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Vol. 28, No. 1(99), 2026: Critically Approaching Education, Languages, Cultures, Communication for Inclusive and Equitable Pedagogy

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Revisiting the Civic University in Europe: Comparative Insights from Poland, Portugal, and Sweden

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Abstract

This article explores how universities enact their civic engagement within regional knowledge ecosystems in Poland, Portugal, and Sweden. Using the civic university framework, it examines cooperation patterns between higher education institutions (HEIs) and local actors and identifies challenges shaping

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these collaborations. The analysis draws on qualitative interviews with civil society organizations and public authorities engaged in partnerships with universities. Findings indicate that Polish universities often serve as cultural and educational anchors, while Portuguese universities exhibit strong territorial engagement through participatory community projects. Meanwhile, Swedish universities function as mediators, connecting local initiatives with broader sustainability agendas. Despite these differences, all three contexts share challenges, including fragmented institutional structures, discontinuity in partnerships, and reliance on short-term funding. The study argues that civic engagement is a relational and context-dependent practice rather than a uniform institutional function. Strengthening policy frameworks and institutionalizing participatory approaches may enhance universities' civic engagement and societal impact.

Keywords

civic university, knowledge ecosystems, HEIs, civic engagement, higher education, university partnerships, community engagement

Introduction

Over the past decades, higher education institutions (HEIs) have increasingly been expected to contribute to the global development of knowledge economies, the needs of competition-driven labor markets, and a plethora of societal challenges that escalate on a global scale. International reforms, such as the Bologna Process, have created a diverse landscape for higher education and intensified the expectations for universities to pursue multiple goals and missions (see Wihlborg & Teelken, 2014). This shift of focus toward internationalization, however, has raised concerns about universities' engagement in their local contexts and their civic role, particularly in addressing community needs and collaborating with non-academic actors. At the same time, the strategic value of universities as regional actors has been acknowledged as a fundamental factor in shaping local sustainability efforts, fostering innovation, and supporting societal initiatives. The idea of universities' civic engagement, in other words, may be elevated as an integral component of their academic activity in the context of regional knowledge ecosystems (Goddard et al., 2016).

A regional knowledge ecosystem is a complex system of cooperation between different actors in a specific region for the creation, flow, application, and development of knowledge and innovation (Vodă et al., 2023). Its key elements are the interdependence and interaction of scientific, business, administrative, and social institutions.

The main elements of the regional knowledge ecosystem include: (i) scientific and research institutions (universities, research institutes, and R&D centers that generate knowledge and innovation); (ii) enterprises (especially innovative and technological ones that implement new solutions and often cooperate with science); (iii) public authorities (local and regional governments that support the development of the knowledge economy through policies and support programs); (iv) business environment institutions (science and technology parks, business incubators, clusters, and investment funds); (v) local community and social organizations (including NGOs, which can be recipients of knowledge but also co-creators of social innovations); and (vi) knowledge and technology transfer systems (i.e., mechanisms and institutions that facilitate cooperation between science and business).

The characteristics of knowledge ecosystems depend on locality and regional specificity (including the scientific, economic, and cultural potential of the region), the ability to build relationships between actors and create networks (cooperation and networking), as well as the rapid and effective response of the ecosystem to the needs of local society and the labor market (dynamic and adaptive) (Valkokari, 2015). The ecosystem is meant to create knowledge but, primarily, to implement jointly developed innovations into the economy and society (Gifford et al., 2021).

Against this backdrop, there is a growing need to examine how universities enact their civic engagement within diverse regional knowledge ecosystems, how local actors perceive these collaborations, and how emerging challenges shape the conditions for partnership. To address this need, the present study draws on empirical material from Poland, Portugal, and Sweden, created within the framework of the ESDEUS project (European Universities as Community Leaders of the Education for Sustainable Development), to examine the civic engagement of HEIs, to problematize tensions arising from contradictory goals, and to identify similarities and differences between distinct geographical contexts.

To pursue the aforementioned aim, we considered the following research questions:

- What cooperation patterns exist between universities and local actors in the varying geographical contexts of the study?
- What challenges emerge in enacting cooperation patterns between universities and local actors?

Although the three countries operate within the broader European higher education area, each one of them presents distinctive societal, political, historical, and economic features that shape universities' engagement in their regions. Guided by

the model of the civic university (Goddard et al., 2016), we consider that the university adapts as an organization not only in response to changes in the Higher Education (HE) environment, but also through active reciprocal engagement with a wide variety of groups and organizations. We, therefore, also try to challenge the sharp distinction between research and education, as well as the narrow conceptualization of engagement as a third pillar.

The civic university

The concept of the civic university has emerged as a response to the evolving role of HEIs in contemporary society. As articulated by Goddard et al. (2016), the civic university transcends traditional academic missions by embedding social engagement into its core purposes. This framework provides a structured approach to analyzing empirical data on universities' engagement with society, drawing from interdisciplinary perspectives within the social sciences.

This theoretical model integrates perspectives from higher education studies, political science, regional development, and adult learning (see Field et al., 2016) to examine how universities function as civic institutions. Specifically, it considers the university's role as an agent of social transformation, a knowledge producer with direct societal impact, and a bridge between global and local communities.

This framework builds on the seven dimensions of the civic university outlined in Goddard et al. (2016, pp. 10–11) while situating them within broader theoretical debates in higher education governance, institutional change, and public engagement. It provides analytical categories for evaluating universities' civic engagement strategies, the organizational mechanisms that enable or constrain such engagement, and the broader policy environments in which they operate. These dimensions build a normative model of analysis and serve as analytical categories for our study. Table 1 presents the analytical dimensions of the civic university and how these were operationalized in our research.

The civic university concept challenges the traditional dichotomy between research-oriented and teaching-oriented institutions. Goddard et al. (2016) position the civic university as an alternative to both the entrepreneurial university (Clark, 1998) and the globalized research university model (Marginson & Considine, 2000). Unlike these paradigms, which prioritize economic competitiveness and international prestige, the civic university is characterized by a commitment to place-based engagement and the public good. This framework conceptualizes civic engagement

as an institutionalized role rather than a subsidiary activity, integrating it within teaching, research, and governance.

Table 1. Analytical dimensions of the civic university framework (Goddard et al., 2016) and operationalization in the study

Dimension (Goddard et al., 2016)	**Core meaning in the model**	**Operationalization in the study**
Purpose and societal impact	The civic university articulates not only what it excels at, but also how it benefits society	Examined through stakeholders' perceptions of universities' contributions to local development and regional socio-economic ecosystems
Engagement with local, national, and global communities	Balancing global research ambitions with local and national responsibilities	Analyzed via partnerships with regional and international actors
Institutional holism	Engagement is embedded across disciplines and administrative functions, contrasting with fragmented outreach initiatives	Explored through the integration of civic engagement into curricula, research, staff appointments, and informal initiatives
Sense of place	Universities are anchor institutions that contribute to regional development, urban regeneration, and social cohesion	Investigated through territorial embeddedness and community co-management
Investment in civic engagement	Financial resources, faculty incentives, and governance structures that support engagement	Explored through funding models, project-based initiatives, shared infrastructure, and staff involvement
Accountability and transparency	Civic universities establish measurable performance indicators to assess their impact	Examined via references to evaluation systems and follow-up mechanisms
Innovative engagement methodologies	Interdisciplinary research, social innovation, and community co-production models	Identified in participatory workshops and co-creation practices

In the concept and research of Goddard et al. (2016), the question of how universities embed civic engagement in diverse governance systems is central.

In centralized higher education systems, civic engagement may be shaped by national policy frameworks, whereas in decentralized or market-driven systems, institutional autonomy plays a more significant role in shaping engagement strategies.

The civic university framework provides a comprehensive lens for analyzing the evolving role of universities in society. By integrating dimensions of civic engagement, this model enables a systematic examination of how universities navigate the tension between academic excellence (research and teaching effectiveness) and societal responsibility.

The ESDEUS research (2024) has explored these dimensions and also analyzed how civic engagement (and each university) is evolving in response to digitalization, climate change, a multi-crisis world, and shifting labor market demands. It also raises the question of what the future of higher education, with its civic mission, will be in these contexts.

Method

In order to answer the research questions related to patterns and challenges, higher education external stakeholders were mapped within the national contexts of Poland, Portugal, and Sweden. The three countries were purposefully selected to reflect diverse higher education traditions and governance contexts across Europe. Their inclusion allows for a comparative exploration of how civic engagement is articulated within different institutional and policy environments. Poland represents a post-socialist system that has undergone significant institutional transformation since 1989. Portugal represents a relatively centralized governance model that is nevertheless permeated by strong local and regional dynamics. Sweden exemplifies a decentralized, autonomy-oriented system in which civic engagement is closely linked to sustainability discourses.

The purpose was to identify local actors within regional knowledge ecosystems. Civic groups, NGOs, social movements, local activist groups, academic and non-academic institutions, galleries, botanic gardens, local governments, and cultural organizations were considered. These stakeholders were selected based on two criteria: (i) they were either civil society organizations, understood as entities made up of groups or associations of citizens who organize themselves around common objectives aimed at the collective good while remaining independent of the state (Edwards, 2010; Salamon et al., 1999), or public authorities with significant local engagement; and (ii) they reported previous collaborations with the university on

one or more cases. The universities analyzed were not intended to be statistically representative of all HEIs in their respective countries. Rather, they were selected as analytically illustrative cases that enable the problematization of the civic university model under different sociopolitical conditions. In addition, their collaboration with local stakeholders encompassed both research partnerships (e.g., research projects) and teaching-related engagement (e.g., educational programs and internships). This allowed us to examine how civic engagement was manifested in research activities, teaching practices, or integrated forms.

From the Polish context, we selected representatives from five organizations: a public university engaged in projects that promote sustainability; a technical university committed to sustainable development; a hydroponics technology company; an educational and tourist UNESCO network area; and an environmental organization.

In Portugal, we considered eight representatives from different organizations that collaborate with a HEI: a marine conservation NGO; a socio-educational intervention cooperative; a municipal community museum; and five associations with different areas of activity (arts, local development, consumer protection, mental health, and residents).

Six organizations from the Swedish context were included: an NGO described as a network for feminists; an environmental organization; a children's rights organization; a regional theatre; a botanical garden; and a municipal labor market and adult education unit.

Regarding ethical considerations, the study received approval from the Ethics Committee and the Data Protection Office in each partner country, following local regulations and guidelines. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants did not receive any form of incentive. All individuals provided free and informed consent, signing a statement detailing all study-related issues, as well as procedures for anonymity, confidentiality, and the researchers' duties and responsibilities. Acronyms were used to ensure the anonymity of participants when transcribing quotes (e.g., Por_1; Swe_1; Pol_1). Audio recordings were stored securely and were accessible only to the project's authorized researchers. The empirical material was used exclusively for academic purposes, adhering to the principles of ethical conduct in research.

To collect data, we developed an interview script based on a previous literature review. The script was translated into the national language of each partner and

tested with two individuals who were not part of the final group of participants in order to assess aspects such as clarity, appropriateness, and relevance of the questions asked. The script proved to be consistent, and no changes were made. Given the international composition of the research team, particular attention was paid to conceptual and linguistic coordination. This was achieved through regular meetings in which coding procedures and emerging interpretations were discussed. The interview was organized into three main blocks: (i) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the community: history and values of the institutions, organizations, or local authorities, and the SDGs that are included in their projects or initiatives; (ii) collaboration and involvement in the SDGs: degree of community involvement in the actions carried out, as well as collaboration with different partners, including higher education institutions; (iii) Understanding Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in local activities: how ESD was integrated into the projects, what skills and knowledge were expected to be developed, and what educational methodologies were used.

The interviews were recorded, and transcripts were completed through automatic transcription with validation by the researchers.

The data was analyzed using a qualitative approach. Since we were dealing with data collected through interviews that required interpretation, we employed qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012). In line with our research questions, we focused the analysis on the following dimensions: (i) cooperation patterns and (ii) challenges in enacting cooperation. Given that the focus of our study was based on the model of the civic university (Goddard et al., 2016) and to support cross-country comparison, the coding categories were informed by the dimensions of the civic university concept: sense of purpose, active engagement, holistic approach, sense of place, willingness to invest, transparency and accountability, and innovative methodologies.

Empirical findings were first analyzed within each national context. Consequently, the study's comparative logic followed what Egetenmeyer (2020) describes as analytical interpretation. Rather than merely presenting national descriptions (descriptive juxtaposition) or listing similarities and differences across national contexts (analytical juxtaposition), the study moved toward interpretative comparison (analytical interpretation) through a cross-case synthesis that identified emergent transnational themes and context-specific variations. This structured approach enabled transparency in how comparative insights were generated.

Findings

In this section, we present our findings based on the analysis of empirical material created in the context of the ESDEUS project. As previously mentioned, the study's analytical framework builds on the model of the civic university as formulated by Goddard et al. (2016). We, therefore, focus on how local actors in the three national contexts describe cooperation with HEIs, using the idea of the university's civic engagement as a point of departure. We also identify challenges that arise in the efforts to build partnerships between HEIs and local actors. The aforementioned interactions and collaborative patterns, as well as the identified challenges, are problematized as emerging within regional knowledge ecosystems. We present each national case separately, adopting a common analytical structure to ensure clarity and comparability. We also synthesize our results to identify emergent transnational themes.

Poland

The political, economic, and cultural contexts and experiences of communities, society, and higher education seem to be important for the emergence and development of regional knowledge ecosystems. The Polish context for knowledge ecosystems has been intensively shaped since 1989. Over the past 35 years, Polish higher education institutions have undergone significant transformations that have affected their relationships with local actors and stakeholders. The key changes in higher education began with the political transformation in 1989, which increased the independence and autonomy of universities and enabled the emergence of the non-public university sector (until 1990, universities were owned exclusively by the state). Consequently, another change was the increase in the number of higher education institutions and students (from 400,000 in 1990 to 2,000,000 in 2010), as well as the introduction of the Bologna Process as a systemic solution for Polish higher education (1999). Poland's accession to the European Union (2004) enabled the integration of Polish universities in both education and research. At the same time, dynamic changes in the labor market forced Polish universities to adapt to the new realities. The need to increase the quality of education and the competitiveness of universities requires sensitizing higher education to different areas of action and influence. Thus, cooperation with local communities has become a key element in strengthening the university's competitive potential and an important part of the university's development strategy. Establishing contacts with stakeholders and communities enables better

alignment of educational offerings with the needs of students, the labor market, and regional development.

Patterns of cooperation in Poland

How do Polish universities cooperate with the local socio-economic environment? The most common forms of cooperation include consultation of curricula with representatives of the socio-economic environment, collaboration with local companies in organizing internships and apprenticeships for students, implementation of joint research and development projects, co-organization of academic events, and inclusion of practitioners in university teaching.

However, these solutions generate indirect social involvement of universities and respond to the demand for integrating the socio-economic environment into university spaces (as postulated, for example, in the entrepreneurial university model), rather than direct involvement in local needs and problems, their solutions, and the animation of civic attitudes (as in the civic model). These are only basic forms of cooperation, some even enshrined in legal documents. However, they do not constitute forms of university involvement in local community affairs.

Partnership, rather than mere cooperation, is promoted by the concept of an engaged, civic university according to Goddard et al. (2016) and requires active participation of universities in solving socio-economic problems of the region (substantively, financially, and organizationally). Universities are expected to co-create knowledge with local communities, engaging in projects of a social and economic nature. One tool that universities can provide is the activation and engagement of social research methodologies (e.g., research in action), which involve collaborative problem-solving and have the emancipatory and transformative potential for local actors, researchers, and communities.

Respondents from the Polish context acknowledge and emphasize that the university serves as a center for educational and cultural initiatives that go beyond classical academic education. What emerges from the interviews is a picture of an institution treated as a "magnet" that attracts diverse social groups to act together. The university is not only a provider of knowledge, but also an animator of networks, thanks to which local organizations and residents can take advantage of the university's research resources and infrastructure. This perception of the university by respondents is in line with the theory of "social capital" (Putnam, 2000), where the university acts as a node of social networks, fostering information exchange and

cooperation among local actors. Its openness to different groups—from children to seniors to NGOs—strengthens social cohesion and a sense of belonging.

Cooperation with a university brings many benefits. The interviewees suggested (i) intergenerational education: "... we participate in the Children's University program—we also have a Third Age University, where seniors can conduct workshops [...]" (Pol_2); or (ii) building spaces for open community laboratories: "... students from the Institute of Ecology conduct field research in the Landscape Park—we, in turn, provide space for measurement stations" (Pol_8); or (iii) as an opportunity to build a coordination platform for local projects: "... we have periodic meetings with the circle of geologists—the university holds seminars open to local residents [...]" (Pol_7).

The "best", "most effective" community-university partnerships must be based on clear principles, common goals, and shared responsibilities, say some interviewees. A key role is played by projects—long-term programs that enable continuity of activities and sustainability of results. Also important is the way they are financed, and above all their flexibility, which allows the project to adapt to changing local needs. Thus, for example, well-known EU strategic programs are indicated in the interviews: "Within the framework of Erasmus+ we work with universities from nine countries—common goals clearly define roles and funding" (Pol_4). In addition, "sharing" resources between the university and the community is also a guarantee of successful partnerships and collaborations, such as projects based on shared research infrastructure: "... The urban farm—the university's greenhouse and research station serve us all, and students learn from real data" (Pol_6); or emerging open-to-citizen learning platforms and engaging field workshops for all: "Regular outdoor workshops with the Institute of Biology engage residents—it makes people feel like co-creators of research" (Pol_8). When the university treats local organizations as equal co-implementers, innovative solutions emerge that are better adapted to social realities emphasized by the interviewees and are strengthened primarily by symmetry between partners—both in terms of resources and involvement (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012).

In the narratives of respondents, two main forms of social engagement of HEIs emerged: responding to local crises and building long-term educational and cultural relationships. The first category relates to emergency crisis response (e.g., providing support to migrants or joining relief efforts): "After the migrant crisis erupted, we opened a support program for foreign scientists, creating lab space for them and training them in new research techniques" (Pol_2).

The second category is related to educational initiatives that involve the continuation and development of ties with different groups of residents through open/public education: "We have been running the Summer University for several years—it's a series of lectures and workshops in the urban space, available for free to everyone" (Pol_7). It also involves citizens in decision-making and creative processes regarding local and research projects: "Environmental engineering students conduct workshops where residents co-design green infrastructure systems in the city" (Pol_6). This form of partnership between the university and the community can be called "participatory laboratories".

According to the concept of Goddard et al. (2016), a university should integrate three dimensions (intellectual engagement, practical application of knowledge, and partnership with the community). In this research, the participants describe that the most visible transition of a university in the region is from the "expert locked in an ivory tower" model to the "open laboratory" model, in which the university works together with local stakeholders.

Challenges and prospects for partnership in the Polish context

Despite numerous initiatives, the university's partnerships and cooperation with local stakeholders face various challenges. At the university level, the main barrier is the lack of a comprehensive management system for cooperation with the surrounding environment, which hinders the effective use of the potential of partnerships. The university's cooperation strategy must take into account the needs of local communities, their cultural and economic characteristics, resources, and labor market changes. In the Polish case, it will also be important to increase the university's involvement in applied research projects, which enhance the university's "attractiveness" in the community due to the post-research solutions introduced to foster local development. Other challenges in partnerships identified by the interviewees include budget constraints, legal complexities, a lack of trust between partners, academic language, and differences in goals and expectations.

Interestingly, the type of higher education institution (polytechnic, university, vocational college, natural, or medical university) and the university's dominant fields of study significantly affect the type of university-community partnerships formed. However, each type of university is most likely to establish partnerships with local authorities and representatives of the economic sphere. This finding

should sensitize partnerships (university and community) to areas that are excluded, absent, and overlooked by the academic and/or community sides in cooperation.

Portugal

The Portuguese context combines a relatively centralized public governance architecture with intense local dynamics, in which community actors play an active role in the design and implementation of territorial policies and projects. HEIs engage with municipalities, non-governmental organizations, and local associations primarily through participatory initiatives—community diagnoses, applied research, technology transfer, and training focused on concrete problems. In this process, universities act as mediators and anchors of regional development, mobilizing human and scientific capital to co-produce knowledge, facilitate deliberative processes, and promote ESD practices rooted in the specificities of the territory.

Patterns of cooperation in Portugal

The Portuguese HEI analyzed understands its teaching and research competencies in a clear way. Its commitment to social transformation and the common good was also evident in the data, through the university's involvement in projects with a strong territorial, environmental, and community impact. Noteworthy in this context is its contribution to applied research and technical support adapted to local realities, as well as its integration into national and international cooperation networks with the capacity to influence public policies. These practices take the form of partnerships with various civil society organizations, demonstrating a collaborative and territorially rooted approach. For example, the collaboration with an NGO dedicated to ocean conservation exemplifies the university's commitment to participatory science and the co-construction of sustainable environmental policies based on community processes: "Regarding who should educate about sustainable development, I think it's all in the power of communication. People who can truly bring this sensitivity to others... I think that in this kind of matter, it must be someone who truly believes in it" (Por_1). This partnership was the basis for the creation of a community-initiated marine protected area, which represents a paradigm shift in marine conservation, in which the university acts not only as a producer of knowledge, but as a facilitator of democratic and sustainable processes in conjunction with civil society.

This commitment to collaborative, territorially grounded action is further illustrated by the university's involvement in a structured sustainable community proj-

ect developed with the residents' association of a nearby island. In this initiative, the university moved beyond a purely technical or scientific role and became an active co-developer of local solutions, sharing responsibility for the design and implementation of actions. This model reflects an understanding of citizen participation as an essential dimension of its civic mission, positioning the institution as a partner rather than an external expert. Similar patterns of cooperation emerge in other projects with territorial and environmental relevance, such as initiatives addressing ocean plastics or supporting short agri-food circuits. Across these collaborations, the university consistently emphasizes the value of the local territory as a strategic space for intervention. This territorial anchoring enables it to act in a context-sensitive manner, aligning its expertise with the specific social, environmental, and economic challenges of the region and working in close coordination with civil society organizations.

The university's active engagement is evidenced through formal collaboration protocols, but also through relationships built on trust, stability, and mutual interest. In some cases, such as that of the local development association, collaboration is described as old and continuous, with connections that have been consistently maintained, revealing a pattern of institutionalized and long-lasting cooperation. Other partnerships, such as the one described by the consumer protection association, are centered on common projects with research centers and also have characteristics of continuity, reinforcing the university's role as an agent for producing applied knowledge committed to social needs.

Particularly relevant is the reference to the relationship with an NGO as a "symbiosis", a term that points to horizontal cooperation and mutual appreciation, in which the different roles are recognized but complementary. This view is reinforced by the description of the partnership with the local development association as being bidirectional and balanced, in which both parties contribute to each other's objectives, working on co-constructed projects based on principles of co-authorship and co-responsibility. An example of this collaborative approach was the community diagnosis carried out as part of a sustainable community project, in which the university was a partner of the local residents' association. The main aim of this diagnosis was to encourage the island community to reflect on their needs and identify ways of meeting them through the development of collective projects. The process shows a dynamic of active collaboration between researchers and community members, with emphasis on the use of participatory methodologies, such as workshops, fostering involvement, and joint learning.

The analysis of the interviews also showed that the university's civic engagement follows a relational and integrated approach that spans different academic actors and is not limited to formal structures. Much of this engagement arises through informal, decentralized interactions generated by personal contacts, invitations, and ongoing collaborations with community organizations. Participants highlighted examples such as students joining classes or seminars hosted by partners and cultural initiatives like theatre projects co-created with a local cooperative and performed in public spaces. These artistic collaborations demonstrate how creative expression becomes a means for social dialogue, community reflection, and the dissemination of themes related to sustainability and citizenship. Emerging from shared commitments and personal relationships rather than institutional mandates, these initiatives reflect an academic culture that values diverse and creative forms of social involvement.

Students' voluntary participation in environmental initiatives organized by local associations reinforces this relational and community-embedded approach. These engagements reveal an informal and supportive dimension of cooperation, driven by individual initiative and a shared commitment to collective well-being. Such spontaneous involvement also connects with more structured experiences, such as internships in organizations whose missions align with students' academic fields, creating reciprocal benefits and strengthening ties with local partners. Together, these formal and informal practices show how civic engagement permeates teaching, research, and everyday academic life, allowing the university's civic mission to be enacted across the academic community and linking it to the more structured, territory-based collaborations described below.

The university's deep understanding of the role of the territory as an educational, cultural, and social space seems clear to the interviewees. The university works as an anchor for local development, promoting practices that recognize and value the specific context in which it operates, namely through ESD and community action rooted in place. The co-management of initiatives with the community is presented as a central strategy, enabling a genuine sharing of responsibilities and recognizing participants as active subjects in social transformation, rather than mere beneficiaries: "I think that for people to really change and transform, they must realize what it means for their lives. And they must realize it, and they must be involved in these processes, really involved. And when I say really involved, it's not just being consulted, it's being co-managed with these communities. If there's no co-management, it's just the consumption of receiving" (Por_5). This approach fosters a culture of

collaborative and democratic learning in which people learn by acting and deciding together. The importance attached to genuine participation, as opposed to symbolic participation, reinforces the commitment to inclusive processes in which citizens have an active voice and influence on decisions.

The interviews show that researchers support these reflective processes by mobilizing scientific knowledge in a dialogical and collaborative manner, co-constructing it with participants rather than applying it unilaterally. One of the initiatives described illustrates this staged educational dynamic within an environmental sustainability project: the process began with a collective diagnosis, progressed through concrete and visible actions, and eventually led to practical changes in local practices. Such examples of action-oriented and transformative education—rooted in the needs and knowledge of the community—appear repeatedly across the narratives. In this sense, the university understands the territory not merely as the setting for its activities, but as a shared space of learning, creation, and transformation, fostering forms of engagement that are simultaneously educational, cultural, and social.

Academic knowledge is valued by organizations as an essential contribution, especially in its technical-scientific dimension, but also for its ability to translate and adjust knowledge for wider audiences as a way of raising awareness and promoting environmental education: "People are disbelieving at a political level; with political work [...] there is discontent and discrediting here. So, if I don't believe in it, I don't take part because I don't believe in what the person is doing. I think it has to do with this: that people feel the problem is theirs and want to participate in the solution" (Por_12). The university's active presence in processes of co-production of knowledge, scientific transfer, mediation between actors, and community awareness indicates an institutional commitment to the social valorization of knowledge and its practical application for the benefit of communities.

The analysis reveals that the university provides, above all, human and scientific capital, putting its knowledge at the service of the needs of the territory, which shows an active stance and commitment to local development and the promotion of sustainable solutions in partnership with social actors.

Challenges and prospects for partnership in the Portuguese context

Although the interviews highlight a dense and dynamic network of collaborations, they also reveal challenges that constrain the sustainability and development

of these partnerships. Some organizations note that relationships that had previously been frequent and productive have become more sporadic over time. Rather than signaling a breakdown, these accounts point to fluctuations in engagement, often linked to changing project cycles, staff turnover, or shifting institutional priorities. For partners, these interruptions are experienced as a loss, underscoring the value attributed to the collaboration and the need for institutional strategies that support greater continuity through transparent communication, active listening, and long-term commitments.

Difficulties in initiating new collaborations were also mentioned. One organization explained that its initial contact with the university occurred within a project framework, but that no further developments followed. Although the organization recognizes the potential complementarity in terms of expertise and infrastructure, the absence of follow-up is perceived as a missed opportunity.

Such accounts do not contradict the existence of strong partnerships; rather, they highlight the unevenness and selective nature of civic engagement practices. They also emphasize the need to strengthen mediation structures, foster trust-building mechanisms, and create conditions that facilitate the emergence of new partnerships. Developing accessible and innovative methodologies to welcome new actors could significantly enhance and revitalize the university's civic action.

No explicit mentions of transparency and accountability practices were found in the interviews conducted. This absence suggests that existing practices in these areas may not be sufficiently visible to partner organizations. Enhancing how the university communicates and shares the outcomes of its civic initiatives would help ensure that these contributions are more clearly recognized, thereby strengthening trust and reinforcing the institution's role as a civic actor committed to the common good.

