kucza-Kuczyński, 2006, p. 111) forms, which in turn leads to an emotional attachment and a sense of rooting with that place, which has become close and comprehensible (Sulima, 2020). „To bond with a place, a child needs experience of that place within some kind of freedom to explore, to take risks, to know a range of emotions, to act on a sense of possession" (Brown, 2014).

Therefore, awareness is extremely important in the process of experiencing. It becomes the starting point for shaping relationships based on social, cultural and historical connotations. Awareness of the space in which one lives also leads to feelings of responsibility for it. This is extremely important for maintaining the quality of a space, because by identifying with a space and understanding the laws that govern it, a person becomes less indifferent to the processes and transformations occurring to and within it. This issue is very broad and includes both aesthetic aspects (sensitivity to the environment: order, ugliness), cultural (knowledge and respect for architectural and spiritual heritage), creative, and also civic aspects – co-responsibility and a critical attitude towards the environment (Sulima, 2020).

Regional education is currently being studied by many researchers.² In today's education system, it functions within several pedagogical concepts and is called regional, cultural, patriotic or civic education. Regardless of the name, its goal is to respect and nurture the achievements of the past with a focus on the future. However, regional education cannot be only about the analysis of heritage, but also the messages it holds. Only this approach can play a significant role in preserving tradition as an active element of culture. As noted by Dorota Misiejuk, nowadays "awareness of heritage and inheritance" is a significant problem from the point of view of upbringing. "The degree of familiarity and knowledge about heritage, as well as the degree of involvement in creative changes in the inheritance process, is important not only as a cultural competence, but above all places the individual either on the passive side of culture or on the active side [...]. Finally [...] the attitude towards the past opens up the future for the individual. It is the attitude towards her own heritage that in a way determines her self-respect, builds her creative potential and builds the individual's openness to new challenges" (Misiejuk, 2013, pp. 91–92).

When discussing regional education, there needs to be mention of one of the currents of contemporary pedagogy – pedagogy of place, which Maria Mendel (2017) deals with more extensively. "Both sub-disciplines [...] assume as the main assumptions in the educational processes [...]: returning to the sources, acquiring regional competences, shaping the attitudes of protecting the cultural heritage of the region, transferring knowledge in the field of core values: language, norms, customs, traditions, rituals, mentality" (Copik, 2013, p. 184). Undoubtedly, as Leon Dyczewski states, these activities should be guided by the motto of Zygmunt Gloger: "it is good to know foreign things, but it is a duty to know your own", and this goal can only be achieved when, along with the transmission of knowledge of traditional values, "students love is awakened" (Dyczewski, 2005, pp. 43–44).³ Only this understanding of education can "significantly contribute to the vitality of culture" (Lewowicki, 2009, p. 23 as cited in Misiejuk, 2013, p. 39).

Childhood is the period in which the holistic development of an individual is formed. It is therefore the best time to skillfully use the potential of cultural heritage and traces of the past in building the identity of a young generation. "The process of 'creating' heritage and its interpretation is connected with the issue of

2 Here should be mentioned the works of Ilona Copik, Leon Dyczewski, Kazimierz Kosak-Główczewski, Maria Mendel, Dorota Misiejuk, Jerzy Nikitorowicz, Ewa Ogrodzka-Mazur, and Mirosław Sobecki, among others.

3 Jerzy Nikitorowicz also wrote about shaping attitudes related to "a private love of homeland" (Nikitorowicz, 2009, pp. 218–219).

awareness of the value of heritage and social dialogue. Activities in this area should not be addressed to conservation circles, but to ‘ordinary people’ – civil society” (Purchla, 2013, pp. 21, 25). It is only adults who can sensitize the youngest to the rights governing the cultural environment and learn to be jointly responsible for it, by making decisions aimed at respecting and protecting it. This is necessary for the harmonious functioning of society in the future (Sulima, 2020).

REGIONAL EDUCATION IN INTERNATIONAL DECLARATIONS

The goals of civic education mentioned above and respect for heritage through educational activities are included in the texts of important international documents. The first such document is the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972. It emphasizes the essence of policy aimed at assigning an appropriate function to heritage in collective life and the need to include the protection of heritage in general planning strategies. This can be done, inter alia, by conducting scientific and research programs, including identification, safeguarding and conservation, as well as by enhancing public awareness of cultural and natural heritage, especially among children and youth. This is mentioned in Article 5 of the Convention, which states that governments should “encourage the establishment or development of national or regional centers of education in the field of protection, conservation and restoration of heritage [...] and encourage the undertaking of scientific research” on this subject. Furthermore, Articles 27 and 28 oblige states to conduct educational programs in order to strengthen in their societies’ respect for and attachment to cultural and natural heritage (The Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972).