Additionally, the interviewees did not identify specific methodological approaches for co-creating knowledge or developing solutions collaboratively with community actors. While many initiatives included collaborative practices, participants did not describe these as part of a formalized or explicitly defined methodology within the university. This lack of clarity limits how these practices are understood and appropriated by partners, making it difficult for them to identify the underlying principles guiding collaboration. Consequently, the potential of the civic university model grounded in co-production becomes less visible. Strengthening the articulation, systematization, and communication of participatory methodologies would,

therefore, help consolidate partnerships and expand the transformative impact of the university's engagement in the community.

Sweden

The Swedish context presents its own unique features regarding the role of HEIs in the emergence of regional knowledge ecosystems. Although supported by state funding, the institutional autonomy of Swedish universities remains relatively high. With regard to the so-called "third mission", it can be argued that universities' societal engagement is permeated by the idea of higher education as a public good that contributes to regional development and enhanced democratic participation. Interestingly, Swedish universities' civic engagement has increasingly been related to the idea of sustainable development and investment in ESD. Therefore, HEIs often act as mediating institutions between policy demands for the implementation of ESD, local societal needs, and community initiatives. This shift in focus, facilitated by a decentralized model of public governance, encourages collaborations between universities and local actors, such as municipalities and civil society, and assigns them a significant role. Such processes create both opportunities and challenges for the emergence of cooperative patterns and innovative practices in regional knowledge ecosystems.

Patterns of cooperation in Sweden

Analysis of data from Sweden has resulted in the identification of different forms of universities' civic engagement with local actors. To begin with, many initiatives revolve around the establishment of frameworks to promote social, economic, and environmental sustainability through educational activities. In these settings, non-academic actors and universities cooperate in joint efforts to promote ESD. For example, a representative from an NGO, described as a network for feminists, mentions their collaboration with researchers from the local university "to produce educational material on water resources" (Swe_1). Another representative from a children's rights organization also highlights the importance of the university in helping them develop their own research projects and documentation strategies.

Such collaborations related to the promotion of ESD may transcend the institutional boundaries of the involved actors and may require the formulation of special employment arrangements. A principal from a municipal adult education provider describes: "We currently have a scientific leader for the education

administration who is employed by the municipality and also has her employment at the local university, which she shares her employment with. And that is a lot to connect the academy with the municipality. So, that is one way that we work with the university" (Swe_9). Another example is the collaboration of a Swedish botanical garden with the local university to establish connections with specific HE courses. The botanical garden also works together with a research center on biodiversity, involving researchers from various disciplines. Thus, the university's civic engagement becomes an active component in the creation of educational frameworks by leveraging academic expertise and promoting ESD outside its institutional boundaries.

Another form of civic engagement in the Swedish context is related to cultural activities and sustainability initiatives at the local level. In this case, we found that the role of the university is to support organizations in their efforts to raise awareness and reduce inequalities. Bridging societal gaps through art, particularly in areas with lower education levels and higher unemployment rates compared to the national average, is outlined as a central activity by a regional theater producer: "The greatest potential of the theater to noticeably influence a larger transition is to use the platform that our activities constitute toward our surroundings. To raise questions, ideas, future visions, and good examples that we believe lead to sustainability for the climate and the environment...but if we think in a broader perspective, it is not where we as a theater make our biggest mark for sustainability, but it is through the fact that many people care about what we do." (Swe_8). Here, emphasis is placed on the importance of collaboration with the local university to develop regional projects and promote sustainability more effectively.

Finally, the university supports and provides advocacy for the civic work of organizations interwoven in regional, national, and international networks of cooperation. For example, the children's rights organization works toward child participation in sustainability education and collaborates with researchers from Swedish universities to enhance evidence-based advocacy. This example highlights an interesting feature of Swedish civic engagement (i.e., the blending of local and global commitments). Partnerships of this kind often link grassroots action with international initiatives, allowing Swedish universities and local actors to participate in broader European and global sustainability efforts. The civic role of the university thus extends from its local territory to an international public sphere through the activities of local actors.

In sum, our analysis of data from the Swedish context resulted in the identification of three broad collaboration patterns between universities and local actors: educational partnerships, cultural and community engagement, and advocacy-oriented cooperation. Across these patterns, collaboration is characterized by reciprocity as well as shared societal and educational initiatives. Unlike in more centralized systems, Swedish universities act as anchors within regional civic knowledge ecosystems, linking different organizations around shared educational, societal, and sustainability goals. Their civic engagement is less hierarchical and more relational, stemming from dialogue and commonly formulated projects. Thus, the university's anchoring practice emerges through both formal collaborations, such as research partnerships and shared staff appointments, and informal, trust-based networks. This reflects the fluidity of institutional boundaries, enhancing the idea of universities as mediating actors rather than isolated institutions. The result is horizontally integrated knowledge ecosystems where the civic university is not a single entity but a collaborative field of practice.

Challenges and prospects for partnership in the Swedish context

The aforementioned patterns of collaboration and civic engagement at Swedish universities are often challenged by structural, systemic, or political ambiguities and contradictions. For example, many initiatives mentioned by our interviewees depend on short-term project funding: "We are an organization that depends on funds from others... it's not so easy" (Swe_2). This project-based logic enhances the agility of initiatives but causes uncertainty and affects long-term planning and partnership. Several interviewees also raise the issue of universities' lack of systematic work with civic engagement. A representative of an NGO, for example, mentions the local university's shift of focus in its willingness to cooperate and establish partnerships: "When I was active at the university [...] I got the support of (being able to use the university) locations. We could have access to the university buildings, etc. to organize things. But they (the university) were extremely passive in their support [...] The system right now gives money to universities to teach, not to make research [...] And that leaves nothing, nothing left for involvement in society. So, the whole system is extremely perverse in that sense" (Swe_1). The university's funding framework, in this case, seems to restrict opportunities for civic engagement due to a political and economic focus on its teaching mission, reflecting a broader tension between academic performance and societal projection.

Another tension emerges when collaborating actors apply different interpretations of concepts in their common undertakings. For instance, the representative of the regional theatre argues that their partners often prioritize economic growth over ecological or social sustainability: "A sustainability like in the business world, an economic sustainability you could say. And like a different kind of circular thinking about money rather than ecological sustainability [...] so there was a deletion of the focus area of sustainability replaced with growth, which I think is quite interesting" (Swe_8). The university's civic engagement, therefore, often unfolds at a nexus of conflicting labor-market, integration, or education policies enacted by collaborating actors, and the resulting tensions illustrate the complexity of Swedish universities' civic engagement.

Finally, many interviewees raise the lack of systematic evaluation mechanisms as a challenge in the civic engagement of the university: "We don't have any good follow-up systems for that" (Swe_3). Despite numerous local initiatives, there are few frameworks for measuring or communicating outcomes, leading to under-recognition of universities' civic contributions.

Emergent transnational themes

When analyzing the patterns of cooperation, as well as the challenges identified in the three national contexts, we identify emergent transnational themes which, nevertheless, also suggest distinct socio-political contexts and local particularities shaped by the regional knowledge ecosystems.

First, in all national contexts, universities are described as local anchor institutions contributing to regional knowledge ecosystems. The identified practices present somewhat different features: cultural and educational in Poland; territorial and developmental in Portugal; relational and sustainability-driven in Sweden. Nevertheless, the expectation for the university in all contexts is that of an active and responsive societal partner, present in different expressions of civic engagement. The university's role in co-producing knowledge with communities is raised as an essential part of this process—fieldwork, open labs, participatory workshops, and co-constructed community projects are examples of universities' civic engagement in the three countries that need to be long-term and sustained.

The identified challenges, on the other hand, are indicative of fragmented institutional structures. Respondents from all three national contexts raise the issue of inconsistent practices related to the civic engagement of the university (e.g., lack

of coordination strategies in Poland, limited systematization and visibility of civic engagement practices in Portugal, and insufficient follow-up mechanisms in Sweden). These issues are further exacerbated by constrained resources and funding, often in the form of short-term and project-based models. Furthermore, different expectations between cooperating actors, contradictory interpretations of complex concepts (e.g., sustainability), and divergent goals are deemed as main challenges in universities' civic engagement. To synthesize the comparative findings and illustrate how the empirical results relate to the civic engagement roles identified in the study, Table 2 provides an overview of the main cooperation patterns, challenges, and characteristics of the knowledge ecosystems in each country.

Table 2. Overview of the study's main findings in a comparative perspective

Country	Dominant civic engagement role	Main cooperation patterns	Key challenges	Features of knowledge ecosystem
Poland	Magnet institution	Educational and cultural initiatives; applied research projects; crisis response; open laboratories	Lack of comprehensive management systems; budget constraints; legal complexities	Transition-oriented knowledge ecosystem, shaped by post-1989 transformation and EU integration
Portugal	Territorially engaged university	Co-managed sustainability projects; participatory community diagnoses; applied research; long-term partnerships	Fluctuating engagement; challenges in establishing new collaborations; low visibility of accountability practices; limited systematization of participatory methodologies	Territory-rooted knowledge ecosystem, combining centralized governance with strong local dynamics
Sweden	Mediating and relational actor	Educational partnerships; cultural and community engagement; advocacy-oriented cooperation	Project-based funding; lack of systematic work with civic engagement; policy contradictions; lack of systematic evaluation mechanisms	Decentralized knowledge ecosystem, linking local action to national and global sustainability agendas

Taken together, the three national cases demonstrate that universities' civic engagement is both locally grounded and influenced by broader societal, economic,

and political conditions. While collaboration patterns reveal strong regional dynamics, the challenges underscore structural and institutional tensions that are common across different contexts. These emerging transnational themes lay the groundwork for the final discussion on how the civic university model can be understood, adapted, and reexamined within diverse European settings.

Revisiting the civic university

This study examined the civic engagement of universities in the regional knowledge ecosystems of Poland, Portugal, and Sweden by problematizing the patterns of collaboration between HEIs and local actors, as well as the unfolding challenges in their enactment. Our analysis was guided by the idea of the civic university (Goddard et al., 2016), which addresses the university's third mission as an integral component of all its activities.

Based on qualitative data from interviews with local actors, we have argued that, across the three contexts, there are a plethora of ways in which universities demonstrate their commitment to civic engagement. More specifically, in the Polish case, the civic university acts as a "magnet" institution, engaging different societal groups in common activities of cultural, educational, and environmental character. The Portuguese case illustrates the image of a territorially engaged civic university, active in the co-creation of projects with civil society and other local actors under shared responsibility. Finally, the case of Sweden highlights the mediating and relational role of universities in linking different organizations around shared educational, societal, and sustainability goals. Very importantly, the identified patterns of collaboration often depend on project-based funding and are enacted within loose policy landscapes. In some cases, civic engagement is closely integrated into teaching activities (e.g., internships and participatory workshops), while in others it is primarily driven by applied research collaborations. However, these domains are not equally supported by existing funding frameworks. Particularly in Sweden, the analysis points to a relative prioritization of teaching outputs over broader civic involvement. In Poland and Portugal, project-based research funding structures generate engagement opportunities but undermine continuity. As a result, fragmented institutional practices and organizational routines frequently emerge, relying on informal networks rather than systematic strategies. These patterns also reflect broader differences in national higher education systems, including governance traditions, funding models, and policy expectations regarding the societal role of universities.

Our main conclusion is that the identified variations between the three national cases show how the idea of the civic university from Goddard et al. (2016) is selectively enacted across contexts and is based on dimensions such as universities' active engagement, their sense of purpose and place, and their contested investments in civic engagement. At the same time, our analysis suggests that the model's normative coherence may overstate institutional integration. In practice, civic engagement often appears fragmented, informal, and unevenly distributed across organizational units. It is also shaped by external governance structures, historical legacies, and funding mechanisms rather than strategic institutional choices alone. Adding to the normative model of the civic university, our findings show that universities' civic engagement is best understood as a relational and context-dependent practice rather than merely an organizational objective or policy requirement. At the same time, our analysis highlights the need for a more integrated approach to universities' civic engagement. Facilitating the formulation of policy landscapes that promote social engagement, securing stable and sustainable funding frameworks, promoting methodological innovation, and increasing the visibility of civic contributions may enhance the idea that universities constitute an indispensable component of regional knowledge ecosystems, promoting social cohesion and supporting the co-creation of knowledge. Revisiting the civic university, therefore, entails moving beyond normative models toward empirically grounded and context-sensitive understandings of how universities (struggle to) act as civic institutions.

While this study provides comparative insights into how universities' civic engagement is enacted within the regional knowledge ecosystems of Poland, Portugal, and Sweden, several limitations should be acknowledged. Our research questions focused on cooperation patterns and emerging challenges. However, this analytical emphasis on observable practices may have obscured structural power asymmetries and institutional hierarchies. Our analysis is based on a limited number of interviews with local actors, which, although rich in depth, cannot fully capture the diversity of partnerships and practices in each national context. Additionally, the study reflects interviewees' perceptions at a specific moment in time. Given the strong influence of shifting policy landscapes and project-based funding models, patterns of cooperation may change rapidly. Furthermore, the focus on external stakeholders means that internal university perspectives, such as those of leadership, academic staff, or students, remain underexplored. Future research could, therefore, broaden the empirical base by incorporating multi-actor perspectives, longitudinal

designs, and comparative analyses beyond Europe. Further investigation into the institutional mechanisms that sustain long-term partnerships, the systematization of participatory methodologies, and the development of evaluation frameworks for civic engagement would also contribute to advancing the understanding of the civic university within regional knowledge ecosystems.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

Not Applicable

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Reimagining Language Policies in Schools of Kerala: Listening to Migrant Parents Envisioning Their Future Amid Current Precarity

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Abstract

Interstate migrants in Kerala, India, are marked by their temporary movement. This "temporariness" is often viewed as a micro decision of the household to diversify income and thereby reduce risk. The precarity of migrants in the destination state plays a crucial role in reinforcing this pattern, which is often overlooked. The term "guest workers" reveals the state's attitude toward establishing a temporary relationship with the migrant. The reduced capability of the migrants provides a context for analyzing and reimagining their children's schooling decisions.

The study is framed in the context of integrating migrant children into the public schools of Kerala, where Malayalam is the medium of instruction, while native children increasingly move to English-medium private unaided schools. The paper visualizes the schooling demands of migrant parents based on the medium of instruction rooted not just in the instrumental, but also in the intrinsic relevance of the language. This shifts the focus from binaries of helplessness and neoliberal aspirations prevalent in the discourses on schooling quality. An improvised framework of the capability approach analyzes the structural constraints that deprive migrant parents of accessing quality education, thereby questioning a discourse that reduces them to being distress-driven. The study includes narratives from migrant parents and interviews with relevant state actors in migrant schooling across the Ernakulam district of Kerala. The study proves useful as migrant children are filling up public schools in Kerala.

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Keywords

language policy in schools, migrant parents, precarity

Introduction

India undertook the universalization of elementary education in the 1990s, with active state intervention driving the expansion of schools and enrollment. The discourse set education as a public good, strongly advocating for public investment in schooling and resisting privatization (Boissiere, 2004). As the nation continues to focus on ensuring effective access in government schools, there has been an increasing number of private schools and a rise in enrollment, revealing a different trend in demand from parents.[1]

The choice of private schooling has been primarily driven by the demand for English-medium instruction, which essentially translates to the English-speaking skills necessary in the labor market (Varghese, 2015). Parents who chose private schools were portrayed as utilitarian entities with mere instrumental ends. The schooling decisions of parents, based on the medium of instruction (MoI), are termed neo-imperialism from below (Mathew, 2018). When the children of marginalized parents access low-cost private unaided schools due to failures in government school provisioning, these choices are often termed "uninformed", as the parents are portrayed as having no awareness regarding the quality of the transaction (Lahoti & Mukhopadhyay, 2019; Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2022). The aspirations of marginalized parents to access English-medium education are shamed, and they oscillate between being portrayed as helpless or having instrumental needs, with no true agency (Mathew, 2018).

The study considers the schooling demand of parents through the lens of the MoI, not just for its instrumental value, but also for its intrinsic nature. This helps break the public/private binary in the schooling quality discourse (Kumar & Sarangapani, 2004). It highlights the necessity of having a new framework for situating the voices of marginalized parents in schooling decisions. This shift is relevant as evidence shows how parental concerns about quality schooling precede their decision to send their child to school (Pandey & Gautam, 2015; Wortsman et al., 2024).

[1] According to the UDISE 2023–24 report, India currently has 69.14% of schools that are government-run, with 51.4% of students enrolled, while private schools constitute 22.5% and hold 36.3% of the student population.

As the number of interstate migrant families increases in Kerala, their schooling decisions are a matter of concern. The MoI remains a major point of contestation both in integrating migrant children from culturally diverse backgrounds and in parental concerns for quality education. The economic discourse portrays migrants as passive recipients of integration measures at the destination; their movement and decision-making do not go beyond the traditional narrative of "helplessness". The analysis of schooling demand through the capability approach highlights the "permanent impermanence" of migrants at the destination (Triandafyllidou, 2022). This removes the temporary/permanent binary in migration, facilitating an analysis of their decision-making across regions. Migration is thereby seen more as a process (Bitschnau & D'Amato, 2023).

Review of Literature

Providing a New Platform to Discuss English Education: English medium education and English as a subject in schools have often been points of contention in India. While the elite upper-caste population accesses English through private unaided schools, the deprived sections are confined to vernacular education. Deprived children are affected by casteist language policies in schools, promoted under the guise of improved learning (Acharya, 1982). Vernacular education in state-run schools is perceived by elites as a resistance against English, which symbolizes imperial power. Ambedkarite discourse, in turn, highlights the emancipatory potential of the language in breaking the shackles of the caste system in India. This is evident in the works of Kancha Iliah and the teachings of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule. As government schools witness widespread closures and declining enrollment (Kingdon, 2020), there arises a necessity to publicly invest in English education. The adaptation of current discourse in promoting English among marginalized students highlights only the instrumental value of the language.

The Adoption of the Capability Approach to Consider the Voice of Marginalized Parents: The capability approach provides the conceptual foundation for considering the voices of marginalized parents. It is a normative approach that goes beyond income poverty to see if a person has the real freedom to live a life of their choosing. It provides a framework for understanding whether a person has substantial freedom to fulfill their "doings" and achieve their "being" (Sen, 1999). The discussion of the agency of marginalized parents, and how they navigate amidst vulnerability, shifts the discourse on parents being "helpless". The approach inculcates not just

the parental demand for English education from an instrumental view (future labor market skills) to an intrinsic view (the emancipatory power of English). Discussions on parental capability reveal the parental relationship as intrinsic in nature, while pursuits in improving the future of children are instrumental in nature. However, intrinsic and instrumental well-being are not mutually exclusive (Hartas, 2014).

Capability Approach in Migration Studies: The government of Kerala addresses interstate migrants as "guest workers", wrapped in the guise of hospitality (Cherian & Rajan, 2024). Discourses on migration portray migrants as either helpless individuals fleeing from poverty, unemployment, war, or climate change, or as undertaking migration for instrumental ends (de Haas, 2021). This creates directionality and hierarchy in the analysis between origin and destination, portraying migrants as solely distress-driven in nature. The use of the capability approach reveals the structures of advantages and disadvantages that accompany such a narrative (Eichstellar, 2021).

Language Policies in Schools and Integration: In most cases, migrant children are assimilated into the educational system rather than being fully integrated. Low-quality schooling is often masqueraded as an equity measure (Nambissan, 1996). In the specific case of Kerala, marginalized children fill the public schools, while the native population leaves for private, unaided English-medium schools. This creates a schooling hierarchy with differential demand, wherein the migrant children occupy the "uneconomic" schools or "schools with fewer students" (Retnakumar & Arokiasamy, 2006). Integration measures that focus on the learning of language at the destination need to be analyzed in this context. The adoption of the capability approach helps to question measures of assimilation that are disguised as those of integration.

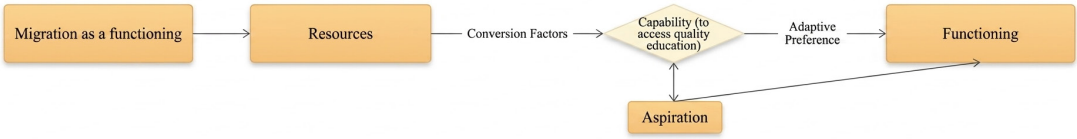
Conceptual Framework: Robeyns (2005) developed a non-dynamic representation of the capability approach. Resources and goods are converted into functioning through conversion factors, which include personal, social, and environmental factors; the person's ability to convert the resources determines their capability. Preference adaptation, which is tuned to the person's capabilities and determined by the individual's personal and social context, adjusts one's choices to achieve functioning.

Adaptive preferences in Sen's capability approach neither explain the individual's value formation nor address the dynamic nature of the process (Leßmann, 2024). Aspirations, in addressing the above problem, have been modeled either as a navigational capacity or a meta-capability (Ray, 2006; Hart, 2016; Zimmermann, 2024). Appadurai (2004) provides a cultural explanation for an individual's capacity to aspire. De Haas (2021) has developed an aspiration-capabilities framework

in the context of migration by integrating Appadurai, wherein he points out that it is development in low-income countries, and not poverty, that boosts internal and international migration.

The destination state opens just enough to fill its gaps in blue-collar jobs but excludes migrants from settling down or building a career. The precarity of migrants can be both temporal and relational; institutions and society are structured in a way that keeps migrants temporary, with unstable work and reduced capabilities to access healthcare, education, housing, and other basic rights (Hung et al., 2024). The reduced capabilities result in declining aspirations, which often lead migrants to rely on their communities at the destination or origin to build their future.

Fig 1: Conceptual framework for the study



Research Objective

Though the absolute number of long-term migrants is rising in Kerala, the proportion relative to the total population remains very low. The projections report a decline in permanent migration to Kerala in the future (Parida & Raman, 2021). This aligns with the state's treatment of interstate migrants as "guest workers", which restricts them to unskilled or semi-skilled labor with no possibility of occupational mobility or permanent settlement. The structural disadvantage, perpetuating precarity, affects the schooling decisions of migrant parents.

The study analyzes the parental demand for schooling among interstate migrants from Kerala based on the medium of instruction. In light of the above analysis, the study problematizes the measures of integration in the public schools of Kerala.

Methodology

The state of Odisha has been selected as it is the first significant population to arrive in Kerala[2]. Domestic remittances constitute 50%–60% of Odisha's state

[2] The state of Kerala currently witnesses a heavy flow of interstate migration, amounting to 3.5 million workers from the northern and eastern states of India. These migrants mostly come from SC/ST-dominating districts in their origin states, and their migration is established as distress-driven in nature (Peter et al., 2020).

income, demonstrating that migration is a major livelihood option (MoSPI, 2016). Ernakulam district has been chosen because it houses the largest number of inter-state migrants in Kerala. The selection was also based on the literature regarding Odia migrants and the availability of Odia NGO workers in the district.

Table 1: Profile of migrants considered for the study

Profile of Migrants	Percentage of household/migrants
Caste (% of household)	
SC	66.3%
ST	21.4%
General	3.1%
OBC	9.2%
Religion (% of household)	
Christian	44.9%
Hindu	55.1%
Migration details (% of household)	
Single migrant (with at most one migrant inKerala)	54.1%
Family migrant (with at least two migrants inKerala	45.9%
Migration details (% of household members w.r.t the child)	**N=439**
Migrant father	98.9%
Migrant mother	46.4%
Migrant children	31.7%
Educational qualification of father	
Finished 12th grade	9.3%
Enrolled but never finished	70.0%
Never enrolled	20.6%
Educational qualification of mother	
Finished 12th grade	3.1%
Enrolled but never finished	62.8%
Never enrolled	32.9%
Type of school of child (% of enrolled children)	
Govt English medium	10.0%
Govt Malayalam medium	15.5%
Govt Odia medium	64.4%
Private English medium	9.7%

Note. All percentages derived from household survey.

The fieldwork was conducted from May 2024 to November 2024. Open-ended interviews with migrant parents were undertaken with the aid of questionnaires. The researcher adopted snowball sampling with strong (peer researchers) and weak ties (friends, family, and acquaintances) to reach the widely distributed population in the district (Parker et al., 2019). Observation of migrants at multiple sites helped in understanding precarity in employment, housing, and societal belonging. An interview schedule covered the history, working principles, current activities, and challenges of various state actors in migrant school provisioning; these include headmasters of public schools with a high number of migrant children and heads and volunteers of Project Roshni.

These migrants are involved in various occupations, including the plywood industry, construction, the hollow brick industry, fishing, gardening, house help, the timber industry, the food processing industry, the garment industry, the copper industry, and daily labor work. The field is spread over 23 migrant pockets across four taluks in Ernakulam district, including Kunnathunaadu, Aluva, Kanayannur, and Kochi. The interviews were conducted in Hindi, a bridging language for both the migrants and the researcher. The duration of each interview averaged 45 minutes. A brief profile of the migrants is provided as follows.

The researcher's positionality, as a native of the destination, was closely aligned with the discourse on migration as distress-driven. This compartmentalizes the decision-making of migrant parents completely to their origin, denying the agency of the migrant household across borders. The selection of both single and family migrants indicates the researcher's reflexivity, fostering a process-oriented analysis of migration.

Findings and Discussion

Migration as a Functioning: The initial functioning of "being able to migrate" opens the discussion of the migrant from just being helpless in nature or pushed/pulled by economic forces. The instrumental nature of migration involves the movement to higher-wage destinations, often driven by the lack of employment opportunities, meager wages, unprofitable farming, and erratic rainfall in Odisha. The movement of people from Odisha to Kerala as part of a structural change in both states provides a platform to discuss the migrants' aspirations to provide good-quality education for their children. Reasons such as a favorable climate, peaceful working conditions, and the ability to practice one's faith show how intrinsic well-being is factored into

the economic reasons. This information is passed on through the social networks of friends and families, facilitating further migration.[3]

> "I could not continue the work in Surat. With all the night shifts, I could not sleep. Here, I can work and sleep well." (Nettoor, male, construction worker, single migrant)

Non-economic reasons, such as the desire to explore new cultures and lands, eloping with friends, and the possibility of personal growth, demonstrate the intrinsic nature of migration for many.

> "My father is still calling me back to do work in the agricultural fields. I do not want to. Agriculture is meant for older people. I want to live in a more developed place." (Kathirikadav, male, construction worker, stays with family)

> "My father had a grocery shop in Orissa[4]. I used to help him. But I could not continue doing it and ran away with the rest of my friends. I tagged along with them to Gujarat, and later I traveled alone to Kerala." (Perumbavoor, male, manager of a plywood factory, stays with family)

This functioning also discusses the agency of the migrant in deciding to move (or not move) with his or her family to the destination. This contrasts with family migration as a distress measure (Smita, 2008). They consider collective well-being, including their wish to stay together and the parental desire to send the kids to schools in Kerala.

> "I initially came to Kerala with a friend to a church-run school in Palakkad. I was amazed by the educational system here. So, I went back to bring my family...I did not move to Kerala for work. We had enough to live [on] back home. I wanted my children to have a good life." (Perumbavoor, male, pastor, stays with family)

> "I brought my family so that my child can learn well. Now I am taking him back to be admitted to a school in Orissa. He is in 4th standard, and he can hardly write A, B, C, D. But I will come back to Kerala after leaving my family in Orissa. I like my stay here." (Chembarakky, male, hollow bricks factory, stays with family)

[3] The shifting trajectory of migration from Surat to Kerala to escape caste discrimination has been explained in Nag et al. (2023).

[4] The official name of the state was changed from Orissa to Odisha in 2011. The term „Orissa" is retained in the interview quotations to preserve the original phrasing and terminology used by the respondents during the fieldwork.

Resources/Assets:

Increased Income: Migrants from Odisha receive varying levels of income based on their occupations. In daily wage occupations involving construction, daily labor, or gardening work, the migrants receive a daily average of 1,000 rupees. In the factories of plywood and hollow bricks, the migrants are paid a weekly average of 4,000 rupees. In larger companies such as KITEX[5] or in the Cochin Special Economic Zone (CSEZ[6]), or as house helps, they earn an average monthly salary of 10,000 rupees. In occupations like fishing, the migrants are paid a piecemeal rate depending on the success of the catch. For single male migrants in Kerala, remittances sent back home range from 2,000 rupees per week to 15,000 rupees per month. In the case of family migrants, the remittance is more uneven and depends on the number of family members left behind in Odisha. Either way, the increased income of migrant households facilitates the parents' access to quality education.

Public Schooling: The universal elementary education in India ensures free access to schools, with neighborhood primary and upper primary schools located within 1 km and 3 km, respectively. The RTE (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2009) ensures that migrants have flexible access to public schools. A specialized language and learning program, Project Roshni, facilitates access and learning for migrant children in Kerala. English-medium education is provided as a parallel stream to Malayalam medium education in many public schools in Kerala.

Conversion Factors:

Personal Factors

The educational level of the parents, their attitude toward educating the child, the order of birth of the child, the child's gender, and the child's age determine the parents' ability to access quality education.

> "I teach my children in our village school. We do not know if the education is good or not. We have not gone to school ourselves." (Manjapra, male, construction worker, stays alone)

[5] Kitex Garments Ltd (NSE: KITEX) is the world's second-largest manufacturer of cotton and organic cotton garments for infants and children. Based in Kerala, the company has recently undergone a major geographical shift in its investments.

[6] Cochin Special Economic Zone (CSEZ) is a multiproduct Special Economic Zone in Kochi, Kerala. It attracts both Malayalis and interstate labourers.

> "I am a Bengali woman married into an Odia household. I am often treated differently since I do not know the customs and traditions at my in-laws' place. I have two girls. I want them to study well, but more importantly, I want them to learn the rituals of our household. They are taught these in schools back home." (Kizhakkambalam, Female, KITEX, stays with husband)

> "I could not properly teach my eldest son. We did not have any money then. He is illiterate. So, after I migrated to Kerala, I wanted to teach the rest of my children here. I decided to stay." (Malayidamthuruth, male, hollow bricks company, stays with family)

Structural Factors

Stability and Security in the Employment of Migrants: The Odia migrants work in a state of constant insecurity, even when they receive a higher daily wage compared to their previous work sites in Mumbai, Goa, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu. These workers stay in Kerala for seven to eight months and leave home for a month or two, only to find themselves under a new employer upon their next arrival. In the case of migrants who have moved up the career ladder or have been consistently working in the same industry, the insecurity substantially declines. However, for most migrants, they have come to terms with the constant sense of insecurity, which intensifies as the number of migrants moving into Kerala increases.

The unstable job/income affects educational investment in the long run. The neighborhood school in Odisha remains the obvious choice for migrants. The decision to access quality education is confined to Odisha, resulting in the choice of far-away schools or private schools within the state. Schooling in Kerala becomes a temporary decision for many family migrants, as their employment remains uncertain. For migrant parents who decide to navigate this "temporariness" in employment to access education in Kerala, they emphasize "sacrifice", "hard work", and a "thrifty lifestyle" to advance in Kerala.

> "Only my wife is working now. I have not had any work for the past two weeks. Life is becoming difficult here. We are putting our younger children here in public schools only for the time being. We will soon shift them, along with the older kids, to Orissa." (Chembarakky, male, daily labourer, stays with family)

> "I had earlier brought my family here, and we stayed here for over five years. I schooled the kids here. But we could not afford it anymore. Now, I stay here alone." (Palissery, male, currently unemployed and previously worked in a quarry, single migrant)

> "I see a lot of my Odia fellow migrants not taking up work because it is low--paying. They only take up work when the pay is as high as 1,000 rupees. I say you should take up every kind of work, even if it pays you only 300 rupees. That is how you should work here." (Puliyanam, female, house help, stays with family)

Housing Condition of Migrants: Insecure employment is complemented by the temporary nature of the housing for migrants. Male migrants either live in dormitories or at their worksites in cramped conditions, with unclean surroundings, facing the demeaning attitudes of the owners, and lacking access to clean water. The migrants identify their current living conditions as indecent, unfit for a long stay or for families. Except for a few, families of four or more often live together in a single room with no separate kitchen; a single house is shared by one or more migrant families. These housing pockets are often segregated from the Malayali population. Female migrants express feelings of isolation and weak networks of socialization in these housing spaces, expressing a desire to reunite with their families back in Odisha.

For migrants who envision a permanent stay in Kerala, their decision is often backed by better housing, supportive homeowners, and a strong network of Odia and Malayali neighbors. This not only provides a sense of security for the migrants, but also facilitates their access to quality education.

> "Let them peacefully stay back home. Kerala is not a place fit for families. Here, our women might go astray. Back home, they are safe. The children can also play around and have a good childhood." (Nettoor, male, construction worker, single migrant)

> "We had lived in many homes before moving into this one. There were a lot of bad experiences. Here, we live along with the Malayali owners in the same house. They treat us well and even take care of our kids. Now, we can peacefully work. They were the ones who suggested the schools for our children." (Kathirikadav, male, construction worker, stays with family)

Environmental Factors

Information Regarding Schools: The single migrant parents chose the neighborhood government school in Odisha for its proximity. The selection reflects the decisions of neighbors, relatives, and villagers (which are further mediated by caste and religion). There are cases where the parents' decisions are driven by their own experiences with the neighborhood school. In cases where they access private schools

or distant government-aided schools in Odisha, information is mostly obtained from better-off villagers, relatives, or institutions like the church.

In Kerala, family migrants from a specific area send their children to the same schools and follow a similar pattern for higher levels of schooling. These decisions are usually mediated by the state (public school teachers, headmasters, and multilingual volunteers). Barriers, including documentation and language, hinder migrants from accessing the state schooling system directly. Migrants with a stronger network (including employers, homeowners, Malayali neighbors, and Malayali spouses) exercise their agency in selecting schools.

> "I am married to a Malayali woman. Our child studies in a private school in Perumbavoor. Children from as far as 20 km come to this school. My wife selected the school; she also studied in a private school." (Perumbavoor, male, manager of plywood factory, stays with family)

> "I have not admitted him to school yet. I still do not have all his documents with me. He is soon going to be 10." (Eachamukku, Female, factory worker in CSEZ, stays with son)

Kinship Care: In the literature, the extended family is seen as responsible for the care of migrant children in the absence of their parents. Odisha parents often entrust their child's education to more learned members of the extended family as they shuttle back and forth between their destination and origin. This arrangement also serves as an alternative in cases where hostel facilities are unavailable for accessing the migrant school of choice. Family migrants in Kerala often lack such support systems, leading their decisions to be "enough for now".

> "My father-in-law is a learned man. He did not allow us to take our daughter along with us to Kerala. My sister-in-law, a doctor, helps her out with her studies. They are sending her to a private school." (Chembarakky, female, worker at hollow bricks company, stays with family)

> "I have tried for hostel facilities for my elder child in Orissa. But in my village, Christians of SC background are discriminated against. The hostels are available for Hindu children of SC/ST. So, my son stays in my relative's house." (Chembarakky, female, worker at hollow brick company, stays with family)

Institutional Factors

Hostels for Children: Residential hostels in Odisha are institutional alternatives to kinship care. They provide the option for migrant parents to access better-quality, faraway schools. Hostels run by Christian missionaries are attractive to many migrants from the Kandhamal district, as they believe that hostel life imparts discipline and spoken English to the children.

> "My wife and I have been working in Kerala for over 15 years now. We are working so hard to give a good quality education to our children. I have admitted all three of my children to hostels so that they would not face a break in their education. One of us visits the children every now and then. Since then, my wife holds a more stable job, it is mostly me." (Perumbavoor, male, construction worker, stays with wife)

> "I admitted my children to faraway schools to get a good education. They stay in hostels run by the seminary/convent. At home, they will loiter around with the village kids. We can hardly take care of them." (Manjapra, male, construction worker, single migrant)

There are very few state-runor charity-based hostels in Kerala, with many reportedly having been closed over time. The discrimination in existing hostels deters parents from admitting their children.

> "We wanted to put our child in the hostel in Aluva since we have long working hours and can hardly take care of our son. But my friend's son was badly beaten up by the Malayali kids, so we chose not to." (Palissery, male, worker at a timber factory, stays with family)

> "Our children stayed in the CWC hostel near the school. Though the school is nearby, we admitted them to the hostel. But they refuse to go there anymore. They do not like the food. So now, we drop them off daily at the school." (Mambra, male, daily laborer, stays with family)

> "I came to Kerala to teach my children. Both my elder children were admitted to hostels near the school, even when we stayed in Kerala. Since their education was taken care of, we toiled in various jobs. My wife and I worked in various manual jobs. Now, both of them study in college." (Perumbavoor, male, pastor, stays with family)

> "The elder kids are enrolled in hostels in Odisha, while the younger ones are studying here in Kerala. For now, this is enough for the younger ones. Soon, I will shift them too to the hostels." (Chembarakky, female, house help, stays with family)

School Admission: The public schools in Kerala and Odisha admit migrant children in a lower grade for "picking up" previous lessons, contradicting the RTE provisions. The lack of flexibility between these two systems of education makes it necessary for migrants to confine their children's education to one system to ensure continuity throughout the learning period.

> "My daughter was schooled in Kerala till the 5th standard. After going to Orissa, she was again put in 1st standard. She lost so many years of schooling. We also had to give her private tuition to catch up." (Palissery, male, currently unemployed, single migrant)

> "We put the children in this school because there are other Odia kids here. But the teacher enrolled us in a lower grade. We lost a year because of it." (Malayidamthuruth, female, housewife, stays with family)

Teaching Quality: Even when many migrant parents choose the neighborhood schools for their physical and social proximity, they are often dissatisfied with the quality of teaching at these schools. The parents report poor teaching and a lack of accountability as the primary problems in government schools. They either distance themselves from the village schools by blaming the apathy of the government or find these schools "good for the poor". Few parents have shifted their kids to private schools for the above reasons.

> "The teachers hardly teach in government schools. Even in our times, it was so. There would be one teacher during the entire schooling who would care for us. My daughter studies in a private school now. The teachers are far more responsible. I am more satisfied now." (Allapra, male, worker at a plywood factory, stays with wife)

> "There are not enough teachers in government schools. In some schools, there are just four teachers for over 100 students. In private schools, there are more teachers." (Manjapra, male, welder, single migrant)

For family migrants who wish to teach their kids entirely in Kerala or those who want to settle down in Kerala, the school quality in Kerala is often perceived to be much better than that of Odisha. For some migrants, government schools remain a lesser choice even in Kerala, which is why they desire English medium education in private unaided schools. They compare their child's learning to that of other privately educated Malayali children in their locality.

> "I want my children to complete their education in Kerala. I may go back to Odisha after some time, but I will make sure my kids complete their education here. We receive an education that matches that of private schools in Odisha." (Kizhakkambalam, female, KITEX, stays with family)

Private Tuition: Private tuition not only provides continuity between school and home, but also becomes a cheaper substitute when parents cannot afford quality education. Private tuition engages children in learning during after-school hours, which parents claim would otherwise be spent "playing around". It also serves as a means for parents to instill English skills in their children, with some parents spending as much as two thousand rupees per child for English education. Family migrants in Kerala mostly have no access to private tuition, mainly due to the high cost of living with family and the lack of information regarding such private facilities. Initiatives by SSA (around 40 Special Training Centers in Ernakulam) and NGOs aim to engage children during after-school hours, ensure their safety, and integrate them into the public schooling system. However, none of the interviewed migrants seem to take advantage of these resources. The migrants in Kathirikadav, under the banner of the Odia cultural association, have established weekly Odia classes at the nearby school. The parents find this necessary, as their stay in Kerala is temporary.

Capability to Access Quality Education: Quality education translates to schooling decisions based on the MoI, specifically English medium education. Even when the parallel sections of government schools in Kerala provide English medium education, the ability of most migrant parents to access it is strained by personal, environmental, structural, and institutional factors. Most single and family migrants navigate their quality concerns, putting aside education in the English medium for higher grades of schooling to access elementary schools in Odisha in the vernacular medium. The schooling decision reflects how parents ensure continuity in their child's learning, away from their temporal precarity. In very few cases, parents have expanded their capability set to access English medium education in private schools, indicating a failure of the governmental system.

Aspirations and Adaptive Preferences: The migrants, according to their capability to access quality education, aspire to a future that is both temporal and relational in nature. Instances from the parents' childhood show their difficult past and their desire to push their children ahead in life. As they continue their stay in Kerala to finish their child's education or permanently settle in the state, they hope for their kids to explore new lands and find better jobs. Set against the background of many

English coaching institutes and international migration facilitation centers, the improved capabilities have developed a capacity to aspire among the migrant parents.[7] The migrants find Malayali kids to be ignorant of the Malayalam language while excelling in English. Some of the single migrants also express their desire to move to Kerala to improve their lives.

> "Back in my days, children hardly went to school. We were taken to the fields to carry the mud. We would be given a very small amount as pay. Even now in Odisha, I can see children going to work after school hours. This is why I want my children to be completely schooled in Kerala. Here, we get public education, which can match the private education in Orissa." (Eachamukk, female, CSEZ, stays with family)

> "I am paying a hefty amount in tuition fees for my children in private schools in Kerala. I want them to study well and go abroad." (Kathirikadav, male, construction worker, stays with family)

> "Pranav (changed name) works with Indigo in Bangalore. My elder son has taken similar courses and will soon follow Pranav's footsteps. Pranav and my son have studied at the same schools. Almost all the Odia kids in the locality follow the same pattern." (Kadavanthara, female, housewife, stays with family)

> "I work in a flat near Kaloor. The kid in that family hardly knows Malayalam. He cannot read or write Malayalam." (Kathirikadav, female, house help, stays with family)

> "I have studied till 12th standard and I can pick up some English. The family whom I work for often speak in English. And I try to learn some English in between. I want my kid to speak like that." (Puliyanam, female, house help, stays with family)

> "My wife is currently studying in her 11th standard through distance mode. My kid is enrolled in a private school. I have heard much about the education in Kerala. I am searching for a house near that flat. If I get that, I will move my family to Kerala. But even then, I will only send my kid to a private school here." (Kathirikadav, male, construction worker, single migrant)

[7] Kerala is the state with the highest international out-migration in the country. Initially, the out-migration was primarily unskilled or semi-skilled labor toward Gulf countries, but it has slowly shifted to skilled employment in European countries. Many students also migrate internationally for educational purposes.

The migrants who wish to soon shift their child's schooling to Odisha have adjusted their aspirations to fit a future in their home state. Though the migrants blame the Odisha government for their current life situation, most of them expect high-paying jobs to be plentiful and accessible with proper education. They are also hesitant about the job opportunities in Kerala, opining that even Malayalis find it difficult to get employment there. The adaptive preferences of these family migrants reflect those of the other single migrants and villagers back home. Many migrants report that although migration enabled them to send their children to schools, it has hardly affected their perception of their children's education. The villagers back home shame migration and the migrant life at the destination, leading them not to want to associate their child's life with Kerala. The migrants are treated with a great deal of disrespect by Keralites as well, ranging from name-calling to instances of physical harm.

> "How will our stay in Kerala have any influence on the schooling decision? We are treated as 'zero' here. So, how will it make any changes in our thoughts?" (Vattakattupady, male, worker at plywood factory, single migrant)

> "We rest our heads on water. We never stay long enough on the land to know anything about the education here." (Munambam, male, fisherman, single migrant)

> "I cannot work like this anymore; I can have another five years of hard work in me. After that, I will surely go home to my family. Migrants have no value even back home. It is difficult for migrant men to find girls for marriage alliances. It is all because we do dirty jobs. We inhale a lot of dust here." (Cheruvelikunn, male, worker at plywood factory, single migrant)

> "I have heard other migrants express their disinterest in teaching their kids in Kerala. I work as a pastor, and I encourage many families to stay in Kerala. I find that many of the migrants lack foresight in their lives." (Perumbavoor, male, pastor, stays with family)

Functioning: The seasonality in the work of migrant parents often affects their children's schooling both at the origin and destination (Smita, 2008). There is very limited institutional support, with low-quality measures often creating an alternate stream of schooling. These equity measures do not meet the quality concerns of the parents, which, in turn, affects their schooling decisions. However, the parents are blamed for having no interest in their child's education (Rajan, 2021). Quite

contrary to the perception of the state, schools, and other non-state actors, all the migrant parents considered for the study understand the importance of education in their child's life. Some of the migrants clearly stated that they would not push their child into labor. Even among children who have dropped out of school, the parents declare that they have tried their best to bring the child back to school.

Education is seen as necessary for future job opportunities for the child. However, this cannot necessarily be reduced to an instrumental end. The parents' urge to protect the child from the hardships they faced constitutes a significant reason to emphasize the intrinsic nature of their demand. It is also a way to successfully break the cycle of poverty. The parents connect it to their lack of knowledge of the world and their own desire to study more, which was met with no support from their homes. They aspire for the child to work in an office rather than in the dirt. Some parents have narrowed their aspirations to opportunities in the army, government offices, and nursing. The parents believe that education would earn their child respect in society. It is also a matter of personal development and survival, where children develop their thoughts well. The parents find education necessary to facilitate a shift in attitude in one's thinking. The following response from an Odia mother, who works in a garment factory and lives with her family in Kerala, sums up the entirety of the parental attitude.

> "Even if we don't have anything to eat, we should teach our kids." (Kizhakkambalam, female, worker at garment factory, stays with family)

Integration of Migrant Children in Kerala: Though most public schools in Kerala have parallel English medium instruction, this is not available if the schools are "uneconomic" or have "fewer students".[8] (VMFT, 2024). In the migrant-dominated schools considered for the study, two had parallel English-medium sections, and the third school uses English-medium textbooks due to parental demand. The former two were previously uneconomic schools, and the third is still in that category. These schools were deserted by the Malayali population in favor of English-medium

[8] GO (Ms) 156/12/G.Edn., dated Thiruvananthapuram, 22nd May 2012, is a circular from the Kerala Education Department. It states that at least one Malayalam division is necessary to start an English division. Since the 1970s, public schools in Kerala have faced declining enrollment, primarily in primary schools. The English-medium instruction in private unaided schools has caused this decline, resulting in differential demand for schooling.

private unaided schools and are currently stigmatized for being a "Bhai school".[9] The inflow of migrant children into these schools has saved them from closure, and many of these schools see migrant children as a strategy to keep the school running. In this context, the quality of English medium instruction becomes questionable.

Project Roshni, a discourse-oriented pedagogy for integrating migrant children, functions in around 40 migrant-dominated schools in Ernakulam. The project primarily focuses on imparting Malayalam learning to migrant children with the aid of multilingual volunteers. Although the project has been successful in improving the learning of migrant children in Malayalam, it works contrary to parental concerns regarding the medium of instruction. Even the volunteers of Project Roshni and headmasters mention the parents' specific request to enroll their children in English-medium education. With the Kerala government pushing toward the compulsory enforcement of Malayalam as the first language in schools,[10] the various integration measures garner more support.

Conclusion

The study shows how the capabilities of migrant parents are deprived at the destination, restricting their effective access to English medium government schooling in the state. Few family migrants possess the adequate ability to convert resources into achieving their desired functioning, enabling the parent to aspire further. In cases where migrants are deprived of the capability to access quality education, they adjust their preferences to their community in Odisha. In these instances, migrants still wish to rise above non-migrant households by accessing faraway or private schools in Odisha. Vernacular instruction becomes a choice for parents to build a life away from their current precarity. Few parents move away from the governmental system as it fails to provide quality education.

Even when the state introduces parallel English medium sections in government schools to attract migrant parents, the temporary nature of migrants at the destination constrains them. Kerala ranks highest in terms of the Interstate Migration Policy Index (IMPEX), with welfare legislation (Interstate Migrant Welfare

[9] "Bhai", which literally translates to "brother" in Hindi, is used in a pejorative manner to address the interstate migrants in Kerala.

[10] Malayalam Language Bill, 2025

Scheme)[11], a housing scheme (Apna Ghar project), health insurance (Aawaz), literacy programs (Project Changathi), and other facilitation (apps for migrant laborers, Shramik Bandhu centers). However, most of these welfare initiatives are still limited to a very small segment of the migrant population, leaving the rest at the mercy of the whims of the informal sector.

The development of a safety net for migrants needs to be carefully drafted, considering the needs of family migrants as well. As the state continues to push for Malayalam medium instruction in its public schools, the needs of migrant parents remain neglected. Language policies in the schools of Kerala, when analyzed in the context of the capability approach, appear to be measures of assimilation. Even though the rising number of migrant children in public schools saves many from closure, these children are merely considered to be transitory in nature. A careful understanding of the precarious conditions of migrant parents will aid in a better formulation of their language policies.

The voices of migrant parents need to be heard in the framing of the state's educational policies by theoretically reconsidering migration as a part of social change and development. The study highlights the continuing importance of the capability approach as a normative framework for understanding the voices of marginalized populations. As the left government continues to frame language policies in light of the decolonial narrative, Ambedkarite discourse offers a novel understanding, especially in the case of marginalized parents.

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Research Ethics Statement

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Conflict of Interest Statement

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Education: A Power to Explore Cultural Identity and Nurture Teaching Methodologies through Indian Regional Texts

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Abstract

Education remains a manifesto where culture, language, and communication are reflected and produce fresh, broader social inequalities. Through the lens of two South Indian novels - *When the Kurinji Blooms* by Rajam Krishnan and *Bride in the Hills by Kuvempu* - this paper explores how characters' language and culture influence systematic inequities. Dominant didactic teaching models often reproduce hierarchies of language, caste, class, gender, and ethnicity. Ultimately, it calls for a reimagination of education not just as a transfer of knowledge, but as a means to embrace diversity, challenge systematic inequities, and recognize education as a way to nurture inclusive and equitable human consciousness. This paper is an attempt to critically examine the themes of cultural identity, community, and tradition while closely studying the conflict between modernity and tradition in current society, debriefing communication for inclusive and equitable pedagogy.

Keywords

education, social inequity, cultural identity, community, tradition, teaching methods

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Introduction

Education is a transformative force through which knowledge, values, and opportunities are produced in society. The primary purpose of education is to close the gaps of differences through knowledge. Yet, in practice, these differences tend to widen and create hierarchies in language, culture, class, gender, and ethnicity—eventually affecting the quality of learning. Far from being neutral, it affects the standard of learning. Indian society is deeply rooted in its cultural and traditional practices; classrooms not only become spaces for instruction and learning, but also spaces for inequalities to come alive. Pedagogical practices, when not aligned with a genuine code, produce possibilities of affecting as well as marginalizing learners who diverge from the mainstream. This paper explores the dynamics of the differences and tensions between tradition and modernity through South Indian novels, foregrounding how language and cultural belonging shape an individual's participation in social institutions, including education. The selected South Indian pieces of fiction explore the pertinent objective reality in society. *When the Kurinji Blooms* by Rajam Krishnan (2009) is a family saga tracing three generations of Baduga tribes living in the Nilgiri hills. The novel is an association of different stories and shows instances of rebellion from characters who voice their dissent against the existing social order in the community. Set in the late 19th century, the story is also a record of post-colonial tribal life and how modernization influences the characters to embrace change. The novel questions caste, feudal systems, patriarchal structures, and discriminatory practices within the community. The paper aims to reimagine education not merely as a platform to impart knowledge, but also as a space for transformative cultural practice, acknowledging diversity, interrogating oppression, and fostering inclusive consciousness. By situating South Indian literary texts within the context of pedagogy and its equity, the paper intends to vocalize the role of literature in promoting critical thinking in society and serving as a pathway for justice and equality. It further provides insight into native structures and struggles that dominate the current social framework through select South Indian narratives, offering a sanity check on the lack of inclusiveness in pedagogical structures. This paper also encourages a dynamic pedagogical environment that fosters constant change and new learning experiences among learners.

Literature Review

Various studies explore the selected novels in terms of theme, the cultural impact experienced by the characters, and environmental concerns in relation to Rajam

Krishnan's work on character and identity. *Bride in the Hills* by Kuvempu (2023) has been studied in the context of cultural and social issues, particularly regarding women's struggles, and has been debated in terms of tradition versus modernity. However, the novels remain underexplored in educational pedagogy, particularly regarding how they serve as archives of culture, tradition, and history, and how they stand as icons for inclusive pedagogical discipline.

The Impact of Displacement on Tribal Communities: A Reading of Rajam Krishnan's When the Kurinji Blooms through Michael M. Cernea's Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction Model by N. Kavimani and Chandrasekar (2024) focuses on displacement and the Badaga community, analyzing it using the IRR model to provide insight into development projects and how they disrupt tribal life and culture. Another paper titled *An Ethnographic Reading of Rajam Krishnan's When the Kurinji Blooms* by Dr. R. Priya (2020) focuses on ethnography and Badaga culture. Using the methodology of Ethnographic Literary Analysis, the paper provides insight into the rich portrayal of Badaga traditions and oral culture. *A Study of Cultural Aspects of Tribal Society through the Novel When the Kurinji Blooms by Rajam Krishnan* by Gayathri S. (2021) explores the cultural aspects of tribal society by examining Rajam Krishnan's portrayal of the Badaga tribe in the novel. *A Portrait of Ruined and Devastated Tribal Life in Rajam Krishnan's When the Kurinji Blooms* by R. Jinu and R. S. Suganth (2019) studies the lost ethical values of tribal groups in Tamil Nadu, analyzing their ritual practices, dressing styles, family setups, and caste. *Exploring the Dynamics of Tradition and Change: Character Analysis of Rangan, Jogi, and Krishnan in When the Kurinji Blooms* by S. Monisha (2024) illuminates the novel's overarching themes such as love, loyalty, and cultural transformation by closely scrutinizing the novel's characters. *The Broken Promise to Nature: A Study of Rajam Krishnan's When the Kurinji Blooms* by T. Vennila Sri (2019) explores the pernicious effects of industrialization experienced by the characters in the novel.

Bride in the Hills by Kuvempu has been explored in different dynamics. The book holds a strong review from its critics, stating the potential outcomes the readers could derive from it. A book review by Aravind Narrain titled '*Bride in the Hills': Kannada writer Kuvempu's novel depicts life under the ruthless regime of caste* (2024) explores the nature of caste as a social conviction, stressing the power of poor people. The review examines the contempt and indifference experienced by the characters and how natural order influences social order. The review quotes, "The novel imaginatively reconstructs what it means to live, resist, and love under the law of caste, and for this reason, deserves to be read and reread."

Another review titled *Review: Bride in the Hills: A Kuvempu magnum opus for the English reader* by N. S. Gundur (2025) appreciates the book as a literary classic that stands as the magnum opus of the author. The book is stated to be an exemplary work of social realism. A review by Rohini Mokashi Punekar titled *Caste, Love, and Resistance* (2025) critiques Karnataka's feudal society through the novel, exploring the existing brutal hierarchies. *Kuvempu's Novel, Bride in the Hills, Limns His Cosmic Vision of Universal Man* is another review in The Federal (2024) that explores Subbana Heggade in particular, highlighting his role and representation of the community in the novel.

A Celebration of 'Nothing is Insignificant' is another review by Chitra Panikkar (2025) that appraises the translation of the novel, stating that: "The translation remains sensitive throughout in its re-rendering of spoken discourse and social hierarchy, local customs, caste practices, and the evocation of flora and fauna unique to Kuvempu's Malnad." The novel *Bride in the Hills* has been reviewed and analyzed from different critics' perspectives. Both select novels stand as narratives of the tribal communities Badugas and Malnad that also serve as archives of the communities' culture, tradition, and history. The novels also present a debating narrative of tradition versus modernity. The novels have been underexplored in terms of pedagogical perspective and also in Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989).

The novels encourage readers to understand the societal conflict and the people through a new lens. They prompt readers to interrogate the possibilities of the existence of unfair scenarios that characters encounter in the novels. The novels, standing as the voices of their respective communities, give a strong impression of inclusivity. This paper attempts to analyze the novels and their narratives, exploring educational inequity in Indian regional texts and encouraging pedagogical inclusivity among learners and the educational system.

When the Kurinji Blooms and *Bride in the Hills*

The novels *When the Kurinji Blooms* and *Bride in the Hills* are not just stories; they represent culture, language, and traditions. *When the Kurinji Blooms* serves as a cultural archive of the Baduga tribes. The novel was originally written in Tamil, titled *Kurunjithaen*, representing the Kurinji flowers that bloom once every twelve years. The story depicts the erosion of their traditional lifestyle, cultural values, and harmony with nature near the Nilgiri mountains. This harmony is disrupted by modernity, urbanization, and commercialization, which encroach upon this community

in the guise of development through dam and school projects. These changes bring both conflict and new beginnings, including advancements in education alongside environmental destruction.