The importance of architectural heritage is also emphasized in the Convention for the Protection of Architectural Heritage of Europe of 1985, which recognizes architecture as an unquestionable and invaluable testimony of our past, and a common achievement of all Europeans. Therefore, starting from children of school age, governments should strive to deepen public awareness of the importance of architectural heritage, both as an element of cultural identity and a source of inspiration for present and future generations. Moreover, it is important to understand the links between architecture, art and tradition on a national, regional or local scale (The Convention for the Protection of Architectural Heritage of Europe, 1985).

The interdependence between material and spiritual heritage is, in turn, designated by the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. It recognizes the following as intangible heritage:

- a) oral traditions and messages, including language as a vehicle for the intangible cultural heritage;
- b) performing arts;
- c) customs, rituals and festive rituals;
- d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- e) skills related to traditional crafts”.

The content of the Convention states, *inter alia*, the need to build greater awareness, especially among the younger generations, of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage and of its safeguarding. Article 14 mentions the need to educate and develop this potential in children. Moreover, it emphasizes the important role of the state in raising awareness and promoting heritage through: specific educational and training programs for interested communities and groups, activities aimed at developing potential in the field of protection of intangible cultural heritage, in particular in the field of management and research, and informal transfer of knowledge to promote educational activities for the protection of natural areas and memorial sites the existence of which is necessary for the expression of intangible cultural heritage. The document also states the importance of getting communities and local groups to participate in the effort to transmit this knowledge to future generations, thus encouraging an active, not passive attitude in this matter (The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003).

The next convention that indicates the need to maintain cultural identity and learn shared responsibility for the place in which one lives is the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society of 2005. In particular, Article 13 of the Convention, entitled “Cultural Heritage and Knowledge”, addresses the need to improve access to local heritage among children and young people. It also recognizes the important place of cultural education in schools, not necessarily as a separate subject, but as an issue integrated with other activities at all levels of education (The Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, 2005).

In turn, the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression of 2005 speaks of cultural diversity as one of the greatest sources of wealth for individuals and society. According to its provi-

sions, the protection, promotion and preservation of cultural diversity are a basic condition for permanent and sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations. Therefore, it is important to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge about the diversity of cultural expression, in particular through educational programs and by raising awareness among the general public (The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression, 2005).

The 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, in addition to research, inventory and identification of the historic landscape in conjunction with its management, emphasizes the active role of children and young people in the protection process (The UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, 2011).

Each of the documents mentioned above emphasizes the role of education with respect to tradition and respect for cultural diversity through a comprehensive system of education for heritage. In order to include this knowledge within the school education system, there must be a certain transformation of the pedagogical reality, which is certainly a long-term process. This is a major reason why projects concerned with the preservation of local culture are usually carried out through non-formal channels of education.

“JOURNEY THROUGH WOODEN PODLASIE” AS AN ACTIVE FORM OF REGIONAL EDUCATION

Based on the provisions mentioned above, and keeping in mind the need to ensure the continuity of the cultural, material and spiritual heritage of the people of the Polish-Belarusian borderland, and not only in human memory, the publication entitled “Journey through Wooden Podlasie” was created. The aim of the project is to help the youngest in building their identity and relationship with the culture of the region, and it is geared towards locality. The leitmotif of the book is wood, which in the case of Podlasie is shown in many aspects. Bearing in mind the need for active protection of heritage, the title “Wooden Podlasie” is seen as a living organism, and is meant to encourage people to wander around all the nooks and crannies of this corner of Poland, both geographically and thematically.

The book is addressed to recipients of all ages and invites children, parents and grandparents to travel together around Podlasie. This book can serve as an additional tool to use in the exchange of ideas and integration that different generations can participate in. It was written as a guide to the culture and architecture

of fifteen villages in the Polish-Belarusian borderland, Bielsko-Hajnowka Poviats. Up until now, the architectural and tourist potential of these areas had not yet been exploited with the youngest tourists in mind. Publishing a creative guide for this audience was to fill this gap.

The route designated in the guide is oriented towards wooden objects of significant cultural value, including numerous colorful Orthodox churches, external decorations on houses, elements of their furnishings, such as a tiled stove, icons hanging in the corners of huts, fabrics embroidered by housewives, or embroidered cushions placed on beds, which formerly constituted a part of the bride's dowry. The guide encourages readers to meet with local artists who are still active in these areas, such as a carpenter or a folk sculptor. Visitors can also discover elements of spiritual culture – legends, tales, songs, or the local dialect, which today is slowly being forgotten with the passage of time, going away with the older generation.