The novel is a poignant portrayal of the cultural, social, and environmental transformation of the Baduga community that spans over three generations in the Nilgiri Hills from Lingayya to Nanjan. The novel showcases the community's lifestyle and its shift over time. The community lives a traditional close-knit life in *hattis*, which means villages. This structure details their social organization. The village elder, Kariamallar, preserves the village traditions by promoting eco-friendly farming practices. The novel vividly describes the community's practices and rituals, including the custom of *hagottu*—the milk house where the cows are milked. The beginning of the novel describes the milking ritual as sacred, which Lingayya follows every morning while donning white clothes after prayers. The *edumane*—the outer room—is the open portion of the room where the characters act. The Kurinji flower, which blooms once every twelve years, is the symbol of time; time that passes by keeps on changing despite the enduring spirit of the land. The novel reflects the transition of the Badugas as they are exposed to the "outside world". The exposure includes education, industrialization, and the British. This leads to the rise of materialism and the loss of the community's connection to their land. Even amidst the community's decline, the author reminds readers of the cultural richness and tradition. Paru, the central female character in the novel, loses her children and moves away from her husband, Rangan. Despite losing everything, Paru finds purpose in nature and in the land that she cultivates. She forms a bond with nature. The environmental change is impactful on the community, as the construction of schools and the Kumari River dam replaces their lush green slopes. At the very loss of connection to tradition and culture due to societal impact, the community reinforces the importance of existing practices and how they represent their identity. The language in the novel reflects the cultural nuances of the Baduga community. It is rich in describing the landscape and daily life of the Baduga tribes. The powerful translation by Uma Narayanan and Prema Seetharam brings the story's emotional intensity to the readers. Rajam Krishnan uses anthropomorphism to describe nature. The mountains, the sky, and the earth are imbued with emotions similar to the feelings of the characters portrayed in the novel. The language not only represents the culture, but also the changing times, the shift from traditional, local terms to modern ones as the community becomes integrated into a broader capitalistic society.

When the Kurinji Blooms is a powerful representation of a community caught between tradition and modernization, with a deep connection to land, nature, and a lost way of life.

Bride in the Hills by Kuvempu, translated by Vanamal Viswanatha, serves as a vivid anthropological and cultural document of the Malnad region of Karnataka. The novel presents a complex and multilayered narrative through three love stories: Gutthi and Thimmi from the Holeya caste, Aita and Pinchalu from the Tulu-speaking Billava caste, and Chinnamma and Mukundaya from the Gowda caste. The three love stories are set in the breathtakingly beautiful landscape of the Western Ghats. Though the characters are caught in the deeply feudal region of Malnad, the barriers of love cross social, feudal, psychological, and patriarchal systems. The novel, apart from evoking the breathtaking beauty of the Malnad region, also leaves behind strong, impactful characters who appreciate their way of life. It presents a rich interior life for each of the characters, and the author provides a smooth transition of images from passages of forest to the descriptions of love between the couples. The novel reflects the intersection of nature, feudal social structures, and evolving modern influences using a rich, lyrical Kannada style that captures regional nuances. The portrait of Malnad is set in the rainy forests of the Western Ghats, depicting rural landscapes and exploring the lives of various communities, from the land-owning Gowdas to Shudras and Dalits, capturing their customs, joys, and struggles. The novel presents a raw picture of the strict, caste-driven society of 1893. It highlights power dynamics where Gowda landlords command the Dalits and explores the hypocrisies of a society where caste laws are rigid and exploitation is deemed common, leading to acts of violence. Despite the mixture of representations in the novel, Kuvempu's writing focuses on the daily lives, struggles, and inherent dignity of humble, working-class characters. The narrative successfully captures the transitional period where age-old customs are challenged by British invasions and influences such as education and Christian missionaries. The novel promotes universal humanism by focusing on regional and often oppressive cultures, emphasizing the dignity of every individual. The core plot of the novel lies in the stories of young couples like Gutthi and Thimmi and Mukundayya and Chinnamma, who challenge the strict caste and marriage laws of their time. The novel incorporates Vedantic philosophy even in the lives of the oppressed, broadening the perspective that spirituality can exist outside the narrow, oppressive interpretations of caste. The novel acts as a bridge between traditional Malnad culture and modern democratic ideals.

The novel resembles an epic style featuring a multi-centered, organic weave of interconnected stories reminiscent of the Mahabharata. It incorporates a Kannada lyrical style, exploring the people's accents and way of life. It documents the Malnad region with poetic interpretations, blending realism with intense descriptions of the communities. The language reflects the local culture through detailed descriptions of the Malnad landscape, sounds, and rituals. It captures the nuanced vocabulary of the rural inhabitants, from agricultural terms to caste-specific slang. The novel reflects the diverse voices of the region, from agrarian dialects to the language used by laborers, showcasing the linguistic diversity of the locality. It stands as a cultural, traditional, and linguistic archive.

Analyzing the novels through the dynamics of cultural perspective established in the works of Rajam Krishnan and Kuvempu produces deep insight into the dynamic nature of a learner. Culture shapes and influences what, how, and with whom learners learn by molding their motivation, behavior, communication, and relationships in the classroom. It eventually influences classroom norms, participation styles, learning preferences, and teacher-to-student dynamics, which impact the learner's sense of belonging. It is worth inquiring how this awareness contributes to education. Culture provides values and beliefs that learners tend to carry as core beliefs for their lives, which they see as important and worth learning. The representation of these cultures plays a crucial role in how learners perceive their surroundings and where they come from. It sculpts how learners think and remember information. Analyzing the selected novels through the lens of the dynamics of culture and its representation to learners, portraying its current stance in society, provides insight into the dynamics of pedagogy present in society.

Scholarly engagement with education has long emphasized how culture and social hierarchies infiltrate institutions, revealing sites of inequality. There are still existing incidents of differences in education due to learners belonging to different classes or lower classes, as structured by society. The selected novels foreground the idea that education is never ideologically neutral, but is shaped by the dynamics of power structures. Within the Indian context, which is widely excluded in education, studies highlight how caste and language intersect to perpetuate exclusion. Dalit and marginalized communities tend to be silenced in academic spaces.

Regional texts promote new identities and provide information on existing clashes that are perpetuated in society, but these texts clash with standardized established texts. Rajam Krishnan and Kuvempu, through their novels, articulate how

cultural belonging and linguistic differences shape access to education and social mobility, exposing the subtle and overt oppressions within everyday life. However, what remains underexplored is how these novels, when read together, reveal the entanglements of education, cultural identity, and social inequity that shape an individual in an academic setting.

Conclusion

Pedagogical structure should welcome individuals with dynamic selves because there are high chances that each learner comes from a different, rich, and complex background. To respect this in the classroom environment is necessary to encourage inclusive teaching and learning. The absence of such teacher-learner experiences would eventually lead to a biased classroom setting. The novels serve as evidence for the existence of different and fragmented communities, cultures, and traditions under the image of a society that pretends to be whole but is much underexplored and unknown. Each individual defines the society that shapes around them. An inclusive pedagogical structure is the need of the hour to instill knowledge in both the privileged and the underprivileged, providing equal opportunities for all. As the epigraph of *Bride in the Hills* notes: "Here, no one is important; no one is unimportant; nothing is insignificant." Letting that be the motto of a classroom setting will create inclusive pedagogy.

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Language, Power, and Pedagogy: Rethinking Inclusion in Higher Education

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Abstract

This paper investigates the politics of pedagogy in higher education, with a specific focus on inclusive education and the role of language as both a tool and a site of struggle. Set within the sociology classrooms of public and private Indian universities, the study draws upon feminist and critical pedagogical frameworks, foregrounding language politics as integral to questions of inclusion, marginality, and epistemic justice in the Indian context. In a multilingual and multicultural society like India, language is central not only to instruction, but also to representation, identity formation, and access to knowledge. The paper foregrounds the interconnection between pedagogy, language, and social justice by engaging with the possibilities introduced by the National Education Policy (NEP, 2020), especially its emphasis on mother tongue instruction and multilingual education, while offering a grounded critique of how these ideals translate (or fail to translate) within everyday classroom practices. It highlights the urgent need for reflexive, culturally responsive, and intersectional pedagogical models that foreground language as central to the democratization of education. Through a qualitative methodology, the research analyzes semi-structured interviews with eight sociology educators from public and private universities in India, offering insights into how they navigate institutional, cultural, and political constraints while attempting to create equitable learning environments. Public university educators, often shaped by their own histories as first-generation learners or members of marginalized communities, exhibit a deeply reflective commitment to inclusive pedagogy. Their strategies include multilingual engagement, peer learning, and assignments grounded in students' lived experiences. In contrast, private university educators face unique challenges under neoliberal structures that commodify education; yet, many

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attempt to foster critical engagement through creative assignments and discourse-sensitive practices. The findings highlight that language is not merely a vehicle of communication, but a site where power is enacted and contested. Educators' choices around terminology, narrative inclusion, and representational ethics directly influence whether classrooms function as spaces of exclusion or transformation. The paper argues that inclusive pedagogy must be conceived as a linguistic and cultural praxis that is deeply intertwined with issues of caste, class, gender, and region. This paper contributes to existing scholarship by explicitly linking inclusive pedagogy with the politics of language in Indian higher education—an area that remains underexplored despite its centrality to questions of equity and justice. It emphasizes the urgent need to train educators in using inclusive language and to redesign institutional frameworks to support the linguistic and cultural plurality of learners. In doing so, the paper responds to global calls for inclusive and equitable education and contributes to building pedagogical strategies that nurture critical thinking, empathy, and democratic participation.

Keywords

inclusive pedagogy, language and power, critical pedagogy,
higher education in India, feminist pedagogy

The Classroom as a Site of Struggle and Transformation

Education has, time and again, been considered the foundation of a healthy democracy. It allows for the possibility of creating equality, helps foster a spirit of critical thinking, and enables spaces for citizens to be involved in social transformation. However, education also bears serious histories of legacy and dominant social hierarchies. Educational spaces, including schools and universities, enact systems of exclusion, despite the fact that they have the potential to undermine the same structures. According to Paulo Freire (1970), education is a non-neutral domain: it reinforces domination or it is a force of resistance. Similarly, bell hooks (1994) points out that classrooms have the potential to enable oppression or be sites of freedom, possessing the possibility of transformation. This dichotomy is especially prominent in the Indian context, wherein higher education is inextricably linked to elements of caste, class, gender, region, and language.

Universities in India are not simply centers for the transmission of knowledge; they are microcosms of the larger society and its conflicts and inequalities. Classrooms are sites for the negotiation of matters of power, legitimacy, and identity. Forms of private and public universities differ to a notable extent, but both embody

tensions over what education is for, whom it serves, and whose knowledge counts. It is within these contradictions that the politics of pedagogy becomes visible.

This paper discusses pedagogy within Indian higher education, focusing on inclusive education and language politics in particular. In a multilingual country like India, language mediates access to information, inscribes identity, and creates borders of inclusivity and exclusivity. English continues to be privileged as the dominant language in academia—it is tied to modernity, cosmopolitan mobility, and elite credibility. English-speaking competence conveys legitimacy within classrooms, while students from vernacular mediums are excluded. This hierarchy is not simply a matter of communicative efficacy; it is also a matter of power: whose voices are amplified, whose epistemologies matter, and whose knowledge is recognized as legitimate.

The relationship between language politics and social justice inevitably becomes entangled. Language impinges on sites of participation, identity, and representation. Educators witness this process in everyday practice. Some educators challenge these inherent linguistic hierarchies by facilitating assignments in local languages, recognizing vernacular expressions, or adopting translation practices. Others, however, are forced to confront institutional contexts in which English predominates and multilingual practices are not always an asset. The findings of this study indicate that language functions not as a neutral medium, but rather as a contested site of inclusion, exclusion, and negotiation.

The interplay between language and the politics of affect is significant. Learning transcends mere intellectual engagement; it is profoundly intertwined with emotional experiences. Classrooms are imbued with sentiments of vulnerability, discomfort, care, and resistance. Educators striving to foster inclusive environments directly encounter these dynamics. They often face hostility when addressing issues related to caste or gender, encounter accusations of "being too political" for naming instances of inequality, and experience pushback from dominant-caste students when discussing privilege. Similarly, they are entrusted with cultivating trust, affirming the voices of students from marginalized backgrounds, and offering emotional support to students grappling with trauma or feelings of alienation. This emotional labor, despite being seldom recognized in institutional assessments, is vital for the democratization of classrooms.

In India, sociology classrooms are an important site for the examination of these processes. Sociology as a discipline engages with questions of inequality,

marginalization, and power relations. In Indian universities, sociology classrooms bring together students from a diverse range of caste, class, gender, region, and linguistic backgrounds. These academic spaces also represent existing epistemic hierarchies. Euro-American sources dominate the curriculum, and often Dalit-Bahujan perspectives are marginalized, while vernacular scholarship is undervalued (if not completely absent in many courses). In this context, pedagogy becomes more than a question of teaching strategies; it becomes an ethical and political project.

By positioning educators' voices at its core, this study contributes to several areas of scholarly debate. It contributes to worldwide inclusive pedagogy discussions by incorporating caste, language, and affect as its focal points—the latter of which is often neglected in Euro-American scholarship. It also contributes to Indian higher education research by providing empirically derived accounts of classroom practice rather than just conforming to policy-driven approaches. It profoundly engages with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and its emphasis on mother tongue pedagogy and multilingual pedagogy. Whereas the NEP's vision aligns with the call for linguistic inclusivity, its attainability faces major obstacles in the form of institutional opposition, the persistence of English dominance, and neoliberal alterations hindering democratization. This paper argues that inclusive pedagogy in India must be reconceptualized as a linguistic and cultural praxis. It is not merely a list of classroom strategies; it is a political and moral stance that intervenes directly within language, caste, class, and gender hierarchies. It must engage with affective labor, recognize marginalized epistemologies, and confront institutional depoliticization. The sociology classroom, a site where inequality is both studied and often reproduced, is a strategic site for this. The subsequent sections are outlined as follows: 1) The literature review examines existing works on inclusive pedagogy, language and power, feminist and critical pedagogy, and identifies conceptual resources and gaps; 2) The findings section reports on the insights of educators from private and public universities; 3) The analysis contextualizes the practices within the larger discussions on language, power, neoliberalism, and epistemic justice; 4) A further section engages critically with provisions on multilingual education from the NEP 2020; 5) The conclusion specifies the future research scope elaborately and integrates arguments, focusing on the imperative to envision inclusive pedagogy as a linguistic, cultural, and affective praxis for democratizing higher education in India.

Research Questions and Research Objectives

This research investigates language as a site of symbolic power in Indian sociology classrooms, evaluating how linguistic hierarchies delineate student legitimacy, participation, and belonging. Through a comparative analysis, it examines the phenomenological experiences and affective labor of educators in public and private institutions as they navigate divergent institutional constraints to enact intersectional feminist pedagogy. Finally, the study assesses the efficacy of pedagogical interventions in disrupting intersectional exclusions—namely caste, gender, and language—to reconceptualize inclusive pedagogy as a situated linguistic and political praxis essential for transformative learning.

To assess the aforementioned objectives, this study attempts to answer the following questions: How do systemic power and language dominance shape the democratic potential of inclusive teaching in Indian sociology classrooms? How do educators in both public and private universities navigate neoliberalism, emotional labor, and language barriers to implement feminist approaches? Finally, what specific combination of epistemic justice and institutional support is needed for inclusive pedagogy to serve as a meaningful political and linguistic praxis?

Theoretical Framework

This study explores the methodologies utilized by sociology educators in both public and private universities in implementing inclusive pedagogy with language and affect. It is anchored in three interconnected theoretical frameworks. Feminist pedagogy approaches learning as relational and transformational, challenging dominant vertical modes of teaching, embracing experience-based knowledge, and viewing affect as an essential element of learning (hooks, 1994; Shrewsbury, 1987). In the Indian context, Sharmila Rege (1995) emphasizes the need for a caste-sensitive feminist pedagogy, arguing that imported Euro-American models should be localized to be meaningful in local circumstances. Critical pedagogy, developed by Freire (1970/2000) and expanded upon by Giroux (2011), considers schooling a site for liberation through dialogue, praxis, and critical insights. In India, it aligns with B. R. Ambedkar's (1936/2014) understanding of education as a pathway to liberation from caste oppression. The concept of intersectionality, posited by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), highlights how different identities such as caste, class, gender, language, and region intersect to produce complex processes of privilege and marginalization. Together, the above-mentioned three approaches provide the necessary

theoretical lens to examine inclusive pedagogy as a negotiation of power, knowledge, and a sense of belonging.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative approach within feminist methodology. It conducted eight semi-structured in-depth interviews with sociology educators in Pune, Maharashtra. The respondents for the study were chosen to ensure a diverse and inclusive sample, representing both public and private universities, varying levels of teaching experience, and gender diversity among educators. Accordingly, the sample comprised four educators (two male and two female) from two public universities and four educators (two male and two female) from three private universities. Pune is a richly endowed site, as it is home not only to historic public universities, but also to elite private institutions. The study was conducted across two public universities and two private universities in and around Pune, Maharashtra. By comparing institutional types, the study illustrates how pedagogy is informed by structural variations, accessibility of resources, and institutional practices. Participants were selected purposively for their experience in teaching diverse classrooms and for their willingness to examine pedagogy. Participants came from different caste and class backgrounds. Several public university educators were first-generation learners or belonged to subordinated castes, whereas private university educators, despite coming from mixed educational and caste-class backgrounds, often had to operate within institutional constraints.

These interviews were primarily conducted in English but allowed for Hindi and Marathi when preferred by participants. Interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes, and participants agreed to be recorded and have transcripts prepared. Thematic analysis was used to inductively code the transcripts, with feminist and critical pedagogy sensitizing concepts guiding this process. Reflexivity was a central element in the design of the project. As a female researcher, I was aware of how positionality influenced the interviews, enabling me to build rapport in some contexts while feeling humbled in others. Informed consent, anonymization, and discretion regarding sensitive issues such as caste discrimination or institutional politics were key components of the ethical measures.

Literature Review

Inclusive Pedagogy

Inclusive pedagogy has been widely theorized as both a practical framework and a moral stance. Crawley, Lewis, and Mayberry (2008) describe it as reflective, action-oriented, and responsive to learners' lived experiences. Hoffmann and Stake (1998) illustrate how inclusive pedagogy validates multiple knowledge systems and enhances critical thinking abilities. Here, inclusivity means more than accommodating diversity; it involves reorienting the classroom as a participatory and democratic space.

In the context of India, connotations of inclusion hold specific significance. Major inequalities stemming from caste, class, gender, region, and language explicitly affect educational potential long before students enter higher education. Research conducted by Kain (2022) and Sadovnik et al. (2018) illustrates how inequality in systems permeates curricula, evaluative practices, and educators' expectations. The neglect of curricula sensitive to caste and the dominance of middle-class cultural norms continue to reinforce exclusionary practices. Thus, in India, inclusive education needs to be framed not merely in conceptual terms of diversity, but as an acknowledgment of marginality as a fundamental condition.

This perspective necessitates affective attention. Inclusive pedagogy encompasses not just intellectual interaction, but also emotional labor. Educators must create an environment in which students feel comfortable bringing forth their experiences, processing distress, and cultivating critical consciousness. As highlighted in this study, this emotional labor is particularly intense in Indian classroom situations, where the exploration of caste or gender inevitably provokes resistance from students who come from privileged backgrounds. Studies on inclusive pedagogy acknowledge the significance of affect (Crawley et al., 2008), but this Indian example suggests an inseparable connection between affect and social hierarchies.

Language and Power

Language is an indispensable, though frequently underappreciated, instrument of inclusive education. Theorists like Pierre Bourdieu (1991) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) emphasize that language should not be seen as a neutral medium, but as a site of symbolic power. It encompasses histories of imperialism, dictates access to cultural capital, and disrupts hierarchies of legitimacy. In the Indian context,

English has historically been a language of privilege. Its dominance persists in the realm of post-secondary scholarship, as it establishes criteria for who is considered articulate, competent, and intellectually worthy of recognition.

Sadovnik et al.'s (2018) research highlights the connection between linguistic capital, class, and scholarship. Students from vernacular-medium institutions often feel ostracized in English-centric environments, even though they bring valuable perspectives based on their life experiences. This research demonstrates how educators at public institutions subvert this dominant discourse by implementing strategies such as writing assignments in local languages or supporting collective translation efforts. These practices affirm students' linguistic identities while simultaneously challenging and subverting the hierarchies rooted in colonial legacies within the educational system.

Language politics is intertwined with the politics of affect. Linguistic exclusion often evokes shame, silence, and withdrawal among students. In contrast, recognition of vernacular languages generates validation and a sense of belonging. Language, therefore, becomes not just a cognitive resource, but also an affective one, shaping the terms of participation. The NEP 2020, discussed in detail in the later sections of this paper, addresses these concerns by promoting mother tongue education and multilingual education. However, the policy often remains ambiguous about how such ideals can be implemented in universities where English continues to be the dominant marker of employability and status.

Feminist Pedagogy

Feminist pedagogy provides an analytical framework for rethinking inclusion. It contests dominant relations in the classroom, celebrates marginalized knowledges, and views knowledge production as a collective process (hooks, 1994). Additionally, it recognizes that education is inherently political, with classrooms both reproducing and modifying power relations.

Hoffmann and Stake (1998) emphasize that feminist pedagogy values relationality, dialogue, and student experience as core to learning. Crawley et al. (2008) identify reflexivity, affect, and responsiveness as its essential characteristics. In Indian contexts, feminist pedagogy must also address caste, communalism, and neoliberalism. Researchers such as Paik (2021) and Guru (1995) argue that Indian feminist pedagogy cannot be limited to gender; it must also encompass caste and regional hierarchies as fundamental axes of exclusion.

Public university educators often based their practice on personal experiences of being marginalized, whether as first-generation learners or members of marginalized caste communities, to implement feminist pedagogy. They validated experiential knowledge, encouraged critical observations of social hierarchies, and created interactive spaces for learning. In contrast, educators in private institutions also adhered to feminist ideology; nevertheless, they were often faced with administrative pressures to suppress contentious discussions. These instances highlight the dual labor required by feminist pedagogy in India: nurturing of inclusion as well as combating suppressive institutions.

Indian Higher Education

Literature on Indian higher education has consistently highlighted its dual role in promoting mobility while simultaneously entrenching inequality. According to major studies, there has been an expansion of access to higher education, but this primarily benefits the upper-caste, urban, and English-speaking elites. While affirmative action policies have helped include students from marginalized groups, prevailing campus cultures often show intolerance toward their inclusion. Caste-based discrimination, regional biases, and gendered expectations still manifest in both subtle and overt ways.

Public universities have long been places of comparative accessibility, particularly for first-generation students. However, they face challenges due to persistent underfunding, overcrowding, and administrative inefficiency. Private universities, on the other hand, offer superior infrastructure and smaller class sizes but are driven by neoliberal principles that treat education as a commodity (Nambissan & Ball, 2010). They prioritize students from more advantageous backgrounds, and diversity often amounts to little more than token scholarship programs.

This institutional gap underlies pedagogical practices. Educators in public universities innovate multilingual strategies and community engagement despite limited resources. Educators in private universities experiment with innovative assignments and participatory methods but face pressures to deliver "student satisfaction" within a consumer-oriented culture. The two contexts highlight the challenges between ideals of inclusion and the practicalities of institutions.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy becomes the integrated framework for understanding these dynamics. Freire (1970/2000) defines education as an act of liberation, where students

actively participate in knowledge production rather than being passive recipients. Giroux (2011) further emphasizes the importance of pedagogy in resisting dominant ideologies and facilitating democratic participation.

Critical pedagogical ideologies resonate in Indian educators' practices. Public university educators consciously and intentionally position pedagogy as a form of resistance to caste, class, and gender hierarchies. While private educators operate solely under neoliberal rationalities, there are still attempts to foster critical thinking through creative assignments and dialogue practices.

However, it is imperative to recontextualize critical pedagogy within the Indian setting to reflect local realities. The presence of caste systems, linguistic hierarchies, and the commercialization of education necessitates a re-evaluation of the term "critical" within this particular context. As this research underscores, inclusive pedagogy in India transcends mere acknowledgment; it encompasses the vital aspect of survival, fostering environments where marginalized students can articulate their voices without trepidation and enabling educators to maintain critical methodologies in the face of institutional opposition.

Synthesis

Scholarship reveals that inclusive pedagogy is an urgent and contentious project. World scholarship teaches us valuable lessons in reflexivity, dialogue, and affect. Indian higher education, however, presents unique challenges: hardened caste hierarchies, English dominance, neoliberal imperatives, and emotional labor. These contexts necessitate understanding pedagogy as situated within linguistic, cultural, and political practices. This study also builds on and extends previous discussions by examining educators' perspectives in Indian universities. It argues that in India, there must be an emphasis on language politics and emotional labor as essential elements in the pursuit of educational democratization. It also illustrates the need for a focus on institutional arrangements, tracing how public and private universities develop distinctive yet related spheres of possibility and constraint.

Divergent Contexts: Public and Private Universities

The stories of public and private university educators reveal starkly different contexts in which inclusive pedagogy is imagined and practiced. Regardless of the differences discussed further, educators at both types of institutions share deep commitments to inclusive pedagogy and express a common conviction that classrooms should

become sites where knowledge is democratized, student experiences are validated, and social inequalities are critically examined. However, the paths toward achieving these objectives vary greatly based on institutional resources, student populations, and administrative cultures.

Public Universities: Inclusion Rooted in Struggles for Justice

For public university educators, inclusive pedagogy is fundamentally inscribed in their own educational paths. Many of them discussed being first-generation college students from rural or non-metropolitan regions, navigating linguistic hierarchies and caste exclusions. These experiences serve as a constant reminder of the exclusions that students still face. One educator described how, as a student who once struggled with English and felt inadequate, they now intentionally create space for students to speak in the language in which they feel comfortable. Reflexivity here is not merely an intellectual exercise, but a gut check of lived injustice. This embodied reflexivity influences classroom practices in ways that respond to, yet also build upon, global models of feminist pedagogy.

Language became the focal point of inclusive pedagogy in public universities. Educators acknowledged that English fluency acts as a gatekeeping force, granting power and legitimacy to certain students while silencing others. In response, they intentionally facilitated the use of Marathi, Hindi, and other local languages in classroom discussions, group work, and even assignments. Some allowed reflective assignments to be initially written in the student's preferred language and then translated collectively into academic English. This approach not only affirms vernacular epistemologies, but also challenges the dominance of English as the sole language of valid knowledge. Such practices represent a form of linguistic justice that enables students from diverse backgrounds to feel more engaged in the classroom.

Educational approaches in public universities were based on linking knowledge to everyday experiences. Educators created assignments on caste dynamics in students' villages of residence, implemented gendered household labor surveys based on Arlie Hochschild's *Second Shift*, promoted peer-led classes in which marginalized students could lead the discussion, and utilized anonymized case studies to facilitate sensitive conversations around caste and gender. These techniques prioritized participatory learning, experiential learning, and critical reflection. Notably, they also acknowledged the emotional toll of challenging inequality, allowing space for care as well as critique.

Despite their commitment to inclusivity, public university educators face significant institutional limitations. Large classes, infrastructural shortages, and bureaucratic resistance obstruct experimentation. More importantly, educators encounter hostility when challenging caste or communalism. Students from powerful groups have accused them of "spreading casteism" or "being too political". Such resistance is emotionally taxing for educators, who must balance the need to disrupt privilege with the risk of alienating students or provoking institutional backlash. As one educator explained, discussions of caste often trigger defensive responses among privileged students, requiring sustained emotional and intellectual effort. The politics of affect, therefore, come to the forefront: inclusion necessitates not just intellectual approaches, but also resilience, patience, and care in the face of resistance.