The project was conceived as an interactive tool, where along the different stages of the journey different elements are introduced to allow readers to explore the land in more detail. For the guide to be attractive to the youngest readers, it contains a number of creative activities, trivia and puzzles related to a given place. During the journey, readers perform tasks that lead them through successive points along the route. The various exercises ask questions not only about the construction materials used in building of the structures and about architectural details, but also about religion, customs and the surrounding environment. Participants thus become partners in discovering culture which they have the opportunity to get in touch with. Readers are asked questions to strengthen their knowledge about the places they are traveling through, and are asked to perform small tasks which engage them in the adventure that they are experiencing. Some of the practical activities readers are asked to complete are designing the corner of a building, the facade of a cottage, or their own idea of embroidering design on a towel that decorates an icon in an Orthodox house.

Going hand in hand with the text are graphic designs that reflect the unique character of this Podlasie region, encouraging people to explore and discover it, and to leave their trace in it, by filling in and drawing their own additions to the landscape. Creative tasks that integrate science, technology and art aim to emphasize the role of artistic activities in the modern educational process. During childhood, children need to actively transform the world, which leads to a deeper exploration of it, and thus their holistic development. The authors' intention was for readers to discover the heritage of the region by developing an understanding of the environment through experience and creation. This guidebook promotes the idea that the study of architecture, culture and art can be a means of education.

The heritage of Podlasie is not presented here as a retrospective of past times, focused on the past, but instead it is focused on the future and gives the opportunity to co-create it. In the context of the creative development of children, it reaches different areas of knowledge. Such an interdisciplinary combination of topics in many areas, such as the history of the region, architecture, folklore – with active participation in the form of rural tourism – may influence the development of a conscious attitude, not indifferent to the cultural and spiritual landscape of rural areas. Presenting the heritage and culture of the countryside in an interesting, accessible and creative way is important and necessary, especially today, when more and more often in urbanized society we witness the presentation of the countryside as an area of backwardness and a relic of the past. Moreover, direct contact with the agricultural and natural environment as well as the cultural and social environment of local communities gives people the opportunity to get to know its authentic side.



Figures 4–5. Pages from the Book “Journey through Wooden Podlasie”

Source: Sulima, M., & students’ science club „small ARCHITECTURE” (2020). *Podróże po drewnianym Podlasiu*. Białystok: Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Białostockiej.

Therefore, the publication is of a cognitive, didactic, tourist and aesthetic nature. The discussed subject matter, through the atmosphere of play, aids in getting to know and understand the space and culture of the countryside and shape social awareness of the local heritage and the role of material and spiritual traces of the past in building identity. Its task is to encourage creative exploration of the borderland villages and to show that the heritage of the ancestors is a value and should be nurtured. Respect for cultural heritage through “living” intergenerational communication is an excellent tool for disseminating knowledge about traditional values among this and future generations. It is therefore a voice in the discussion on the protection of the wooden heritage of Podlasie (Sulima, 2020, p. 7).

It should be noted that students of the science club “small ARCHITECTURE” from the Faculty of Architecture of the Białystok University of Technology⁴ participated in the work of creating the publication, adapting it to the needs of young recipients. During its formation, the student’s club also conducted a number of architectural workshops and creative activities, activating the youngest generation of Podlasie in activities related to the cultural heritage of the region. Their aim was to investigate the knowledge of young people about the achievements, history and traditions of their place of residence. One of the events was entitled “Grandma and Grandpa’s Wooden Hut, Rich in Tapestries”, organized together with the Foundation “Save Soce Village and the Surrounding Area from Oblivion” and the Narew Cultural Center as part of the European Heritage Days 2019⁵. The event took place in the village of Soce (one of the stops along the route outlined in the book), where to this day, examples of richly ornamented wooden architecture have survived. During the meeting, children learned about the traditional construction of the huts, learned the names of the basic elements of the house, who made the decorations and how, and the symbolic meaning of the ornamentation in the culture of the Orthodox village. After a short theoretical introduction to local heritage, they took on the role of carpenters and translated their thoughts into hand-made models of the facades of houses. During the classes, great interest in the subject

4 The students’ science club „small ARCHITECTURE” from the Faculty of Architecture of the Białystok University of Technology conducts research on methods of architectural education, including the role and needs of children in relation to space. This is to help them get to know and understand their environment, how it functions, help shape their social awareness in this area, develop aesthetic sensitivity and promote regional education among the youngest.