Private Universities: Inclusion in a Marketized Setting

Private universities offer a different landscape for inclusive pedagogy. The majority have institutionalized Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies, workshops, and committees. Educators recognized that these efforts leave room for dialogue on inclusivity; however, opportunities for pedagogical innovation in the form of smaller classes, improved infrastructure, and curricular freedom also present themselves. Educators also pointed out contradictions between institutional practice and rhetoric. For instance, while DEI workshop sessions were prevalent, administrators would dissuade educators from discussing caste or minority issues that might be seen as politically inflammatory. Inclusivity in this context risked becoming commodified, presented as a component of the institution's brand rather than ingrained as a mission of transformation.

Under these limitations, private university educators still managed to implement innovative practices. Multimodal forms of expression were promoted in assignments, such as podcasts, photo essays, and participatory research. Group projects were strategically organized to combine students across different castes, classes, and regions to avoid homogeneous cliques. Certain educators allowed indigenous expressions or local dialects to be spoken during class discussions to facilitate involvement and minimize the sense of alienation among students educated through vernacular media. The syllabi were enriched by including the writings of Dalit, Bahujan, Adivasi, and feminist intellectuals, rather than being limited to Eurocentric or upper-caste canonical thinkers. Additionally, many educators used trauma-sensitive strategies, including issuing trigger warnings and offering alternative assignments

for students who may have found some materials emotionally draining. A professor of sociology described an assignment in which students monitored rural news from specific areas over the course of a semester, creating newsletters that invited critical examination of rural realities and developmental contradictions. These strategies represented an active effort to democratize learning while working within neoliberal institutional limits.

These presented various challenges for private university educators. Both student and institutional expectations were shaped by market rationalities. Well-paying students often viewed themselves as clients and equated critiques of caste, gender, or privilege with personal attacks, sometimes resulting in complaints or low feedback scores. Faculty precarity added another layer of difficulty: short-term appointments and performance evaluations tied to student feedback discouraged pedagogical experimentation. Numerous educators pointed to tokenism in institutional strategies, where diversity was used for advertising purposes without meaningful structural changes. Institutional censorship was another obstacle, as events or discussions on sensitive subjects were delayed, diluted, or blocked in the name of "reputation management". One educator recalled being required to expel "short-topped" students even while leading a course on gender, highlighting the contradictions between classroom ideals and institutional image management. These contradictions led to dissonance, frustration, and burnout for many.

Similar to their public university counterparts, private university educators undertook significant emotional labor, albeit of a different nature. Their challenges were framed in terms of infrastructural shortcomings and were more focused on navigating neoliberal student satisfaction and institutional branding cultures. Maintaining critical pedagogy in these circumstances required ongoing balancing acts between provocation and accommodation, criticality and prudence. The politics of affect was, therefore, as central to private universities as to public ones, albeit mediated by consumerist aspirations rather than material limitations.

Cross-Cutting Themes

In both institutional settings, several themes also transversally cut across educators' accounts. Language was consistently revealed as a domain of exclusion and power. Educators in public universities attempted to counteract the supremacy of English by legitimizing local languages, whereas private university educators diminished the elitism of English by facilitating mixed or multimodal communication. In both

settings, language politics directly influenced student engagement, confidence, and access to knowledge.

Educators also noted the persistence of intersectional silences. While gender was frequently addressed institutionally, caste and language differences were less regularly acknowledged, particularly in private universities where caste-blind policies tended to obscure structural privilege. This differential inclusion perpetuated structural inequities, underscoring the need for more comprehensive intersectional strategies.

Meritocracy was another recurring motif. Dominant-group students frequently pushed back against discussions of privilege, clinging to ideologies of merit and individual effort. Educators had to navigate this pushback carefully to prevent critical discussions from falling apart. Such negotiation required not only intellectual ability, but also significant emotional investment.

Emotional labor, as it happens, was at the core of both settings. In public universities, where educators bore the emotional weight of validating marginalized lives in the face of hostility, and in private universities, where they navigated the tension between provoking thought and meeting institutional demands for ease, affect could not be disentangled from pedagogy. Inclusive pedagogy was, therefore, experienced not merely as an intellectual position, but as an emotional practice.

Lastly, the two groups of educators highlighted the contradictions within their institutions. The public universities faced shortages of resources and bureaucratic resistance to change, while the private universities were entrenched in neoliberal consumerism and managerialism. In both cases, institutions tended to sabotage rather than facilitate transformative pedagogy.

Toward a Comparative Understanding

Taken together, the experiences of public and private university educators illustrate that inclusive pedagogy is intertwined with broader political and institutional forces. Public universities emphasized inclusion through experiential reflexivity and linguistic democratization, whereas private universities showed innovation within neoliberal constraints but risked commodifying diversity. Both contexts, however, demonstrate that inclusive pedagogy cannot be reduced to classroom techniques alone; it is embedded in institutional logics, cultural hierarchies, and political economies.

Simultaneously, the determination and creativity of educators highlight the potential for change. In the face of opposition, tokenism, and emotional fatigue, they

created micro-spaces for inclusion, affirming marginalized voices, reshaping hierarchies, and challenging the boundaries of their institutions. Their actions show that even as structural change is greatly needed, individual educators still demonstrate courage, imagination, and resilience in democratizing Indian higher education.

Language, Power, and the Politics of Belonging

One of the salient themes that emerges from this study is the central role of language in shaping the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion in higher education in India. Teaching professionals at public universities repeatedly cited the way English acts as a gatekeeping device that grants individuals speaking the language legitimacy and symbolic capital while destabilizing the status of individuals moving from vernacular-medium school backgrounds to higher education. This finding aligns with Pierre Bourdieu's (1973) reading of language as a form of cultural capital, whereby linguistic competence is not neutral but closely aligned with privilege related to class and caste. Here, language becomes an indicator of membership: proficiency in English often signals elite experiences of education, urban origins, and caste privilege, while hesitation or accents become excuses for derision, repression, or exclusion.

Educators at public universities often challenged such linguistic hegemony through methods that validated local languages, encouraged translations, and crafted tasks based on local epistemologies. Such methods contest the monopoly of English as the only valid medium of academic expression by opposing the so-called "colonial captivity of language" propagated by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. By enabling student participation through Marathi, Hindi, or any other local language, educators created a platform of epistemic diversity and increased access to knowledge. These programs prove that inclusive teaching is not only an approach to education, but also an act of resistance against linguistic imperialism and its accompanying hierarchies of power. In private university colleges, the dynamics of language play out differently. While awareness of the phenomenon of linguistic exclusion exists among educators, the institutional culture, shaped overwhelmingly by a class of elite learners, defies open challenges to the hegemony of the English language. Instead, they have devised subtle strategies of including native terms alongside English usage or permitting multilingualism in selected tasks. These approaches reduce the elitist overtones of English while maintaining its privileged status. Additionally, they shed light on inherent institutional contradictions: on the one hand, private universities proclaim diversity and international competitiveness; on the other hand, they tacitly

maintain English's superior status as a marker of cosmopolitanism Kumaravadivelu, 2007). This contradiction mirrors larger neoliberal discourses in which inclusion is championed in theory but often delimited by existing hierarchies.

Together, the findings suggest that inclusive education in India must be viewed through the lens of language politics. It goes beyond teaching practices or classroom strategies and involves the politically charged consideration of how language creates and maintains social inequalities. Educational language politics play a significant role in determining who sees themselves as having the right to express their ideas, who will remain silent instead, and which experiences will be recognized as valid knowledge. In response, inclusive education can never be separated from the ongoing struggles for linguistic rights and cultural democracy.

Negotiating Power and Resistance in the Classroom

The classroom, as depicted by educators, does not seem like a site of neutral learning but rather a highly politicized space where hierarchies of caste, class, gender, and language are repeatedly produced, challenged, and negotiated. This is consistent with the view of Paulo Freire (1970/2000) that education is never neutral but reinforces prevailing powers or becomes an instrument of liberation. Public and private university publications present findings on the challenge of negotiating prevailing ideologies while educators seek to create an environment that keeps students active rather than at the periphery.

Campus faculty at public universities reported resistance from majority caste students when discussions of caste oppression took place. The allegation of "spreading casteism" is typical of privileged student frames that perceive critique as personal attacks, diverting focus away from structural oppression. This case parallels dynamics observed by Sara Ahmed (2012) when discussing issues of feminist pedagogy, wherein the identification of oppression gets reimagined as causing division. In such scenarios, educators bear an unequal share of what bell hooks (1994) identifies as the exercise of "teaching to transgress", which propels the student beyond their limits while also containing hostility, negation, and defensiveness.

Educators at private universities encountered similar forms of resistance, although expressed within consumerist paradigms. Here, students as "clients" often equated discomfort with poor service, leading to grievances or lower evaluations for professors. Thus, critical pedagogy experiences resistance within neoliberal contexts that privilege "customer satisfaction", making intellectual challenges hazardous for

educators in tenuous positions. The need to work through issues of power occurs not only between professors and students, but also between educators and colleges that are more concerned about brand management than about critical discourse. What is evident amidst diverse contexts is that resistance against inclusive pedagogy is neither haphazard nor incidental but rather systemic. It emerges from institutionally deep-seated systems of privilege that sustain themselves by remaining unquestioned. Pedagogical decisions made by educators, utilizing anonymized case materials, scaffolding progressively harder discussions more often, or constructing debates within abstracted frames, constitute modes of pedagogical negotiation that work toward sustaining critical inquiry while avoiding conflict. They illustrate that inclusive pedagogy requires a commitment of more than kindness; rather, it requires the political maturity of an adult sort, emotional fortitude, and ongoing calibration of classroom dynamics.

Neoliberalism and the Commodification of Inclusion

One particular theme in private universities is the commodification of inclusivity. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies, workshops, and committees are in place, but faculty members consistently point out that these tend to be more branding exercises rather than transformational commitments. Inclusion is sold to potential students and parents as part of institutional status, but meaningful engagement with systemic inequities—especially caste—is usually pushed aside. This use of diversity illustrates the neoliberal logic of higher education, wherein market rationalities prevail over democratic imperatives.

Scholars like Giroux (2011) have maintained that neoliberalism has made universities corporate in nature, promoting efficiency, consumer happiness, and employability. The lives of private university faculty strongly echo this criticism. Professors explained how discussions on caste, gender, or communalism were censored on the grounds of "reputation management". Others pointed out how students from marginalized groups were highlighted in advertisements while receiving limited structural support in classrooms. The outcome is what Fraser (1995) calls "recognition without redistribution": symbolic diversity without underlying structural transformation.

By comparison, public universities are less formally market-oriented but are chronically underfunded, plagued by bureaucratic inefficiency, and subject to state meddling. In these settings, the limitation on inclusive pedagogy is less one

of commodification and more one of infrastructural abandonment and political enmity. However, both environments demonstrate how structural conditions, either neoliberal consumerism or a lack of resources, limit the radical potential of inclusive pedagogy. Educators work within institutions that tend to erode their efforts, necessitating micro-resistance to maintain democratic practices in adversarial settings.

Epistemic Justice and the Struggle over Knowledge

At the core of inclusive pedagogy is the conflict over what constitutes valid knowledge. Both private and public university educators attempted to make curricula more diverse by integrating the works of Dalit, Bahujan, Adivasi, feminist, and vernacular thinkers. This action directly challenges the epistemic hegemony of Eurocentric, upper-caste, and male canonical thinkers that continue to influence sociology syllabi in India. By validating students' lived experiences as knowledge—whether through ethnographies of caste in villages, reflections on gendered household labor, or participatory regional newsletters—educators exercised what Fricker (2007) refers to as epistemic justice: the acknowledgment of marginalized groups as legitimate knowers.

However, epistemic justice is precarious. In public universities, rigid syllabi and outdated materials hinder the incorporation of critical content, and inclusivity relies on the initiative of individual faculty members. In private universities, while there is flexibility in curricula, it is often constrained by neoliberal imperatives. Faculty can introduce critical texts, only to have them dismissed as "political" or "unmarketable". Epistemic justice is, therefore, always incomplete, always mediated by educators' commitments and institutional arrangements.

Focus on language in education also cuts across epistemic justice. Allowing students to write or communicate in regional languages disrupts the exclusivity of English as the sole bearer of knowledge. It acknowledges that epistemologies in Marathi, Hindi, or other vernaculars are not second-rate but on par. These practices decolonize knowledge production by challenging colonial hierarchies that equate English with intellectual supremacy. They also create more just opportunities for students from oppressed groups to engage as producers of knowledge instead of passive consumers.

On this understanding, Indian inclusive pedagogy is an epistemic justice project. It aims to deconstruct epistemic exclusion, authorize different kinds of knowledge, and make authority more democratic in classroom settings. Yet, the research

also shows how little these gains hold up when faced with institutional resistance, neoliberal market rationalities, and vested caste-class interests.

Inclusive Pedagogy as Political and Ethical Praxis

The accumulated wisdom of public and private university educators emphasizes that inclusive pedagogy cannot be framed as a toolbox of methods or classroom strategies; it is an ethical and political praxis. In public universities, this praxis is anchored in histories of marginalization, constitutional imaginings of equality, and the everyday struggles of educators and students. In private universities, it is determined by negotiations in neoliberal consumerist cultures, where inclusion is perpetually under threat of commodification or depoliticization.

In both contexts, inclusive pedagogy calls on educators to be courageous, reflexive, and caring. It asks them to challenge structural injustices, handle resistance, and carry the emotional burden of validating minoritized perspectives. It also asks them to negotiate strategically with institutions that tend to reject or devalue critical pedagogy. The results present inclusive pedagogy not as an addition, but as a constitutive component of the struggle for democracy, justice, and equality in Indian higher education.

By centering language politics, epistemic justice, and the dilemmas of neoliberalism, this study enhances our understanding of inclusive pedagogy as a space where larger social conflicts are enacted each day. Classrooms serve as microcosms of Indian society, where hierarchies are not only reproduced, but also subverted, and where more democratic futures are made possible through the tenacity and creativity of educators.

Interpretive Discussion

Based on the empirical findings, this study seeks to navigate an interpretive framework that bridges observed classroom practices with broader questions of power, institutional structure, and social inequality in higher education. The discussion that follows connects educators' accounts to an analytical understanding of inclusive pedagogy as a situated and contested process rather than a neutral pedagogical ideal.

1. The findings discussed above suggest that inclusive pedagogy is significantly influenced by institutional location. Public universities enable forms of reflexive, justice-oriented teaching rooted in educators' lived experiences of marginalization, while private universities frame inclusion within

market-driven logics that both enable innovation and constrain critique. These contextual pedagogies cannot be separated from institutional histories and governance structures.

2. Language emerges as a key interpretive lens, moving beyond communication to function as a site of power and exclusion. Empirical practices, such as multilingual participation and translation-based assignments (discussed above), reveal attempts to disrupt the dominance of English and challenge its alignment with caste and class privilege. Such strategies point to broader struggles over epistemic legitimacy and students' feelings of belonging.
3. The interpretive analysis also highlights how inclusion is unevenly institutionalized. While gender is more readily addressed, it is always more convenient to talk about women's equal rights than to engage with the intersections of caste, class, and gender, and how language becomes a tool that shapes these issues. Hence, discussions on caste and language remain depoliticized and at the margins, producing forms of symbolic inclusion that leave structural hierarchies largely intact. Resistance from students, often framed through meritocratic or consumerist discourses, reflects these entrenched inequalities rather than individual discomfort alone.
4. Across both public and private universities, emotional labor is central to sustaining inclusive pedagogy. Educators' efforts to navigate resistance, affirm marginalized voices, and balance critique with care suggest that inclusion operates as an ethical and political praxis.

This framework sets the stage for further discussion on the theoretical and practical implications of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which are discussed below. The interpretive analysis implies that meaningful pedagogical transformation necessitates structural change that extends beyond the classroom.

Policy and the NEP 2020: Multilingualism and the Limits of Reform

Firstly, The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been recognized as a landmark reform due to its robust focus on inclusivity, equity, and multilingual education. It clearly promotes the use of the mother tongue or regional languages as the medium of teaching, especially in early education, and encourages a transition toward multilingual practices in higher education. Ideally, these provisions align with demands to democratize knowledge access and counter English hegemony. By respecting regional languages, the NEP 2020 acknowledges what this research finds to be at the heart of inclusive pedagogy: linguistic justice and epistemic plurality.

However, the translation of this vision into practice remains intensely debated. To begin with, Indian higher education still functions within a deep-seated hierarchy in which English is the reigning medium of instruction, the language of scholarly publication, and the symbolic signifier of elite legitimacy. The present study verifies that educators, especially in public universities in Pune, Maharashtra, are already piloting multilingual pedagogies, fostering Marathi or Hindi assignments, empowering local expressions, and practicing translation techniques. These local initiatives embody both the potential and the viability of multilingual education. However, they also uncover the colossal institutional resistance that the NEP 2020 has not yet overcome. Without curriculum overhaul, teacher training programs, and testing reforms, the mother tongue provisions might remain pedagogical wish lists instead of students' lived experiences.

Secondly, the NEP's articulation of multilingualism at times threatens to flatten out the political tension of language. While the policy prioritizes diversity, it fails to capture the ways in which linguistic hierarchies intersect with caste, class, and regional privilege. As this study points out, knowledge of English is frequently associated with caste and class privilege, while vernacular languages remain largely overshadowed. Simply mandating mother tongue instruction does not dismantle these hierarchies; in fact, if poorly implemented, it risks reproducing them by creating parallel systems where marginalized students are confined to regional language streams with fewer resources, while elites continue to benefit from English-medium dominance.

Thirdly, the NEP 2020 does not address the affective and emotional labor involved in multilingual pedagogy. The educators interviewed emphasized that maintaining inclusive classrooms requires more than just language policy; it necessitates constant negotiation of discomfort, resistance, and trauma. Policy regimes often overlook this aspect of pedagogy, and in its absence, the practice of multilingual education can falter at the implementation level.

Lastly, the NEP's concurrent adoption of neoliberal reforms complicates the agenda for inclusivity. On one hand, it promotes multilingual education; on the other, it encourages privatization, internationalization, and market competitiveness in higher education. These trends risk undermining the very purposes of equity and democratization. The experiences of private universities show how inclusion, in neoliberal times, is frequently reduced to branding over reform. Unless coupled with structural redistribution and protection for academic freedom, the NEP's promises risk being co-opted into tokenistic gestures.

In short, although the NEP 2020 offers a key policy window for reframing pedagogy, it will succeed only if it is seized as something beyond rhetoric. That involves making systemic investments in educator education, curricular change, and institutional responsibility. More significantly, however, it involves a recognition that multilingual and inclusive pedagogy is not merely about language options, but about addressing the deeper hierarchies of caste, class, gender, and power that define Indian education.

Conclusion: Inclusive Pedagogy as Linguistic and Cultural Praxis

The study has explored the politics of pedagogy in Indian higher education through the interwoven perspectives of language, power, and inclusion. Based on interviews with sociology educators across public and private universities in Pune, Maharashtra, the research emphasizes how inclusive pedagogy is enacted, contested, and reimagined in the daily life of the classroom. It also demonstrates that the politics of language is at the center of this project, not just as a medium of learning but as a space where caste, class, and regional hierarchies are reproduced and challenged.

At the center of these findings is a sense that inclusive pedagogy cannot be framed as a series of techniques or methods. Instead, it must be seen as a cultural and political praxis. For educators in public universities, inclusivity is an ethical imperative informed by their own histories of marginalization as first-generation students or members of marginalized caste groups. Their classrooms become sites where students' lived experiences are legitimized, vernacular languages are affirmed, and canonical knowledge is questioned. This vision finds its echoes in the emancipatory tradition of B. R. Ambedkar and responds to the constitutional promise of equality and social justice.

For educators in private universities, inclusivity is discussed within the neoliberal framework of marketized education. Their pedagogical approaches are often creative, utilizing innovative assignments, multimedia pedagogy, and dialogic teaching, but are constrained by institutional imperatives to focus on student satisfaction and job readiness. Their frustrations reveal the contradictions of implementing critical pedagogy in institutions that position students as consumers and classrooms as venues for brand promotion. Though they foster areas of change, they also face limitations that depoliticize inclusion into tokenistic diversity.

The comparative observations of public and private institutions highlight that inclusive pedagogy needs to be situated within wider configurations of power.

Infrastructural limitations, doctrinaire curricula, and ideological intolerance restrict public university educators, as do consumerist paradigms, precarious appointments, and institutional conservatism for their private university colleagues. Nevertheless, within both settings, educators' voices confirm that language, emotion, and reflexivity are essential to the practice of inclusion.

One of the major contributions of this research is that it highlights language as both a means and a site of power. English language proficiency remains a signifier of legitimacy and privilege, while local and regional languages remain stigmatized. Educators who ask students to write their assignments in Marathi, Hindi, or other local languages subvert this hegemony and enunciate epistemic justice. These practices underscore that inclusive pedagogy is not merely a matter of diversifying the curriculum, but also of reshaping the very conditions of participation and belonging in the university space. Language becomes a site of struggle between colonial histories of English supremacy and hopes for a truly plural, democratic higher education system.

As important as the above is the role of affect and emotional labor. Educators interviewed stressed that building inclusivity involves ongoing negotiation and navigation through students' unease, trauma, and resistance. Discussions on caste, gender, or sexuality tend to elicit defensiveness from dominant groups, and educators need to navigate critical provocation with sensitivity. This highlights that inclusive pedagogy is as affective as it is cognitive. It calls for awareness of the emotional aspects of learning, as well as institutional facilitation for educators who carry the responsibility of creating classrooms that are both safe spaces and sites of critical thinking.

The interface with the NEP 2020 reflects both the potential and constraints of policy reform. Its focus on mother-tongue teaching and multilingualism reaffirms the directions already pioneered by academics in public universities. However, without investments in curriculum structures, educator capacity-building, and changes in assessment or grading systems, such policy acts are likely to be rhetorical. Furthermore, the NEP's neoliberal strain, prioritizing privatization and competitiveness, could potentially counteract its agenda for greater inclusivity by pitting efficiency against equity. This paradox underlines the necessity for policy discussions to be anchored in the everyday experiences of classrooms, where educators are already negotiating the tensions between linguistic justice and structural inequality.

The results also resonate with broader discussions within feminist and critical pedagogy. They confirm the centrality of reflexivity, action orientation, and emotion,

but push these concepts further by locating them in the Indian context of caste and language as essential axes of analysis. Furthermore, it illustrates that inclusive pedagogy is not a universal model but needs to be constantly re-conceptualized in response to local hierarchies and institutional locations. This calls for an intersectional response that seriously engages with the interlinkages of caste, class, gender, and region in constituting both access to knowledge and classroom experiences.

In practical terms, this study highlights the need for immediate institutional reforms. Teacher training needs to progress from tokenistic workshops to an in-depth exploration of intersectional pedagogy, linguistic diversity, and reflexive practice. Curricula need to be reworked to incorporate marginalized voices and epistemologies. Assessment systems need to evolve from rote memorization to forms that appreciate critical thinking and diverse expressions. Above all, teaching needs to be institutionally acknowledged and valued equally to research, with appropriate support structures for educators engaged in emotionally and politically challenging work.

At a more general level, the study maintains that inclusive pedagogy can be separated from the democratization of education itself. It is not just about the accommodation of difference, but about challenging the hierarchies along which difference is produced. It means reimagining classrooms as spaces of solidarity, dialogue, and resistance. In India's multilingual and stratified society, this involves addressing the exclusions in language, caste, and class while constructing pedagogies that affirm plurality, dignity, and critical thought.

Future Research Scope

This study enhances discussions on inclusive and feminist pedagogy in Indian sociology courses while also indicating many avenues for future research that can expand and enrich this field.

1. A primary objective is to integrate students' viewpoints, especially from marginalized caste, class, gender, and linguistic backgrounds, to ascertain how inclusive practices are experienced, negotiated, resisted, or internalized, and whether they truly democratize classroom participation or perpetuate subtle hierarchies.
2. Future research should implement longitudinal designs to evaluate the sustainability of inclusive pedagogical changes over time: Do critical engagement and dialogic participation endure across semesters, and can inclusive

classroom cultures persist beyond the influence of a single dedicated educator, or are they reliant on individual effort?

3. This study's geographical limitation to Pune necessitates further research that conducts comparative regional analyses across India's many language and socio-political contexts to investigate how local histories, state politics, and regional caste-gender dynamics influence instructional opportunities.
4. There exists an opportunity to investigate inclusive pedagogy beyond sociology, encompassing fields such as engineering, law, medicine, business, and the sciences, to determine whether disciplinary epistemologies, frequently focused on standardization and "objectivity", create distinct obstacles that necessitate context-specific pedagogical approaches.
5. Considering post-pandemic changes, research must rigorously examine the impact of digital and hybrid learning environments, particularly how online classrooms may either perpetuate or challenge exclusions in access, participation, and engagement amid ongoing digital disparities.
6. A crucial focus pertains to the convergence of neoliberalism and inclusion, especially within private universities, where market-driven principles of employability, consumer satisfaction, and branding may depoliticize or commodify equity initiatives. Subsequent research could investigate alternative institutional frameworks that may more effectively uphold democratic education.
7. The study highlights the pressing necessity to conceptualize emotional labor and educator burnout, examining the gender disparities in affective demands and identifying institutional support structures that can foster resilience.
8. Ultimately, policy and institutional ethnographies are essential for examining how inclusion policies manifest in daily administrative and classroom practices, uncovering the micro-politics that influence whether institutional cultures, accreditation systems, and governance frameworks facilitate or hinder systemic pedagogical transformation.

In conclusion, inclusive pedagogy needs to be imagined as a linguistic and cultural praxis—one that is sensitive to the politics of language, responsive to the affective aspects of learning, and anchored in intersectional analyses of power. It is, ultimately, a social justice project. The educators whose voices bring life to this study remind us that classrooms are not neutral sites but contested grounds where hierarchies are reinscribed and resisted. Their own efforts, however limited, are

acts of care and subversion that preserve the democratic potential of education. For inclusive pedagogy to take root, it must be nurtured by policies and institutions attuned to its political, ethical, and affective investments. Otherwise, higher education in India can only aspire to be a means of mobility at best, and not a site of communal liberation.

Research Ethics Statement

This study was carried out in adherence to existing social science research ethics standards. Participants were offered clear information on the study's purpose and scope, and consent was sought before participation. Interviews were conducted with respect for participants' autonomy, confidentiality, and comfort levels. Pseudonyms were employed to ensure anonymity, and identifying information was excluded from transcripts and analysis. Data was kept confidential on password-protected equipment only accessible to the researcher. The research was informed by a feminist ethics approach that privileged reflexivity, non-hierarchical interviewing, and respect for participants' social locations..

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Program badania splotu ruchów społecznych i edukacji

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Abstrakt

W artykule proponujemy otwarty program badawczy analizujący splot ruchów społecznych i edukacji, osadzony w tradycji *social movement learning* oraz krytycznych badań edukacyjnych. Traktujemy edukację nie tylko jako obszar wpływu ruchów, ale też przestrzeń ich ciągłego re-kodowania. Program organizujemy wokół dwóch wektorów – „od ruchów" i „od szkoły" – oraz postulatu opisania splotu powiązań: od mikropraktyk uczenia się i napięć emocjonalnych w klasach szkolnych po makroprzesunięcia w prawie oświatowym. Proponujemy narzędzie heurystyczne w postaci mapy Szlaków Społecznego Zaangażowania, które mogą się przecinać i pozwalają porządkować genealogie współczesnych rozwiązań edukacyjnych. Zachęcamy, aby w sporach o edukację pytać o to, jaki ruch mógłby „podpisać się" pod daną propozycją, a także o sposoby, z których pomocą legitymizuje się, neutralizuje lub rytualizuje te ostatnie. Program otwiera pole badań genealogicznych, porównawczych, biograficznych, etnograficznych oraz eksperymentów myślowych.

Słowa kluczowe

ruchy społeczne, edukacja, program badawczy, genealogie edukacji, dziedzictwa ruchów

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Research Programme on the Entanglement of Social Movements and Education

Abstract

In this article we propose an open research programme for studying the entanglement of social movements and education, grounded in social movement learning and critical educational research. We treat education not merely as a recipient of "movement influence" but as a site of ongoing re-coding. The programme is organized around two vectors ("from movements" and "from schooling") and calls for mapping the entanglement of relations: from micro-practices of activist learning and emotional tensions in classrooms to macro-level shifts in educational law and policy. As a heuristic tool, we introduce a map of "paths of social engagement", which can intersect and help systematize genealogies of contemporary educational arrangements. We invite researchers to ask, in any current educational controversy: which movement could plausibly "sign" a given proposal, and how such proposals are legitimized, neutralized, or ritualized through partial and tolerated solutions. The programme opens space for genealogical, comparative, biographical, and ethnographic projects, as well as thought experiments tracing how today's activist micro-practices may become tomorrow's "normal" education.