5 European Heritage Days is a celebration of the cultural monuments of the Old Continent, which has been held in Poland for over 20 years. It is a joint initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Union, and its aim is to promote and introduce cultural heritage. The National Coordinator of the European Heritage Days is the National Heritage Institute, and the regional Coordinator is the National Heritage Office of the Podlaskie Voivodeship Marshal’s Office.

and commitment on their part was visible. Already in the design phase, they used new specialist concepts learned during the presentation. During the workshops, parents and grandparents who were present at the event also joined in to complete the work, which additionally had the dimension of intergenerational integration. This event received an award from the National Heritage Institute for promoting knowledge about the cultural heritage of Podlasie. It was also distinguished in the competition of the National Cultural Center “Discover Your Treasure” and was included in the publication of the best educational and cultural initiatives entitled “Local Inspirations” (*Mała architektura drewniana – genius loci Podlasia*, n.d.).



Figure 6. Architectural Workshop “Grandma and Grandpa’s Wooden Hut, Rich in Tapestries” during the European Heritage Days 2019 in the Village of Soce

Source: Author’s own collection.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the collected material, including documents from around the world, as well as my own observations from projects carried out on the basis of regional education, confirm the need to implement heritage protection programs from scratch. This should be part of the upbringing of children from an early age, and this issue should be included as an important point in the social policy of each country. This is a message addressed to authorities, educational institutions, cultural institutions, architects, the academic world, and non-governmental organizations. Nowadays, there is a need for a conscious and sensitive society that actively participates in their cultural, material, spiritual and natural environment. Activities engaging children and deepening their cognition (and indirectly engaging them in the creation process) in relation to their local environment should be considered as a form of civic participation, i.e., as a way of encouraging children to partici-

pate in experiencing space both in the physical layer (cultural space, architectural dimension) as well as semantically. Developing cognitive skills in children by awakening their curiosity about the world, sharpening their sense of observation, getting them interested in the history of their place of residence, allowing them to solve problems, show respect for the achievements of past generations, all play a large role in shaping attitudes based on traditional, moral, social and aesthetic values. It will certainly be a solid foundation for shaping a sense of one's own identity, and thus help in recognizing the potential of cultural heritage and its role in the future.

The value of such practices increases if they additionally take place through play and with the support of adults such as parents, but also competent people, including architects, museum specialists and conservators. Contact with the "living" knowledge of indigenous people, who accumulate and cultivate this heritage on a daily basis, is also extremely important in such activities. On the one hand, it may become a form of activation of local residents and a gesture of respect for the values represented by these groups. On the other hand, it is a bond between the generations and an important medium for the preservation of their culture (Sulima, 2019, p. 103).

The project "Journey through Wooden Podlasie", mentioned here and discussed as a means of active promotion and protection of cultural heritage, on the one hand can serve as a signpost in the implementation of similar ideas of this type in other regions of the country. On the other hand, it can also become an effective and attractive educational tool in schools, helping in the implementation of separate subjects, e.g., knowledge about culture or art, or in combination with other subjects, e.g., history, geography, helping to get to know the culture of the region. This is especially important today, when we hear more and more often about the many difficulties in the field of interdisciplinary skill acquisition and practical education. Despite the fact that the Ministry of Education has emphasized the necessity to create conditions for children to learn respect for their national cultural heritage and learn about local architecture and art (The Regulation of the Minister of National Education..., 2017), the reality in schools is quite different. Including local themes in educational projects through integration with other subjects, can also help in "synergistic shaping of 'I' in social reality" (Bulzak, 2009 as cited in Mincherb, 2019).

The approach of an interactive tour proposed in the book also favors a multidimensional perception of heritage, turning to the past and at the same time opening oneself to the future, which is particularly desirable in terms of protection and preservation of heritage. The project suggests how to creatively explore

and discover the surrounding world, at the same time teaching readers to foster a critical attitude and to pay attention to the aspect of transience and temporary impermanence. The concept of locality presented in the publication in the context of cultural and social research takes on a broader meaning. Looking at protection from a local perspective in the global world enables a more conscious approach to heritage in a general (national and global) sense (*Nasze miejsce. Inspirator do pracy z lokalności*, 2016, p. 9). It may also be of great practical importance and will certainly result in an attitude of commitment to matters relating to the protection of traditional values and drawing from the past for the benefit of future generations, because, as Jacek Purchla wrote, heritage is “not only an object of protection, but also a potential, which should be used for future development. Only [...] skillful and harmonious incorporation of heritage into the great civilizational change that we are witnessing guarantees its effective protection” (Purchla, 2013, pp. 21, 25).

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