Keywords

social movements, education, research programme, genealogies of schooling, movement legacies

Wstęp

W tym roku mija dziesięć lat od mobilizacji, jaką były Czarne Protesty i Strajki Kobiet – przykłady masowego upodmiotowienia obywatelek i obywateli Polski (np. Kowalska & Nawojski, 2019). To jeden z wielu przykładów działań zbiorowych nastawionych na radzenie sobie ze współczesnymi problemami i szeroko rozumianymi kryzysami – demokracji przedstawicielskiej (Castells, 2017; Migalski, 2015), klimatycznym (Verlie, 2022), wojnami (Kowzan, 2018; Paluch, 2022), a także sytuacjami, które wymagają adekwatnych odpowiedzi między innymi pod postacią działań kolektywnych (Szczygieł & Kowzan, 2025). Badaną przez nas formą działania zbiorowego są między innymi ruchy społeczne (Besta i in., 2019; Czapliński i in., 2019).

Zainteresowanie problematyką ruchów społecznych oraz ich związkiem z edukacją, a zwłaszcza z procesami uczenia się, można rozpatrywać w kontekście andragogicznego zwrotu ku społecznościom uczącym się (Kurantowicz, 2007). Kurantowicz nawiązywała do radykalnej tradycji edukowania dorosłych, w której ramach kluczowe znaczenie dla procesów uczenia się miały konteksty strukturalne i polityczne. W tej tradycji szczególną uwagę poświęca się ruchom społecznym dążącym do realizacji idei sprawiedliwości społecznej (por. Johnston, 2003). Nie dałoby się realizować tego celu bez przejścia od uczenia się indywidualnego ku uczeniu się kolektywnemu, co jest zmianą wręcz paradygmatyczną, jeśli chodzi o rozumienie procesów edukacyjnych w społecznościach (Dekeyser, 2001).

Uczenie się kolektywne, na które chcemy zwrócić uwagę w tym tekście, jest trudne do uchwycenia w społecznościach wychowanych do indywidualizmu. Knud Illeris (2006, s. 215) pisał, że „współczesne, zindywidualizowane społeczeństwo nie zapewnia możliwości uczenia się kolektywnego". Doświadczenia różnych zachowań zbiorowych pokazują jednak coś innego. Zbiorowa odpowiedź społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w Polsce po wybuchu wojny w Ukrainie dowiodła potencjału walki z kryzysem. Oddolnie przeprowadzono działania wcześniej nie do pomyślenia, jak spontaniczne transporty milionów uciekinierów z zaatakowanej Ukrainy. W lokalnej perspektywie dowodzą tego badania Pawła Rudnickiego (2023) nad pomocą humanitarną wobec osób uchodzących przed wojną.

Tekst rozpoczniemy od zdefiniowania ruchów społecznych oraz uczenia się w ich ramach (ang. *social movement learning*). W dalszej części wskażemy koncepcje pedagogiczne, w których podejmowane są zagadnienia istotne dla analizy uczenia się zachodzącego w obrębie ruchów społecznych. Naszym głównym celem jest opracowanie propozycji programu badań splotu ruchów społecznych i edukacji osadzonego w perspektywie pedagogiki. Szkołę ujmujemy jako instytucję o podwójnej naturze: z jednej strony należy ona do najbardziej rozpowszechnionych i standaryzowanych form nowoczesności, z drugiej zaś jest zawsze praktykowana lokalnie, toteż zamiast wybierać między skalą lokalną a globalną, proponujemy badać ich wzajemne sprzężenie: to, jak ponadlokalne repertuary ruchów, obiegi idei i uniwersalistyczne formaty szkolne zostają zakotwiczone w porządkach edukacyjnych. Zależy nam nie tylko na odróżnieniu naszego podejścia od ujęć reprezentowanych przez inne dyscypliny (zwłaszcza socjologię), lecz także na ukazaniu, w jaki sposób pedagogika – jako nauka stosowana – może dostarczać specyficznych sposobów analizowania ruchów społecznych.

Czym są ruchy społeczne?

> *It goes on one at a time / It starts when you care / To act, it starts when you do it again after / They said no / It starts when you say we and know what / You mean, and each / Day you mean one more*. – Marge Piercy, *The Low Road*

Ruch społeczny to pojęcie, które doczekało się wielu definicji i konceptualizacji. Dla potrzeb niniejszego tekstu przyjmujemy ogólną definicję, która podkreśla polityczny charakter zjawiska. W jej myśl ruch społeczny jest formą sporu politycznego, w którym zwykli ludzie podejmują zorganizowany wysiłek publiczny, formułując zbiorowe roszczenia wobec określonych adresatów (Tilly, 2004). Z punktu widzenia pedagogiki istotne jest to, że ludzie bez określonych kwalifikacji inicjują konflikt z uznanymi autorytetami, a asymetria w rozkładzie uznania i widoczności w sferze publicznej wymaga od nich długofalowej mobilizacji w celu emancypacji ze stanu „zwykłych ludzi" do godnych współdecydowania o sprawach istotnych.

Według Davida Snowa, Sarah Soule i Hanspetera Kriesi (2004, s. 11), ruchy społeczne to „kolektywy działające z pewnym stopniem organizacji i ciągłości, funkcjonujące poza instytucjonalnymi kanałami, w celu kwestionowania lub obrony istniejących form władzy – niezależnie od ich zakorzenienia w strukturach instytucjonalnych, kulturowych, grupowych, społecznych czy globalnych". Donatella Della Porta i Mario Diani (2009) wskazują na kluczowe cechy ruchów społecznych: nieformalne sieci interakcji, wspólne przekonania i solidarność, działania ukierunkowane na konflikt społeczny oraz wykorzystywanie protestu jako narzędzia wpływu. Można to ująć następująco: ruch społeczny to trwała forma zbiorowego działania oparta na nieformalnych sieciach relacji między jednostkami i grupami, które podzielają wspólne wartości i angażują się w działania konfliktowe, często wykorzystując protest.

W kontekście aktorów ruchów społecznych Della Porta i Diani (2009) podkreślają, że uczestnicy tych ruchów funkcjonują w relacjach konfliktowych z określonym przeciwnikiem, dążąc do zmiany społecznej lub przeciwstawienia się jej. Konflikt definiowany jest jako relacja opozycyjna między aktorami, którzy rywalizują o kontrolę nad zasobami i formułują negatywne żądania wobec przeciwnika. Ponadto uczestnicy ruchów tworzą gęste, nieformalne sieci wymiany zasobów, zachowując jednocześnie autonomię, a także podzielają tożsamość zbiorową, która wykracza poza pojedyncze zdarzenia, obejmując poczucie wspólnoty i wspólny cel. Skala i trwałość tych mobilizacji odzwierciedlają siłę autorytetów i skostniałość instytucji,

które mogą ignorować to, że *jacyś* „zwykli ludzie" rzucili im wyzwanie, uważając za stronę w sporze. Ta bezwładność organizacyjna i piętrzenie formalnych trudności przed ruchami społecznymi są powszechne i retrospektywnie nazywamy je *willful blindness*, by oddać niedowierzanie, z jakim każdorazowo odkrywamy, ile zbiorowej determinacji wymaga wdrożenie zmiany społecznej.

Ważnym aspektem konfliktu społecznego jest również zmiana podmiotów. Według Della Porty i Dianiego (2009, s. 60) głównymi aktorami konfliktu nie są już klasy związane z przemysłowym procesem produkcji, lecz grupy reprezentujące odmienne stanowiska odnośnie do wykorzystania i podziału zasobów, w tym także symbolicznych. Trudność polega na tym, że zmiany proponowane przez ruchy społeczne zwykle dotyczą uznania czegoś za zasób podlegający podziałowi w procesie politycznym, nie zaś tylko tego, jak podzielone zostanie to, co już się za takowy uznaje.

Z kolei koncepcja Alaina Touraine'a wnosi do rozumienia ruchów społecznych perspektywę ich funkcji jako mechanizmu ochrony autonomii społeczeństwa obywatelskiego przed technokratycznymi próbami przejęcia kontroli nad różnymi sferami życia społecznego. Ruch społeczny postrzegany jest tu jako specyficzny rodzaj konfliktu społecznego, w którym wyraźnie wyodrębnieni są oponenci oraz przedmiot sporu (Touraine i in., 2010). Jego metoda interwencji socjologicznej ma potencjał przeciwdziałania eskalacji trwałego konfliktu politycznego w społeczeństwie na poziomie międzyludzkich interakcji na płaszczyźnie lokalnej, a więc tam, gdzie zagrożenie przemocą fizyczną wobec pojedynczych osób jest największe (por. Jurczyszyn, 2011)

Ze względu na to, że jako mieszkańcy i obywatele przyzwyczajamy się do niektórych konfliktów – dowiadujemy się czegoś od aktywistów jednej ze stron, a potem wręcz agitujemy za rozwiązaniami proponowanymi przez drugą – to brak formalnego członkostwa w organizacji utrudnia rozeznanie w temacie ruchów społecznych, a tym bardziej identyfikację z nimi. Proponujemy nowatorską metaforę mapy ruchów społecznych, która zawiera przykłady tychże. Składa się ona ze „Szlaków Społecznego Zaangażowania", spośród których każdy stanowi spektrum – podążając nim, wędrowiec przechodzi płynnie od jednej formy zaangażowania do drugiej, dostrzegając przy tym ich wspólny mianownik. Szlaki te, tak jak w realnym świecie, mogą się przecinać. Odwołujemy się tu do logiki barw utrwalonej w polskim systemie znakowania pieszych szlaków turystycznych, w której to kolory nie oznaczają stopnia trudności, lecz funkcję i charakter trasy. Czerwony wyznacza zwykle szlak główny, niebieski – dalekobieżny, zielony – stosunkowo krótką drogę do ważnych

miejsc, a żółty i czarny – krótkie szlaki łącznikowe lub dojściowe. Dzięki temu nasza mapa może być czytana nie hierarchicznie, lecz relacyjnie – jako porządkująca nie tyle poziom trudności zaangażowania, ile różne kierunki, długości i tryby dochodzenia do spraw publicznych.

Szlak Czerwony – główny szlak strukturalny

W turystyce szlak czerwony to szlak główny, wiodący przez najbardziej spektakularne i kluczowe miejsca regionu. Na naszej mapie będzie to szlak zmiany politycznej i ekonomicznej, szlak walki o redystrybucję dóbr, władzę i prawa (np. prawo do miasta). Punktami na trasie są:

1. ruchy pracownicze i związkowe, np. globalne zrzeszenia pracowników Amazona (por. Rakowska, 2025);
2. ruchy miejskie, np. neoanarchistyczny, lokatorski czy mieszczański (por. Pluciński, 2014);
3. ruch na rzecz globalnej sprawiedliwości, tzw. alterglobalistyczny, np. Occupy Wall Street, Indignados w Hiszpanii (por. Szwabowski, 2015);
4. masowe ruchy na rzecz praw człowieka/kobiet, np. Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet (Korolczuk i in., 2019);
5. ruchy rewolucyjne/insurekcyjne, dążenie do całkowitej zmiany ustroju, np. Demokratyczna Federacja Rożawy w Północnej Syrii, Zapatyści w Meksyku (Prądzyńska, 2014; Knapp i in., 2019).

Wkraczając na ów szlak, rozpoczynamy od fundamentów bytu – pracy i płacy. Konflikt może się przenieść na sferę reprodukcji życia, czyli do naszych domów. Z mieszkań wychodzimy na ulice, żądając wpływu na kształt naszego otoczenia, by w końcu dostrzec, że lokalne problemy mogą być wynikiem globalnych przepływów kapitału. Tu wkraczamy na odcinek krytyki systemowej. Szlak ten kończy się tam, gdzie system przestaje być reformowalny, a zaczyna być kontestowany w całości – w punktach zapalnych rewolucji i masowego buntu. To trasa dla tych, którzy chcą przebudować architekturę społeczeństwa.

Szlak Niebieski – tożsamości i stylu życia

Szlaki niebieskie są długie i wymagają wytrwałości, bo chodzi o przemianę osobistą. Symbolizują „długi marsz" przez szeroko rozumiane instytucje życia społecznego i kulturowego oraz codzienne nawyki. To szlak biopolityki i kultury. W tym wypadku zmiana nie zachodzi na barykadzie, ale „od kuchni" – w ciele, w języku i w sferze duchowej. Punktami na trasie mogą być:

1. ruchy żywieniowe, np. weganie, wegetarianie, freeganie (por. Lange, 2017);
2. ruchy „ucieleśnionego oporu", np. *fat acceptance movement*, *body neutrality movement*, sztuki walki i samoobrony (por. Teutsch, 2016);
3. ruchy rozwoju świadomości i duchowości, np. joga, neotantra, kręgi kobiece/męskie, czy też tradycyjne ruchy odnowy religijnej jak neokatechumenat (por. Reed, 2019);
4. ruchy „rewitalizacji" etnicznej i językowej, np. ruch kaszubski, śląski, *movimiento chicano* w USA (por. Dołowy-Rybińska, 2016);
5. ruchy artystyczne i performatywne, np. dadaizm, streetart (por. Jarosz, 2021; Szreder, 2021);
6. ruchy tożsamości neotradycyjnej, np. ruch *pro-life*, nacjonalizm tożsamościowy jako styl życia, ruchy obrony „naturalnego porządku" (por. Żuk & Żuk, 2022).

Wędrówkę zaczynamy od refleksji nad naszym ciałem: w jaki sposób je postrzegamy i akceptujemy, a następnie dyscyplinujemy i doskonalimy. Od ciała fizycznego przechodzimy płynnie do poszukiwania poczucia sensu i zakorzenienia. To trasa, na której szukamy języka, by wyrazić swoją odrębność, a na końcu szlaku przekształcić ją w komunikat estetyczny lub wspólnotę wartości. Jest to szlak przemiany „Ja" (jednostkowego i zbiorowego) w kontekście kultury.

Szlak Zielony – przyrodniczy i planetarny

Prowadzi do miejsc znaczących przyrodniczo. Na naszej mapie to szlak relacji człowiek–natura. Nie chodzi tu tylko o „ochronę przyrody", ale o redefinicję miejsca gatunku ludzkiego w całym ekosystemie. Punktami na tej trasie będą:

1. ruchy obrony ekosystemów, np. Amazonii, Puszczy Białowieskiej (por. Borodaj, 2024);
2. ruchy zwalczające zanieczyszczanie środowiska, np. Krakowski Alarm Smogowy (por. Mateja, 2023);
3. ruchy prozwierzęce, np. antyłowieckie, przeciwko fermom futrzarskim (por. Morska, 2021);
4. organizacje ruchów ekologicznych, np. Greenpeace, Pracownia na Rzecz Wszystkich Istot (por. Molek-Kozakowska, 2021);
5. ruchy klimatyczne, np. Extinction Rebellion, Młodzieżowy Strajk Klimatyczny (por. Kocyba i in., 2020).

Trasę zaczynamy lokalnie – od obrony drzewa za oknem lub rzeki w naszej gminie. Szybko orientujemy się, że powietrze nie ma granic, co prowadzi nas do

walki o to, czym oddychamy. Idąc dalej, dostrzegamy innych mieszkańców domu – zwierzęta. Na trasie możemy dojść do wniosku, że te jednostkowe walki wymagają dostrzeżenia pełnej panoramy katastrofy i konieczności szerszej zmiany politycznej. Szlak zielony to droga od „mojego podwórka" do „naszej planety".

Szlak Żółty – łącznikowy, solidarności i troski

Szlaki żółte często łączą inne trasy lub prowadzą do punktów widokowych. Nasz to szlak radykalnej empatii**.** Łączy on tych, którzy są „wewnątrz" systemu, z tymi, którzy wypadli poza nawias lub potrzebują wsparcia. To ruchy, które zszywają pękniętą tkankę społeczną. Przykładowymi punktami na tej trasie będą:

1. ruchy rodziców i opiekunów osób z niepełnosprawnościami, np. protesty rodziców osób z niepełnosprawnościami w 2014 i 2018 w Polsce (por. Kubisa & Rakowska, 2018);
2. ruchy samopomocowe i pacjenckie, np. wspólnoty chorych, grupy wsparcia, ruchy abstynenckie (por. Chaudhary i in., 2013);
3. ruchy ratowniczo-humanitarne, np. Grupa Granica, ratownictwo na Morzu Śródziemnym (por. Kowzan & Szczygieł, 2023);
4. ruchy solidarnościowe, np. ruchy solidarności z uchodźcami i migrantami, z Palestyną, Marsz do Aleppo, demonstracje solidarnościowe z aktywistami (por. Rudnicki, 2023)**.**

Ten szlak jest krótki, ale stromy emocjonalnie. Zaczyna się w domach, gdzie niewidoczna praca opiekuńcza domaga się uznania. Prowadzi przez sale szpitalne i grupy wsparcia, gdzie ludzie uczą się dzielić cierpieniem. Następnie wyprowadza nas na peryferie – na granice i do stref konfliktu, gdzie solidarność staje się kwestią życia i śmierci. To szlak, który uczy, że społeczeństwo jest tak silne, jak jego najsłabsze ogniwo, niezależnie od tego, czy znajduje się ono za ścianą sąsiada, czy za murem getta.

Szlak Czarny – infrastruktury wiedzy i innowacji

Ten szlak to krótka trasa dojściowa, często prowadząca do schroniska lub węzła szlaków. Wbrew stereotypom nie jest wcale najtrudniejszy – prowadzi nas do „schroniska wiedzy" i wyznacza nowe kierunki (przyszłość). Punktami na trasie są:

1. ruchy demokratyzujące edukację, np. edukacja domowa/*homeschooling*, *unschooling*, szkoły demokratyczne (por. Gawlicz, 2023);
2. ruchy akademickie i studenckie, np. walka z komercjalizacją wiedzy, obrona autonomii uniwersytetu, Komitet Kryzysowy Humanistyki Polskiej (por. Kalbarczyk i in., 2024);

3. ruchy wolnej kultury i cyfrowych dóbr wspólnych, np. ruch wolnego oprogramowania, Wikipedia, Sci-Hub, aktywizm na rzecz neutralności sieci (por. Siuda, 2008);
4. ruchy historii żywej, np. archeologia eksperymentalna, bractwa rycerskie i grupy rekonstrukcyjne, oddolne ruchy upamiętniania historii lokalnej (por. Olechnicki & Szlendak, 2020).

To szlak, którym wchodzimy w dorosłość, cyfrowość i świadomość historyczną. Zaczyna się w szkole, gdzie pytamy o sens przymusu edukacyjnego i alternatywy wobec tradycyjnej edukacji, a prowadzi na uniwersytet, który staje się poligonem walki o wolność badań. Współczesna wiedza wykracza jednak poza mury akademii i szlak wiedzie nas w stronę wirtualnych bibliotek, by uwolnić wyniki badań, a czasem skręca w stronę „żywej historii", gdzie przeszłość poznajemy przez dotyk i doświadczenie, nie zaś z podręcznika. Kończy się w serwerowniach, gdzie toczy się walka o to, kto kontroluje oprogramowanie, platformy i infrastrukturę cyfrową współkształtujące życie społeczne. To szlak hakerów, uczniów, studentów, badaczy i pasjonatów, którzy współdecydują o obiegu wiedzy i formach pamięci zbiorowej.

Mapa ruchów społecznych i szlaki w jej obrębie mogą zainteresować pedagogów, oprócz realizacji celów społecznych i politycznych, stanowią bowiem okazję do uczenia się, to ostatnie zaś w ramach ruchów społecznych odnosi się do: a) uczenia się przez osoby będące częścią dowolnego ruchu społecznego; b) uczenia się przez osoby spoza ruchu społecznego w wyniku podjętych działań lub po prostu istnienia ruchów społecznych (Hall & Clover, 2005, s. 584–589). Uczestnictwo w nich staje się sytuacją nabywania kompetencji ważnych nie tylko ze społecznego i politycznego punktu widzenia, lecz także z uwagi na możliwość ich przenoszenia na inne dziedziny życia.

Jaka pedagogika widzi ruchy społeczne?

Zanim przejdziemy do szczegółowej analizy splotu edukacji i ruchów społecznych, musimy określić, na ile współczesna myśl pedagogiczna jest w ogóle przygotowana na ich dostrzeżenie. Wbrew pozorom praktyka ta nie zaczęła się od transformacji ustrojowej, lecz czerpie z wieloletniej pracy pedagogicznej u podstaw samych ruchów (por. Kuroń, 1989). Jeśli zaś chodzi o podstawy teoretyczne, to również nie startujemy od zera – pedagogika dysponuje bogatym instrumentarium pojęciowym, które pozwala uchwycić dynamikę oporu, emancypacji czy troski o świat. Poniższy, selektywny przegląd nurtów – od pedagogiki krytycznej, przez pedagogikę miejsca,

aż po ujęcia po-krytyczne – ma na celu zmapowanie tych intuicji badawczych, które stanowią fundament dla proponowanego przez nas programu.

Pierwszą znaczącą inspiracją do myślenia o uczeniu się w ruchach społecznych jest pedagogika krytyczna. Jako jedna z jej przedstawicielek Maria Czerepaniak-Walczak rozumie ów nurt pedagogiki jako dyscyplinę naukową oraz koncepcję i praktykę działań edukacyjnych „(...) zorientowanych na odkrywanie, weryfikowanie i wdrażanie warunków racjonalnego, odważnego i odpowiedzialnego uwalniania się od doświadczanych osobowych i zbiorowych opresji i niesprawiedliwości w określonym kontekście historycznym i politycznym" (2021, s. 31). Pedagogika krytyczna inspiruje się teorią krytyczną, której celem jest odkrywanie mechanizmów ucisku jednostek, grup społecznych i społeczeństwa w ogóle. Zrozumienie ucisku jest wstępem do wyzwolenia (emancypacji).

Pedagogika krytyczna inspiruje do demaskowania sił społecznych i mechanizmów systemowych, które prowadzą do ucisku, widząc w tym pierwszy krok do oswobodzenia. Jej ambicją jest bycie instrumentem transformacji społecznej, która nie ogranicza się wyłącznie do interpretacji świata, dążąc do jego zmiany. W tym ujęciu kluczowa staje się waga osobistej odpowiedzialności każdej jednostki za podjęcie wysiłku emancypacyjnego (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2006). Tym samym pedagogika koncentruje się na tworzeniu warunków osobowej i społecznej emancypacji, stawiając w centrum uczenia się doświadczenia uczestników. Jest to szczególnie istotne w kontekście osób związanych z instytucjami, czego wyrazem są chociażby krytyczne studia nad uniwersytetem badające mechanizmy władzy wewnątrz akademii (por. Szadkowski, 2015).

W polskiej pedagogice krytycznej można wyróżnić co najmniej kilka obszarów inspirujących dla badaczy ruchów społecznych. Krytyczna pedagogika rodzaju koncentruje się na analizie i dekonstrukcji norm płciowych oraz praktykowaniu równości w edukacji. Badania w tym zakresie koncentrują się na analizie mechanizmów opresji ze względu na płeć społeczno-kulturową (ang. *gender*; por. Chmura-Rutkowska & Ostrouch, 2007; Kopciewicz & Zierkiewicz, 2009; Ostrouch-Kamińska, 2019), łącząc założenia pedagogiki krytycznej i koncepcji feministycznych. Na przykład Lucyna Kopciewicz (2011) analizowała w tym kluczu przemoc symboliczną wobec dziewcząt w polskich szkołach – krytyczne spojrzenie na mechanizmy dyscyplinujące obecne w systemie edukacji można traktować jako część mechanizmów właściwych tzw. kulturze patriarchalnej. Diagnoza problemów społecznych pod kątem płci i walka o równość pod tym względem wpisuje się w działalność ruchów

kobiecych i feministycznych. Krytyczna pedagogika pracy bada związki między edukacją a światem pracy, demaskując nierówności społeczne i ekonomiczne, a także wskazując na obszary emancypacji pracowników (Stańczyk, 2013). Ten wątek koresponduje z problematyką pracowniczych ruchów społecznych. Przykładowo Tomasz Szkudlarek (2008) analizuje Ernesta Laclaua koncepcję pustych znaczących, które w kontekście ruchów społecznych są ważne, gdyż odnoszą się do „wypełniania" i konstruowania żądań różnych grup społecznych. Stanowią one podstawę tożsamości zbiorowych, dotyczą bowiem wartości i przyjmowanych wizji realiów społeczno-politycznych. Można je także rozumieć jako nieuchronne tematy uczenia się, w tym sensie, że w obrębie ruchów społecznych polega ono właśnie na wypełnianiu owych pustych znaczących, co prowadzi do nieporozumień i rozbicia mobilizacji (por. Zielińska i in., 2011). W obszarze pedagogiki krytycznej odnajdujemy także krytykę neoliberalizmu, badaną szczegółowo między innymi przez Małgorzatę Lewartowską-Zychowicz (2010), Eugenię Potulicką i Joannę Rutkowiak (2012), a także Maksa Chutorańskiego i Oskara Szwabowskiego (2016). Celem tych ostatnich jest między innymi chęć „rozwijania utopijnego, rewolucyjnego języka pedagogiki, który wyzwoli pokłady energii oraz wyobraźni zdolne stawić skuteczny odpór procesom korporacyjnego rozkładu demokracji i edukacji" (Chutorański & Szwabowski, 2016, s. 53).

Inną ważną koncepcją stanowiącą inspirację do myślenia o ruchach społecznych jest pedagogika miejsca (Mendel, 2017; Zielińska, 2016). Wskazuje ona na rolę miejsca nie tylko jako fizycznej lokalizacji, lecz przestrzeni nasyconej znaczeniami, emocjami, historiami i relacjami społecznymi o znaczeniu edukacyjnym. W nawiązaniu do pedagogiki społecznej miejsce jest tworzone przez ludzi i dla ludzi, a w związku z tym kształtuje tożsamości zarówno jednostkowe, jak i zbiorowe. W kontekście ruchów społecznych miejsce może być punktem wyjścia do tworzenia projektów zmiany społecznej – diagnozowania i naprawy tego, co nie działa zgodnie z oczekiwaniami – stanowiąc tym samym potencjalną przestrzeń walki i renegocjacji sensów. W odniesieniu do konkretnego miejsca możliwe jest bowiem budowanie poczucia przynależności, sprawstwa i odpowiedzialności. Edukacja wrażliwa na miejsce powinna odsłaniać mechanizmy władzy obecne w przestrzeni i zachęcać ludzi do wzięcia spraw we własne ręce – nie porzucać swoich miejsc bez walki, ale też robić miejsce dla Innych. Ów aspekt akcentuje się zwłaszcza w rozwijanej ostatnio koncepcji krytycznej pedagogiki miejsca, która to kładzie nacisk na procesy dekolonizacji i reinhabitacji w związku z radykalizmem ruchów społecznych (Kowzan i in., 2025). W obrębie tej pedagogiki prezentuje się między innymi walki o dobro wspólne.

Pedagogika po-krytyczna z kolei opiera się na założeniu, że „krytyka nieuzupełniona o jakiś pozytywny projekt jest toksyczna" (Zamojski, 2014, s. 11). Wynika z koncepcji po-krytyczności, która nie odrzuca całkowicie perspektywy krytycznej, lecz wskazuje na jej ograniczenia i potrzebę przekroczenia jej negatywizmu. Podejście to czerpie z tzw. filozofii odpowiedzialności, w której świat postrzegany jest jako słaby, kruchy i wymagający troski. Podmiot ludzki jawi się w niej jako odpowiedzialny za świat i sprawy uznawane za ważne – nie tyle poprzez interwencję w szkodliwe *status quo*, ile poprzez afirmatywne zaangażowanie w tworzenie alternatyw. Po-krytyczność stanowi zatem zachętę do tego, by przejść od demistyfikowania opresyjnej rzeczywistości ku opartym na trosce, afirmacji i miłości praktykom zaangażowania. Istotnym elementem tego podejścia jest działanie na podstawie przyjętego aksjomatu – założenia, które z krytycznej perspektywy może być nieprawdziwe (np. że wszyscy ludzie są równi), ale którego uznanie umożliwia budowanie nowych początków. Edukacja w tym ujęciu jest przestrzenią otwartą na takie początki, aktem nieustannego ich podejmowania, ucieleśnieniem „nieustępliwego wysiłku działania według założenia fundamentalnej równości" (Zamojski, 2014, s. 18).

W kontekście uczenia się w ruchach społecznych podejście po-krytyczne jest z jednej strony radykalnie antypolityczne (w sensie odrzucenia logiki walki o władzę), z drugiej – głęboko zaangażowane w sprawy wspólne. Skupia się na trosce o świat rozumiany jako krucha forma współobecności, która wymaga odpowiedzialności, uwagi i zaangażowania. W kontekście naszych rozważań podejście to rodzi jednak interesujące napięcie, o ile bowiem pedagogika po-krytyczna stara się chronić autonomię szkoły jako czasu wolnego (scholé) od bezpośredniej presji politycznej, o tyle perspektywa badaczy ruchów społecznych brutalnie odsłania fakt, że ta autonomia rzadko jest dana raz na zawsze – najczęściej bywa wywalczona albo jest bezustannie negocjowana.

Do zrozumienia dialektyki, w której edukacja jest zarazem przestrzenią wzrastania i polem bitwy o kształt społeczeństwa, potrzebujemy ramy analitycznej wychodzącej poza samą filozofię wychowania. Narzędzi do uporządkowania tych wielokierunkowych relacji dostarcza propozycja Tricii Niesz (2022), która proponuje spojrzeć na edukację funkcjonalnie – jako na taktykę, cel, kontekst i rezultat działań zbiorowych.

Kierunki w badaniach edukacyjnych a ruchy społeczne

Edukacja jako taktyka ruchów społecznych

Edukacja rozumiana jako taktyka ruchu społecznego pełni wielowymiarową rolę w procesie osiągania celów i budowania kolektywnej sprawczości. Ruchy społeczne wykorzystują działania edukacyjne jako strategię służącą zarówno wewnętrznemu rozwojowi, jak i zewnętrznemu oddziaływaniu. Po pierwsze aktorzy ruchów społecznych uczą się, by lepiej rozumieć problemy społeczne oraz możliwe sposoby ich przezwyciężania. Edukacja pełni tu funkcję narzędzia autorefleksji, analizy oraz wzmacniania kompetencji potrzebnych do działania. Po drugie edukacja służy jako sposób promocji i upowszechniania celów ruchu, wliczając w to zdobywanie wiedzy i umiejętności związanych z organizowaniem się, komunikacją, działaniami rzeczniczymi oraz strategiami medialnymi. Dzięki temu ruchy mogą skuteczniej funkcjonować w przestrzeni publicznej i zyskiwać poparcie. Po trzecie praktyki edukacyjne ruchów społecznych mogą przyjmować formę edukacji obywatelskiej lub popularnej (*popular education*), zwłaszcza kierowanej do grup marginalizowanych. Edukacja staje się wówczas narzędziem budowania władzy i wprowadzania zmiany poprzez produkcję i upowszechnianie określonego typu wiedzy.

Perspektywa ta obecna jest również w analizach polskich badaczy edukacji. Na przykład Szwabowski (2015) odnosi się do ruchu Occupy jako przestrzeni produkcji wiedzy, w której bezpośrednia akcja stanowiła formę edukacji, a kluczową metodą było przechwytywanie czasu i przestrzeni. Tego rodzaju edukacja taktyczna nie była li tylko zbiorem wyodrębnionych działań, wpisywała się raczej w samą logikę praktyk ruchu. Occupy tworzył tymczasowe przestrzenie autonomiczne, które same w sobie stawały się środowiskami uczenia się. Edukacja nie funkcjonowała w tym wypadku jako dodatek do aktywizmu, lecz realizowała się „tu i teraz" – w materialnej i temporalnej organizacji ruchu. Akcja bezpośrednia miała więc nie tylko wymiar polityczny, ale również pedagogiczny, terapeutyczny i emancypacyjny, umożliwiając uczestnikom wspólne diagnozowanie własnej sytuacji oraz ćwiczenie sprawczości. Ruchy społeczne, jak zauważa Szwabowski, nie tylko uczą się efektywnego działania, ale także tworzą alternatywne sposoby wytwarzania świata społecznego.

Podobny wymiar edukacyjny analizuje Marta Kosińska (2020) w odniesieniu do Czarnych Protestów. W jej ujęciu pełniły one funkcję edukacyjną zarówno wobec społeczeństwa, jak i wewnątrz samego ruchu feministycznego w Polsce. Istotnym elementem tego procesu było wprowadzenie do dyskursu publicznego tematów

takich jak obywatelstwo kobiet, ich nieodpłatna praca czy prawa reprodukcyjne. Edukacja wewnątrz ruchu realizowała się między innymi poprzez aktywność w mediach społecznościowych (grupy). Codzienne praktyki wymiany informacji, organizowanie się, mobilizacja uczestniczek oraz informowanie o bieżących wydarzeniach można traktować jako przejawy nieformalnej edukacji dorosłych. Kosińska podkreśla również relacyjny charakter tego procesu, zwracając uwagę na znaczenie wspólnego zaangażowania, wzajemnej troski, empatii i wsparcia, a także na rolę rozmowy i wspólnie spędzanego – niekiedy wręcz „trwonionego" – czasu jako kluczowych elementów praktyk edukacyjnych ruchu (Kosińska, 2020, s. 22).

Edukacja jako cel ruchów społecznych

Ruchy społeczne od dawna traktują edukację – zwłaszcza formalną – jako jeden ze swoich głównych celów działania. Edukacja staje się areną walki o społeczne uznanie, sprawiedliwość i równość. Ruchy społeczne wpływają na treści programów nauczania, podejmując działania mające na celu wprowadzenie alternatywnych perspektyw, takich jak edukacja międzykulturowa, studia nad kobietami (*women's studies*) czy edukacja globalna. Często postulują zmianę nie tylko tego, *czego* się naucza, ale również tego, *jak* się to robi – domagając się bardziej partycypacyjnych, krytycznych i sprawiedliwych metod dydaktycznych. Jak zauważa Niesz (2022), ruchy społeczne wywarły wpływ nie tylko na szkolnictwo podstawowe i średnie, ale także na wyższe, przyczyniając się do powstania nowych dyscyplin akademickich i kursów odpowiadających na potrzeby grup dotąd marginalizowanych. W odpowiedzi na te działania część środowisk akademickich zaczęła aktywnie angażować się w ruchy społeczne lub korzystać z ich taktyk w celu transformacji instytucji edukacyjnych. Coraz częściej pojawiają się apele o tworzenie koalicji i ruchów na rzecz szkoły i uniwersytetu jako miejsc realizacji idei równości.

Kowzan i Prusinowska (2011) analizują współczesne ruchy uniwersyteckie jako aktorów, którzy czynią z edukacji wyższej główny przedmiot sporu politycznego. Punktem wyjścia jest rozpoznanie kryzysu uniwersytetu, dotąd opisywanego „z lotu ptaka" - w kategoriach globalizacji, neoliberalnych reform i Procesu Bolońskiego. Kowzan i Prusinowska proponują inne słownictwo, pokazujące sprawczość uczestników, oparte na kategoriach „polityki głosu" i „polityki wyjścia", aby uchwycić różne sposoby reagowania studentów i doktorantów na urynkowienie edukacji – od prób reformowania instytucji „od środka" po odchodzenie do alternatywnych form uczenia (się) poza nią. Na podstawie badań partycypacyjnych i *militant research*

związanych z samorządem doktoranckim oraz udziałem w międzynarodowych sieciach ruchów uniwersyteckich pokazują oni, że zajęcia budynków (*occupations*), tworzenie wolnych uniwersytetów czy akcje typu *teach-in* w bankach są próbą ucieleśnienia innego modelu edukacji – opartego na wspólnocie, równości i współodpowiedzialności za instytucję. Postulat „edukacji autonomicznej" oznacza tu nie tyle indywidualną samodzielność, ile kolektywne poszukiwanie takich form studiowania, organizacji i finansowania uniwersytetu, które pozwolą traktować go jako dobro wspólne, a nie zwykłą usługę rynkową.

Przykładem uczynienia systemu oświaty bezpośrednim celem działań aktywistycznych na poziomie programów nauczania szkolnego jest Młodzieżowy Strajk Klimatyczny (MSK), który sformułował postulat powszechnej i rzetelnej edukacji klimatycznej. Analizując te wyzwania na gruncie edukacji polonistycznej, Magdalena Ochwat (2020) dostrzega w działaniach młodzieży wezwanie do etycznej i merytorycznej „odpowiedzialności" nauczycieli. W postulatach MSK pojawia się żądanie wprowadzenia „kompleksowej i aktualnej wiedzy o mechanizmach kryzysu klimatycznego" do podstawy programowej wszystkich przedmiotów oraz obowiązkowych szkoleń dla nauczycieli. Ma ono wymiar paradoksalny i doniosły. Uczniowie, świadomi własnych deficytów poznawczych wobec skali kryzysu planetarnego, domagają się od instytucji szkoły nie tylko uwagi, ale przede wszystkim systematycznych narzędzi służących zrozumieniu rzeczywistości. Ochwat pokazuje jak w odpowiedzi na tę presję i inspirację nauczanie literatury i języka jest w stanie zrewidować kanon i metody, stając się przestrzenią, w której program nauczania ewoluuje pod wpływem troski uczniów o wspólną przyszłość.

Edukacja jako kontekst ruchów społecznych

Instytucje edukacyjne są domem dla aktorów ruchów społecznych, których uczniowie i studenci mogą stawać się uczestnikami w toku kształcenia. Uczenie się o społecznych i politycznych uwarunkowaniach świata staje się punktem wyjścia zaangażowania i weryfikacji zdobytej wiedzy. Instytucje są również miejscem tworzenia tożsamości w odniesieniu do rozmaitych ruchów. Niesz (2022, s. 75) analizuje jako przykład ruchy uczniowskie i studenckie, podkreślając przy tym, że „zarówno instytucje edukacji formalnej, jak i przestrzenie aktywności ruchów społecznych dostarczają przestrzeni, czasu, sieci społecznych oraz zasobów potrzebnych do pracy nad tożsamością".

Dopełnieniem polskiego kontekstu tych rozważań są analizy poświęcone fali okupacji domów studenckich w latach 2023–2024 (Kalbarczyk i in., 2024;

Antonowicz i in., 2024). Protesty te przeniosły dynamikę sprzeciwu z sal wykładowych do akademików, czyniąc „edukację jako kontekst" dosłowną walką o prawo do zamieszkiwania w obrębie instytucji. W świetle tych wydarzeń uniwersytet jawi się jako soczewka skupiająca szersze napięcia społeczno-ekonomiczne, w której osoby studiujące w Polsce, balansujące na granicy statusu uczących się i pracowników, testują narzędzia oporu i syndykalistycznej samoorganizacji. Konflikt o domy studenckie „Jowita" i „Kamionka" stał się przestrzenią intensywnego „uczenia się w ruchu", gdzie zaufanie i wspólnota budowane są nie poprzez względnie bezpieczną deliberację, lecz w ogniu konfrontacji z biurokracją i serwilizmem części kadry uniwersyteckiej. Okupowany akademik staje się laboratorium, w którym odzyskiwanie uniwersytetu jako dobra wspólnego splata się z praktycznym przygotowaniem do przyszłych ról i starć w świecie pracy.

Edukacja jako efekt działania ruchów społecznych

Ruchy społeczne nauczają. Uczą się zarówno uczestnicy ruchów, jak i osoby spoza nich (sympatycy i oponenci) – ci pierwsi poprzez bycie w dialogu, działania, zaangażowanie; drudzy dzięki komunikatom wysyłanym przez ruch. Uczenie się w ruchach społecznych (*social movement learning*) jest często incydentalne, usytuowane, głęboko społeczne i polityczne. Naszym zdaniem zbieranie tego, czego ludzie uczą się poprzez aktywizm, to najpowszechniejszy kierunek badań edukacyjnych realizowany w ramach podsumowań doświadczeń oddolnych organizacji (por. Praczyk, 2017).

Wspomniany już ruch Occupy był przestrzenią wychowującą i edukującą. Można powiedzieć, że edukacja zachodziła w nim incydentalnie, poprzez praktyki kolektywne, nie zaś zaplanowane działania. Skumulowany efekt tych wysiłków staje się widoczny dopiero z perspektywy czasu. Occupy realizował demokratyczną edukację poprzez horyzontalne struktury, współdzielone decyzje i brak reprezentacji. Szwabowski wskazuje, że dla uczestników ruchu Occupy efektem edukacyjnym było nie tylko rozwinięcie kompetencji, lecz rozpoznanie własnej sytuacji, mierzenie się z doświadczeniem wykluczenia i bardziej autonomiczne działanie (Szwabowski, 2015).

Z kolei Agnieszka Woynarowska (2019) zwraca uwagę na edukacyjny efekt protestu w postaci przemiany dyskursu publicznego, analizując okupacje korytarzy Sejmu RP prowadzone przez osoby z niepełnosprawnościami oraz ich opiekunów w latach 2014 i 2018. Autorka wskazuje, że dyskurs aktywistów koncentrował się wokół doświadczeń wykluczenia i systemowego zaniedbania, a działania liderów zmierzały przede wszystkim do bycia usłyszanymi oraz unaocznienia swojej obecności w prze-

strzeni publicznej. Tematyka niepełnosprawności, wcześniej traktowana marginalnie w przekazach medialnych, została wówczas włączona do głównego nurtu debaty publicznej. Jak podkreśla Woynarowska, okupacja Sejmu przyniosła społeczeństwu polskiemu „wiedzę na temat realnego życia osób z niepełnosprawnością" (2019, s. 140). Działania aktywistów obnażyły paternalistyczny charakter systemu wsparcia, prowokując zmiany nie tylko na poziomie regulacji prawnych, lecz także języka, za pomocą którego pedagogika opisuje normę i pomoc.

Dorobek badań edukacyjnych ukierunkowanych na ruchy społeczne, choć znaczący, pozostaje często rozproszony. Brakuje mu spajającej ramy, która pozwoliłaby traktować te zjawiska jako centralny mechanizm napędzający zmianę edukacyjną. Analiza pionierskich szkół niepublicznych ujawnia, że ich masowy charakter wyrastał wprost z etosu „Solidarności" rozumianej jako wielki ruch społeczny oraz codzienna postawa obywatelska. To właśnie samorządny skrypt działania oraz zasada brania spraw w swoje ręce ukształtowały ten proces u progu transformacji (Rozmarynowski, 2026). Podobny mechanizm można dostrzec w obszarze edukacji klimatycznej i globalnej. Deklaracja Dublińska nie zaczyna się od ministerialnego projektu zmiany, lecz od uznania roli organizacji młodzieżowych, społeczeństwa obywatelskiego i ruchów społecznych oraz od zobowiązania do wspierania edukatorów i reform programowych (GENE, 2022). To ważny ślad genealogiczny: najpierw pojawia się mobilizacja społeczna i wywierana przez nią presja, a dopiero później polityka edukacyjna nadaje tym dążeniom uporządkowaną i prawomocną formę (por. Nowosad & Śliwerski, 2025).

Analiza funkcjonalna zaproponowana przez Niesz pozwala zrozumieć rolę edukacji w ruchach społecznych, jednak do pełnego uchwycenia jakości i charakteru tych procesów potrzebujemy narzędzia nawigacyjnego, które pozwoliłoby orientować się na mapie nakreślonych wcześniej Szlaków. Ruchy społeczne nie są wszak statycznymi punktami – to dynamiczne wektory rozpięte między sprzecznymi wartościami. Proponujemy zatem matrycę analityczną w formie „róży wiatrów", która posłuży do namierzania napięć, w polu których poruszają się ruchy społeczne. Każdy ruch na naszej mapie – czy to ze Szlaku Czerwonego, czy Żółtego – musi nieustannie negocjować swoją pozycję na czterech osiach biegunowych, które obrazują napięcia (nie same cele polityczne) decydujące o specyfice klimatu edukacyjnego wewnątrz danej mobilizacji.

Pedagogiczna róża wiatrów – osie napięć w ruchach społecznych

Inspiracją dla naszej pedagogicznej róży wiatrów była Joanny Rutkowiak koncepcja „kategorii pulsujących" (1995). Podobnie jak autorka kreśliła mapę konturową odmian myślenia o edukacji, tak my rozpinamy przestrzeń analizy ruchów społecznych na osiach napięć, które nie znoszą się nawzajem, lecz współistnieją w nieustannym ruchu. Proponowana róża jest pedagogiczna, ponieważ porządkuje ruchy społeczne według kategorii opisujących procesy uczenia się, wychowania, wiedzy i podmiotowości. Jej osie wyrastają z pytań centralnych dla pedagogiki – o źródła wiedzy, kierunki oddziaływania, relacje między transmisją i innowacją oraz o to, kto mówi i działa. W ramach róży wyodrębniamy cztery osie: epistemiczną, adresatów oddziaływań ruchu, innowacyjności oraz podmiotowości.

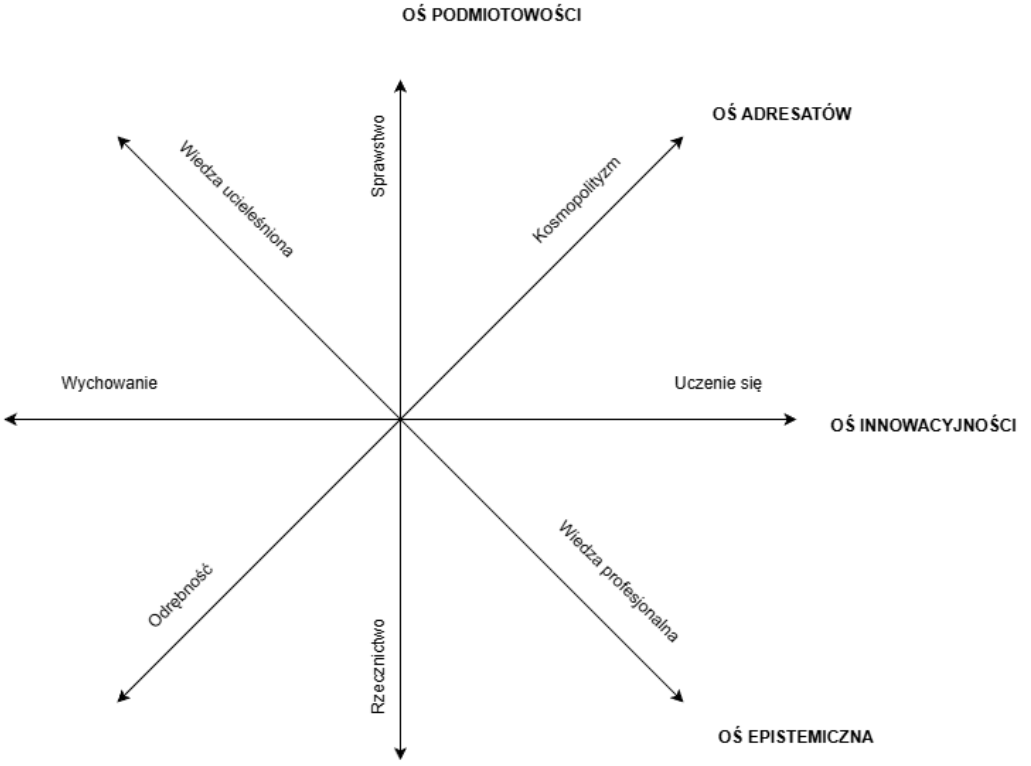

Diagram 1. Pedagogiczna róża wiatrów (opracowanie własne)

Oś epistemiczna

Oś epistemiczna jest rozpięta między wiedzą ucieleśnioną a wiedzą profesjonalną aktorów ruchów społecznych. Wiedza ucieleśniona to forma wiedzy, która nie ogranicza się do językowego opisu, lecz jest wyrażana i przekazywana poprzez bezpośrednie działanie, ciało i emocje. Powstaje w konkretnych kontekstach działania i ujawnia się w rytmie, performansie oraz materialnych aranżacjach. Jest dynamiczna, trudna do adekwatnej werbalizacji i obarczona ryzykiem, ponieważ jej ujawnienie może wiązać się z realnymi konsekwencjami dla osób, które ją przekazują. Na biegunie wiedzy ucieleśnionej autorytet wynika z bezpośredniego doświadczenia uczestników („Wiemy, bo to przeżyliśmy"). Na naszej mapie szlaków jest to domena między innymi Szlaków Niebieskiego (tożsamości) i Żółtego (troski), gdzie doświadczanie bólu, wykluczenia czy specyfiki ciała są trudne do wyartykułowania, a tym bardziej przekazania innym. Jak zauważają autorzy *Legitimation Code Theory*, jest to kod typu *knower*, polegający na zasadzie „*Who you are matters most*" (Maton, 2014). Na przeciwległym biegunie leży wiedza profesjonalna, oparta na abstrakcji, badaniach naukowych i eksponowaniu eksperckości. To naturalne środowisko dla Szlaków Czarnego (infrastruktura wiedzy) czy Zielonego (klimat), w obrębie których ruch posiłkuje się raportami naukowymi czy analizami prawnymi, by być skutecznym. Ruchy zwykle oscylują między tymi biegunami, np. ruchy pacjenckie zaczynają od wiedzy ciała, by z czasem wytwarzać „ekspertów przez doświadczenie" (*expert by experience*), niejako profesjonalizując swój przekaz.

Oś adresatów

Kolejny wymiar analizy dotyczy tego, *kogo* i *przez kogo* ruch społeczny mobilizuje, a także skali działań (od lokalnych po globalne) podejmowanych w dążeniu do pożądanej zmiany społecznej. Z odrębnością mamy do czynienia wówczas, gdy działania ruchu i związana z nimi edukacja służą wyodrębnieniu się zbiorowości z tła, budowaniu silnej, ekskluzywnej tożsamości. To domena ruchów rewitalizacji etnicznej, jak również osobistej zmiany (Szlak Niebieski), gdzie uczenie się polega na pogłębianiu różnicy, kultywowaniu „swojskości" i codziennym ćwiczeniu się w odmienionym życiu. Z kolei ruchy klimatyczne (Szlak Zielony) i globalnej sprawiedliwości (Szlak Czerwony) są kosmopolityczne, czyli zorientowane na ludzkość i planetę jako całość. Napięcie na tej osi widać w ruchach feministycznych (Szlak Czerwony), które balansują między podkreślaniem specyfiki kobiecego doświadczenia (odrębność) a walką o uniwersalne prawa człowieka (kosmopolityzm).

Oś innowacyjności

Kolejny wymiar dotyczy innowacyjności na tle różnych perspektyw czasowych i rozpina się między uczeniem się a wychowaniem, przy czym to ostatnie rozumiane jest w takim wypadku jako nawiązywanie do i czerpanie ze wskazówek, jakie otrzymaliśmy od poprzednich pokoleń. Ruch występuje tu w roli strażnika ciągłości i dziedzictwa, np. demokracji, a wychowując, selektywnie nawiązuje do przeszłości i angażuje do udziału w swoistej sztafecie pokoleń. Jest to widoczne na Szlaku Czarnym (rekonstrukcje historyczne) czy w ruchach neotradycyjnych (Szlak Niebieski), gdzie edukacja ma charakter formacyjny i konserwujący, zaś uczenie się rozumiane jest jako poszukiwanie poprzez ruch społeczny własnych odpowiedzi na aktualnie dokuczliwe problemy, kryzysy, wyzwania (Biesta, 2007). Może ono przybierać charakter uczenia się na błędach poprzednich pokoleń, eksperymentowania z nowymi rozwiązaniami – to domena ruchów na Szlakach Zielonym (zwłaszcza klimatycznych), Czarnym (w wersji hakerskiej/innowacyjnej) oraz Czerwonym (kiedy to stare formy oporu nie przystają do nowych mechanizmów, np. wyzysku w algorytmicznym zarządzaniu pracą).

Oś podmiotowości

Na tej osi pytamy o to, kto mówi i działa. Wychylenie w kierunku rzecznictwa (*advocacy*) oznacza, że ruch działa w imieniu tych, którzy nie mogą przemawiać we własnym imieniu lub są niesłyszani. Na Szlaku Zielonym oznacza to, że działamy w imieniu zwierząt i przyrody. Sprawstwo (*empowerment*) rozwija się wtedy, gdy aktorzy ruchów biorą sprawy we własne ręce. Tego doświadczamy między innymi na Szlaku Czerwonym, gdy pracownicy walczą o swoje prawa, a także w momencie przejścia na Żółty, na którym osoby z niepełnosprawnościami same przejmują mikrofon (por. Woynarowska, 2019). Nadmiar rzecznictwa grozi paternalizmem, z kolei nadmiar presji na sprawstwo może prowadzić do wypalenia w grupach pozbawionych zasobów.

Program badawczy splotu ruchów społecznych i edukacji

Dotychczas posługiwaliśmy się propozycją Tricii Niesz (2022), aby przyjrzeć się edukacji jako taktyce, celowi, kontekstowi czy też efektowi działania ruchów społecznych. Ta rama porządkuje rozproszone badania, ale sama autorka podkreśla, że nie dysponujemy jedną, spójną dziedziną wiedzy o relacjach między edukacją a ruchami społecznymi. Mamy do czynienia raczej z wieloma równoległymi poszukiwaniami,

które rzadko ze sobą współgrają. W tej części proponujemy potraktować tę diagnozę nie tyle jako problem, ile punkt wyjścia do otwarcia programu badawczego, który mógłby połączyć rozproszone wątki, a zarazem przesunąć perspektywę: od analizowania ruchów społecznych przez pryzmat ich wkładu w edukację ku analizowaniu samej edukacji przez pryzmat jej powiązania z ruchami społecznymi.

W naszym przypadku chodzi o powiązanie zmian w systemach edukacyjnych z dynamiką ruchów społecznych. które w różnych momentach historii odciskały się na instytucjach, programach, metodach nauczania, a nawet na języku, jakim posługujemy się, mówiąc o „dobrym obywatelu". Program ten zakłada co najmniej trzy intuicje, które warto traktować jako hipotezy robocze. Po pierwsze każda znacząca forma organizowania edukacji pozostaje w genealogicznej relacji z określonym ruchem społecznym, nawet jeśli jest on dziś odległy w czasie lub ideowo ambiwalentny. Po drugie współczesne sprzeczności w edukacji – między równością a selekcją, emancypacją a kontrolą, uczeniem się dla wspólnego dobra a uczeniem się pod kątem wymogów rynku – są w dużej mierze efektem nakładania się na siebie dziedzictw wielu ruchów. Po trzecie to nakładanie i krzyżowanie się dziedzictw można badać systematycznie, zamiast traktować je jako przypadkową mieszaninę „tradycji" i „reform", czyli jako zestaw niespójnych naleciałości, których nie da się sensownie wyjaśnić ani zmieniać bez naruszenia całości.

Najłatwiej zobaczyć tę logikę na przykładach, które z pozoru znamy „od zawsze": koedukacja, bezpłatność szkolnictwa czy obecność matematyki jako przedmiotu obowiązkowego na egzaminach. Rozwiązania te można czytać jako czysto pedagogiczne, ale też – za tradycją szkoły nowoczesnej (Ferrer Guardia, 2009) – dostrzec w nich ślady ruchu anarchistycznego, który eksperymentował z formami wspólnotowego uczenia się i alternatywną wobec obowiązującej definicją sprawiedliwości. Podobnie wybór języka nauczania wydaje się „naturalny" dopóty, dopóki nie przypomnimy sobie strajku dzieci we Wrześni, współczesnych praktyk kaszubskich czy też migranckich społeczności, które upominają się o edukację uzupełniającą w języku swojego pochodzenia. W takich wypadkach ruch narodowy, ruchy mniejszościowe i migranckie współtworzą to, co z punktu widzenia pedagogiki jest w danym momencie uważane za oczywiste.

Inny ważny obszar dotyczy pojawienia się tematów takich jak edukacja klimatyczna czy globalna oraz krytyczne podejścia do nierówności. Ich obecność w podręcznikach oraz podstawach programowych można z jednej strony wiązać z kolejną falą „innowacji" edukacyjnych, z drugiej jednak – czytane przez pryzmat ruchów

klimatycznych, feministycznych i ruchu globalnej sprawiedliwości – pokazują, że to raczej efekt długoletniego uczenia się systemów edukacyjnych od ruchów.

Równie ciekawa jest perspektywa, w której szkoła przestaje być wyłącznie dziedziczką ruchu oświeceniowego. Pisząc o pięciu tradycjach „oświecenia" w historii duńskiej edukacji, Ove Korsgaard (2000) pokazał, jak dalece to, co nazywamy „kształceniem ogólnym", było formowane kolejno przez ruchy chrześcijańskie, obywatelskie, ludowo narodowe, robotnicze, a wreszcie też te skupione na samorozwoju. Tego typu analizy można rozciągnąć na różne kraje, w tym na Polskę, i pytać, które ruchy – religijne, narodowe, klasowe, feministyczne, samorządowe – są zapisane w architekturze szkoły, jej rytuałach czy też w kalendarzu roku szkolnego. Pytanie o „publiczny" charakter szkoły (Zamojski, 2015), o jej rzekomą neutralność wobec rynku czy narodu, staje się wówczas pytaniem o to, które ruchy utrzymały swoje wpływy, a które zostały zneutralizowane i przetworzone w bezpieczne, zrytualizowane formy edukacji.

Proponowany tu program badawczy zakłada także spojrzenie na edukację jako na przestrzeń, w której ruchy społeczne są nieustannie re-kodowane, gdyż z jednej strony jest ona stymulowana przez ruchy społeczne, a z drugiej zasila je absolwentami. Kluczową inspiracją pozostaje tu dorobek badań nad *social movement learning*, które pokazują, jak dorośli uczą się w ruchach i dzięki nim, a także jak wytwarzają one wiedzę. W ramach niniejszego programu zachęcamy badaczy do analizy wielopoziomowych splotów: od mikropraktyk aktywistycznego uczenia się, przez afektywne napięcia w klasach szkolnych (m.in. gniew, pasja, zamiłowanie), po makrostrukturalne przesunięcia w prawie oświatowym. Stawką jest zrozumienie, jak w sercu instytucji utrwalającej przeszłość (szkoły) rodzi się siła zdolna tę przeszłość zakwestionować (ruch) i jako sprzężenie zwrotne powracać do kwestii edukacji.

Stąd dwa wektory programu: „od ruchów" i „od szkoły". Od strony ruchów społecznych interesuje nas, jakie formy uczenia się kolektywnego wyłaniają się na różnych szlakach; jak ruchy wytwarzają, negocjują i hierarchizują wiedzę; jaki jest koszt (afekty, wypalenie, ryzyko) budowania sprawstwa; oraz jak udział w mobilizacjach przekształca tożsamości, języki opisu świata i nowatorskie praktyki, którymi uczestnicy dzielą się w swoich społecznościach, gdy mobilizacja ruchu wygasa.

Szkołę rozumiemy jako instytucję publiczną osadzoną na warstwach organizacyjnej, dydaktycznej, symbolicznej i politycznej. W tym sensie edukację formalną traktujemy jako wtórne pole przechwytywania, filtrowania i translacji impulsów płynących z ruchów społecznych. Interesuje nas to, co szkoła z tych impulsów przejmuje,

co wypiera, co profesjonalizuje, a co dopuszcza jedynie w postaci bezpiecznego rytuału. Analizie poddajemy przede wszystkim te mechanizmy szkolne, poprzez które kształtowane są dyspozycje absolwentów: wiedza ogólna jako to, co dla nich oczywiste w charakterystyce świata; języki wyrażania wartości; doświadczenia kształtujące poczucie mocy; dozwolone emocje i empatia oraz legitymizowane formy podmiotowości. W każdym z tych obszarów pytamy o mechanizmy selekcji, przekształcenia i unieszkodliwienia, np. o to, w jaki sposób treści pierwotnie polityczne są w szkole przekładane na projekty edukacyjne, neutralne narracje obywatelskie lub repertuar „kompetencji miękkich".

W tym miejscu wraca kwestia epizodycznych rozwiązań edukacyjnych w małych wspólnotach, w tzw. alternatywnych placówkach, w praktykach aktywistów, którzy testują nowe formy uczenia się. Takie prototypy powstają na marginesach – w ramach ruchów feministycznych, osób z niepełnosprawnościami, studenckich, inicjatyw migranckich – a dopiero później, często po wielu latach, przenikają do głównego nurtu. Program badawczy, który proponujemy, zakłada, że właśnie te epizodyczne rozwiązania trzeba dokumentować – nie tylko jako ciekawostki z pogranicza „edukacji alternatywnej", lecz jako wczesne sygnały przyszłych przekształceń systemu. Z tej perspektywy każde rozwiązanie edukacyjne było kiedyś alternatywą.

Program badawczy splotu ruchów społecznych i edukacji zachęca, by przy każdym współczesnym sporze o edukację zadać dwa pytania: 1) jaki ruch społeczny mógłby się podpisać pod daną propozycją organizacji szkoły, finansowania, języka nauczania, kalendarza zajęć, rozumienia sukcesu ucznia?; 2) w jaki sposób legitymizowane są współczesne propozycje organizowania edukacji (od przypisywania im roli „rozsądnej reformy" po ich kooptację w formie tolerowanych, lecz ledwie cząstkowych rozwiązań)? Zamiast pytać tylko w porządku historycznym – „Jak dany ruch wpłynął na edukację?" – pytamy: „Jakie warstwy (osady i dziedzictwa) ruchów zachowały do dzisiaj swoje znaczenie w edukacji?". Interesuje nas także to, w jaki sposób są one neutralizowane, przerabiane lub rytualnie celebrowane, ponieważ to właśnie z kompetencjami wyniesionymi ze szkoły ludzie wchodzą w kolejne ruchy społeczne. Nie próbujemy sformułować „teorii wszystkiego" ani nie redukujemy ruchu do „wpływów", nie moralizujemy, dzieląc ruchy i zmiany na „dobre" bądź „złe", badamy raczej mechanizmy przenikania i neutralizacji. Zjawiska te proponujemy ujmować jakościowo, przede wszystkim poprzez porównawcze studia przypadków szkół, analizę dokumentów szkolnych, wywiady z nauczycielami i uczniami oraz analizę dyskursu praktyk dydaktycznych i wychowawczych.

Podsumowanie

Proponowany program badawczy jest wyraźnie otwarty. Nie obiecuje jednej teorii, która wyjaśni całą historię edukacji w powiązaniu z ruchami społecznymi. Jak wskazaliśmy, zakłada on raczej, że źródła rozwiązań edukacyjnych są wielorakie, a ich obecny kształt jest – czy też być – wynikiem sporów, sojuszy i kompromisów między ruchami społecznymi. Podejście to sugeruje, że możemy rysować mapę napięć strukturalnych w edukacji jako mapę nakładających się ruchów społecznych. Otwiera to pole dla wielu projektów badawczych: genealogicznych, porównawczych, biograficznych, etnograficznych, a także dla eksperymentów myślowych, które pozwolą nam zobaczyć, jak dzisiejsze mikropraktyki aktywistyczne mogą w przyszłości stać się „normalną" edukacją.

Zaproszenie do udziału w programie kierujemy szerzej niż tylko do badaczy ruchów społecznych. Potrzebni są na tym polu historycy edukacji, andragodzy, pedagodzy wczesnoszkolni, badaczki polityki oświatowej i dydaktyki, osoby zajmujące się edukacją specjalną, globalną i klimatyczną, obywatelską, a także badaczki i badacze języka edukacji i technologii uczenia się. Chodzi o to, by przyglądając się własnym „wycinkom" edukacyjnej rzeczywistości, zadawać dodatkowe pytania o ruchy społeczne, które ją wytworzyły, kwestionują lub próbują przekształcić. Jeśli potraktujemy poważnie intuicję Niesz, że edukacja jest zarazem taktyką, celem, kontekstem i efektem działań ruchów, to proponowany tu program badawczy okaże się próbą dołożenia piątego elementu – edukacji jako żywego archiwum ruchów społecznych, które domaga się odczytania na nowo.

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Review of: Robert L. Klitzman. *Doctor, Will You Pray for Me? Medicine, Chaplains, and Healing the Whole Person*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2024. 376 pp.

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Abstract

Robert L. Klitzman's *Doctor, Will You Pray for Me?* explores the relationship between medicine, spirituality, and existential care in contemporary healthcare. Drawing on qualitative interviews, clinical experience, and autobiographical reflection, Klitzman examines how patients, physicians, and hospital chaplains confront questions of suffering, meaning, mortality, and hope in situations of serious illness and end-of-life care. This review situates the book within the field of medical humanities and focuses on three major themes: the critique of biomedical reductionism, the changing nature of spirituality in contemporary societies, and the role of hospital chaplaincy in increasingly pluralistic healthcare environments. The article also discusses Klitzman's qualitative and interpretive methodological approach and highlights the relevance of the book for European healthcare systems facing growing cultural and religious diversity. At the same time, the review addresses several limitations of the book, including its strong grounding in the American context and its limited engagement with non-Western perspectives. Nevertheless, *Doctor, Will You Pray for Me?* constitutes an important contribution to current debates on spirituality, holistic care, and the human dimensions of medicine.

Keywords

medical humanities; spirituality in healthcare; chaplaincy; holistic care; religion and medicine

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Introduction

Robert L. Klitzman is an American psychiatrist, bioethicist, and medical humanities scholar affiliated with Columbia University, where he serves as Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Master's Program in Bioethics. His work combines psychiatry, medical anthropology, bioethics, and qualitative health research, focusing particularly on ethical dilemmas in medicine, doctor-patient relationships, and the psychosocial dimensions of illness (Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, n.d.).

Doctor, Will You Pray for Me? continues Klitzman's long-standing interest in the existential dimensions of healthcare while also containing a significant autobiographical element. Born in 1958 into a Jewish family whose ancestors emigrated from Lithuania to the United States, Klitzman describes himself as largely atheistic during his student years and strongly oriented toward scientific explanations of human life (Klitzman, 2024, pp. 14–15). A turning point came after the death of his sister during the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, an experience that profoundly challenged purely rational frameworks of understanding suffering and mortality. Reflecting on this tragedy, he writes that "none of the atrocity made sense" (Klitzman, 2024, p. 18). The experience later opened him more strongly to questions of spirituality, grief, and existential meaning.

The book also reflects broader transformations within contemporary American society, where religious affiliation has become increasingly fluid and diverse, and hospitals care for patients from a wide range of cultural, religious, and secular backgrounds. Klitzman notes that physicians often feel poorly prepared to respond to explicitly spiritual or existential concerns raised by patients. This observation is especially relevant for European readers. Although Europe is generally more secularized than the United States, contemporary European healthcare systems are likewise becoming increasingly religiously and culturally pluralistic as a result of migration and demographic change. Research increasingly suggests that spiritual and existential needs may influence patients' well-being, coping, and experiences of illness (Koenig, 2012).

The title itself - *Doctor, Will You Pray for Me?* - captures one of the book's central tensions. The patient's request confronts physicians with expectations for which medical education rarely prepares them. Klitzman recalls his own uncertainty during his early medical training when caring for a dying patient: "I had no idea whether or when to call a priest. No one had ever told me" (Klitzman, 2024, p. 12).

The question addressed to the doctor thus becomes a symbol of a broader gap within modern medicine: the gap between technical competence and existential care.

The book deliberately moves between scholarly analysis, memoir, qualitative inquiry, and public-facing medical humanities writing. Importantly, Klitzman's contribution lies less in the development of a new theoretical framework than in his ability to humanize and synthesize ongoing discussions within medical humanities, spirituality studies, and patient-centered care. The book's strength resides primarily in its narrative and empirical richness, combining autobiographical reflection, qualitative material, and clinical experience in ways that make complex existential questions accessible to both academic and professional audiences. In this respect, *Doctor, Will You Pray for Me?* functions as a bridge between scholarly debates and everyday clinical practice.

The primary audience for both the book and this review is multidisciplinary. Klitzman's work will be particularly relevant to physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals seeking to deepen their understanding of the spiritual and existential dimensions of clinical practice. It will equally engage hospital chaplains, pastoral care educators, medical ethics scholars, and researchers working at the intersection of medicine, religion, and the social sciences. More broadly, the book speaks to anyone – whether in academic, professional, or policy contexts – who is concerned with the humanization of healthcare and the integration of holistic approaches into contemporary medical systems. For European readers specifically, the book offers a comparative perspective on models of spiritual care that, while embedded in the American context, raise questions with direct relevance for increasingly pluralistic European healthcare environments.

Biomedical reductionism and the limits of scientific medicine

One of the central arguments developed throughout *Doctor, Will You Pray for Me?* concerns the limitations of contemporary biomedicine in addressing the existential dimensions of illness. Klitzman does not question the achievements of scientific medicine but criticizes reductionist tendencies that treat patients primarily as biological organisms rather than meaning-seeking human beings.

Reflecting on his own medical training, Klitzman recalls that religion and spirituality were almost entirely absent from the curriculum: "Through my medical training, I had never received a single lecture about religion or spirituality" (Klitzman, 2024, p. 12). Similar concerns regarding the limited preparation of physicians

for addressing patients' spiritual questions were also discussed by Klitzman in earlier publications (Klitzman, 2021).

Klitzman argues that biomedical explanations, although scientifically accurate, often fail to satisfy patients emotionally or existentially. Serious illness disrupts identities, relationships, and systems of meaning, leading patients to ask questions that medicine alone cannot adequately answer: Why me? What does this suffering mean? How should I face death? In this respect, the book resonates strongly with broader discussions in medical humanities and narrative medicine, which emphasize that illness is not merely a physiological condition but also an existential and narrative experience.

Importantly, Klitzman avoids idealizing spirituality or religion. He acknowledges that spiritual beliefs may provide comfort and hope for some patients while generating doubt or anger in others. His central argument is therefore not that physicians should become religious authorities, but that healthcare systems need greater awareness of the existential realities accompanying illness. Similar conclusions have been formulated within European palliative care research, where spiritual care is increasingly understood as an important component of holistic healthcare education and practice (Best et al., 2020).

Methodological and interpretive approach

An important strength of *Doctor, Will You Pray for Me?* lies in its explicit qualitative and interpretive methodological grounding. Although written in an accessible style for a broad readership, the book is firmly rooted in traditions associated with medical anthropology, sociology of health, narrative medicine, and interpretive psychiatry. Klitzman combines empirical interviews, participant observation, autobiographical reflection, and engagement with interdisciplinary scholarship to examine how patients, physicians, and chaplains confront existential crises within healthcare settings.

Importantly, the book is not based merely on anecdotal reflection or journalistic observation. Klitzman explains in Appendix B that the project emerged from both informal conversations with chaplains and a subsequent formal qualitative study involving in-depth interviews with 21 board-certified hospital chaplains across the United States. The participants represented diverse religious and philosophical backgrounds, including Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and secular humanist traditions. They also varied geographically, professionally, and demographically, with chaplaincy experience ranging from three to thirty years. Klitzman

further notes that all interviewees provided informed consent and that identifying details were altered to preserve confidentiality.

The interviews explore how chaplains understand their professional role, respond to patients with differing beliefs, and negotiate their position within highly medicalized institutions. Particularly valuable is the book's refusal to portray chaplaincy as a homogeneous or narrowly denominational practice. Some chaplains work within explicitly religious frameworks, whereas others focus more broadly on existential accompaniment and meaning-making among secular, agnostic, or "spiritual but not religious" patients.

Klitzman explicitly situates his methodological orientation within the interpretive anthropological tradition associated with Clifford Geertz and the concept of "thick description" (Geertz, 1973). He emphasizes the importance of understanding how individuals themselves interpret suffering, illness, mortality, and hope. This orientation is reflected in the book's emphasis on narrative complexity, subjective meanings, and emotionally textured accounts rather than abstract theorization or standardized measurement. Consequently, the book's primary contribution lies less in theoretical innovation than in its capacity to illuminate lived experiences of suffering and existential vulnerability through richly contextualized narratives.

Klitzman's integration of autobiographical narrative into the book's interpretive structure is particularly significant, especially reflections connected to the death of his sister during the September 11 attacks. These personal experiences function not merely as background, but as a reflexive methodological lens, sensitizing the author to dimensions of suffering, grief, and existential distress with unusual emotional and interpretive depth.

At times, however, the book moves fluidly between scholarly analysis, memoir, and narrative journalism, prioritizing accessibility and emotional immediacy over methodological systematization. Readers seeking a more theoretically structured qualitative analysis may therefore occasionally find the argument conceptually eclectic. Nevertheless, this openness also constitutes one of the book's major strengths: its capacity to illuminate the lived experience of illness and existential distress in ways that more formalized clinical research often cannot.

Hospital Chaplaincy and the Institutionalization of Spiritual Care

Before engaging with Klitzman's argument, it is necessary to clarify the conceptual framework within which the book operates, as the meanings of key terms –

"chaplain", "religion", and "spirituality" – differ substantially between the American and European contexts. In Klitzman's usage, a "chaplain" designates a board-certified healthcare professional whose role is defined primarily by competence in existential and emotional accompaniment, rather than by denominational affiliation or the administration of sacraments. "Religion" refers to organized systems of belief and practice associated with particular faith traditions, while "spirituality" is used in a broader sense encompassing the search for meaning, transcendence, and moral orientation – dimensions that may be present among both religious and non-religious individuals. These distinctions are central to Klitzman's argument and must be kept in view throughout.

Klitzman presents chaplains not primarily as representatives of organized religion, but as specialists in existential and emotional support operating at the intersection of medicine, psychology, ethics, and spirituality. Their role extends far beyond traditional religious functions and increasingly involves accompanying patients facing suffering, uncertainty, grief, and death.

European readers should approach this description of chaplaincy with careful attention to the significant institutional and cultural differences between the American and European models (Cadge, 2012). In the European context, the term "chaplain" traditionally denotes a role fulfilled by ordained clergy operating within a specific denominational framework. In the face of existential crises – such as serious illness, dying, and bereavement – European hospital chaplains typically administer sacraments and engage in specific religious practices oriented toward forgiveness, the acceptance of mortality, and the eschatological dimensions of human existence. Being an "interfaith" chaplain in Europe does not imply a non-denominational or secular orientation, as Cadge and Sigalow (2013) have demonstrated in their study of the distinct strategies – including neutralizing and code-switching – that chaplains employ when working across religious and spiritual boundaries. Moreover, a chaplain is neither a psychologist nor a volunteer; conflating these distinct roles generates unrealistic expectations and is a source of frustration for both caregivers and those receiving support – a difficulty that Klitzman himself acknowledges in the autoethnographic sections of the book.

These distinctions matter for readers in Poland and other European countries where, depending on institutional arrangements, chaplains may serve as full-time hospital employees and members of healthcare teams, yet retain a specifically denominational and sacramental identity that differs fundamentally from the broadly

interfaith and existentially oriented American model described by Klitzman. It is precisely the American model – one of increasing professionalization, institutional integration, and transdenominational practice – that Klitzman portrays as a normative development and which may not be directly translatable to European healthcare systems without significant contextual adaptation.

The book notes that chaplaincy services are present in a substantial proportion of American hospitals, especially large medical centers, oncology units, palliative care services, and intensive care departments. Chaplains are often involved in situations concerning terminal illness, end-of-life decision-making, traumatic diagnoses, grief, family conflict, or emotional crisis. They may also support healthcare professionals themselves, particularly in highly stressful clinical environments.

Klitzman also emphasizes the growing religious and philosophical diversity within the chaplaincy profession itself. Contemporary American chaplains come from Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and other religious traditions, while some identify as nonreligious or humanist chaplains. At the same time, professional chaplaincy generally requires moving beyond narrowly denominational roles. Although chaplains retain their own beliefs, their task is not primarily to promote doctrine, but to accompany patients and families in situations of vulnerability and suffering. Only when patients explicitly request denominational support does chaplaincy become more directly connected to shared religious identity or ritual practice.

The book shows that chaplains often enter clinical situations precisely when biomedical language becomes insufficient. While physicians can explain diagnoses and treatment options, chaplains help patients and families articulate fears, hopes, guilt, unresolved conflicts, and questions concerning meaning and mortality. Importantly, many chaplains work not only with religious patients, but also with individuals who identify as secular, agnostic, or "spiritual but not religious".

Recent European palliative care frameworks likewise emphasize that spiritual care should be integrated across multidisciplinary healthcare teams rather than restricted to narrowly confessional models (Paal et al., 2026).

At the same time, the book acknowledges tensions surrounding chaplaincy within modern medicine. Some physicians remain uncertain about the role of spiritual care, while chaplains themselves sometimes criticize the emotional detachment and technological orientation of contemporary healthcare. Nevertheless, Klitzman convincingly argues that questions of meaning, suffering, and mortality remain deeply

present within clinical practice and cannot be fully separated from experiences of illness and care.

Spirituality Beyond Religion: "Spiritual but Not Religious" Patients

One of the most important contributions of Klitzman's book is its analysis of spirituality beyond traditional religious frameworks. *Doctor, Will You Pray for Me?* shows that existential anxiety cuts across all belief systems, impacting religious, secular, agnostic, atheist, and "spiritual but not religious" patients alike.

Klitzman situates this phenomenon within broader social changes in Western societies, where traditional religious affiliation has declined while individualized forms of spirituality have become increasingly common. Several patients described in the book reject organized religion yet continue searching for meaning, hope, or transcendence when confronted with illness and mortality. One patient states: "I pray to the God I don't believe in" (Klitzman, 2024, p. 152), illustrating the ambiguity and complexity of contemporary spiritual experience.

The book avoids simplistic distinctions between "religious" and "secular" identities. At times, however, the analytical boundaries of spirituality remain intentionally broad, encompassing existential reflection, emotional coping, relationality, and moral meaning-making within a single interpretive category. Klitzman shows that severe illness often destabilizes previously stable worldviews and prompts reflection on mortality, suffering, guilt, hope, and meaning – even among individuals who previously considered themselves nonreligious. In this sense, the book contributes to broader discussions suggesting that secularization does not eliminate existential needs, but rather transforms the ways they are expressed. This issue has important implications for healthcare practice. Spiritual care can no longer rely solely on formal religious categories or rituals, but requires openness to diverse and individualized forms of meaning-making.

Importantly, the book remains fundamentally secular and patient-centered in tone. Klitzman does not advocate religion or present spirituality as universally beneficial. Instead, he treats spirituality as a complex dimension of human experience connected to illness, vulnerability, suffering, and the search for meaning.

Limitations of the Book

Despite its many strengths, *Doctor, Will You Pray for Me?* is not without limitations. One of the most evident is its strong grounding in the American cultural and

institutional context. The organization of healthcare chaplaincy in the United States differs significantly from many European healthcare systems, where spiritual care is often less institutionalized or more closely connected to particular religious traditions. Consequently, some of Klitzman's assumptions concerning religion, chaplaincy, and spiritual discourse may not be directly transferable to more secularized European contexts.

Related to this issue is the predominance of Judeo-Christian perspectives throughout the book. Although Klitzman emphasizes pluralism, non-Western religious traditions and Muslim patients receive relatively limited attention. In increasingly multicultural healthcare environments, future research could benefit from broader engagement with non-Western and postcolonial perspectives on suffering, healing, and spiritual care.

Another limitation concerns the relatively limited attention devoted to structural inequalities. Klitzman focuses primarily on interpersonal and existential dimensions of care, while issues such as socioeconomic disparities, migration status, language barriers, and unequal access to healthcare remain largely in the background. Moreover, although the author deliberately adopts an inclusive understanding of spirituality, the concept occasionally becomes analytically diffuse, encompassing a broad spectrum of emotional, existential, relational, and moral experiences. At times, the boundaries between spiritual care, existential reflection, psychological coping, and emotional support remain insufficiently differentiated. This conceptual openness increases the accessibility of the book but somewhat weakens analytical precision.

Methodologically, the book prioritizes narrative richness and accessibility over analytical systematization. The interviews and clinical stories are compelling and insightful; however, readers seeking a more theoretically structured analysis may occasionally find the argument conceptually eclectic.

The book also occasionally risks universalizing the existential and spiritual dimensions of illness. While many patients undoubtedly search for meaning, transcendence, or moral orientation in situations of suffering and mortality, some individuals may approach illness primarily through secular, scientific, or pragmatic frameworks without experiencing a corresponding spiritual crisis. Although Klitzman acknowledges such cases, they remain less central within the book's overall interpretive framework.

Nevertheless, these limitations do not undermine the book's central achievement. Klitzman convincingly demonstrates that questions of meaning, suffering,

and mortality remain deeply embedded in experiences of illness and care, even within highly technological healthcare systems.

Conclusion

Doctor, Will You Pray for Me? constitutes an important contribution to contemporary discussions at the intersection of medicine, spirituality, and medical humanities. Combining qualitative research, clinical reflection, and autobiographical narrative, Robert L. Klitzman demonstrates that severe illness often generates existential questions that cannot be adequately addressed through biomedical explanation alone.

A major strength of the book lies in its integration of the medical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of care. Particularly valuable is Klitzman's portrayal of hospital chaplaincy as a form of support addressing dimensions of suffering often overlooked within conventional medical training. Other reviewers have likewise emphasized the book's importance for contemporary discussions on holistic and patient-centered healthcare (Wirpsa, 2025).

Klitzman shows that questions concerning vulnerability, finitude, moral meaning, existential distress, and mortality emerge not only among traditionally religious individuals, but also among secular and "spiritual but not religious" patients. At the same time, he avoids simplistic idealization of spirituality, presenting it instead as a complex and deeply personal dimension of human experience.

Although the book remains strongly rooted in the American context and gives limited attention to non-Western perspectives and structural inequalities, these limitations do not diminish its overall significance. Klitzman contributes importantly to contemporary discussions about the human dimensions of medicine and the need for healthcare systems to respond not only to diseased bodies, but also to existential suffering. In this sense, the book makes a valuable contribution to ongoing debates concerning holistic and patient-centered care in contemporary healthcare.

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Kilka uwag pedagogiczno-filozoficznych o *Wspólnocie śmiertelnych*. Recenzja książki Małgorzaty Roeske *Wspólnota śmiertelnych. Tanatologie zwierząt towarzyszących w perspektywie etnografii wielogatunkowej*, Pasaże, Kraków 2025.

Some pedagogical and philosophical remarks on Małgorzata Roeske's *The Community of Mortals. The Thanatology of Companion Animals from a Multispecies Ethnographic Perspective*, Wydawnictwo Pasaże, Kraków 2025.

Oskar Szwabowski[1]

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Książka Małgorzaty Roeske koncentruje się na żałobie po zwierzętach poza-ludzkich. Głównym celem podjętych przez autorkę badań jest „próba określenia, czy doświadczenia związane z umieraniem i śmiercią mogą zostać uznane – a jeżeli tak, to w jakim stopniu i formie – za przeżycia egzystencjalne, które tworzą wspólnotę ponadgatunkową" (Roeske, 2025, s. 23). Próbując odpowiedzieć na to pytanie, autorka dzieli książkę na cztery główne części (poza wprowadzeniem i zakończeniem). Część pierwsza stanowi rozważania metodologiczno-teoretyczne, w których autorka zastanawia się nad relacją człowieka i zwierzęcia towarzyszącego, nad tym, jak umierają zwierzęta nie-ludzkie, a także podejmuje kwestię świadomości i odczuwania

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bólu przez inne istoty niż człowiek. Część druga stanowi bardzo obszerne omówienie wyników badań – dowiemy się z niej między innymi o doświadczeniach żałoby, sposobach radzenia sobie z nią, a także o społecznej recepcji tejże. Sporo miejsca zostaje poświęcone formom upamiętniania i pochówku zwierząt poza-ludzkich. Części trzecia i czwarta to zbiory narracji o opiece i odchodzeniu zwierząt towarzyszących.

O ile część pierwsza i druga pisane są z pozycji zdystansowanej naukowczyni, która traktuje relacje niczym dane podatne na analizę i zawierające „prawdę", o tyle części trzecia i czwarta oddają więcej przestrzeni głosom innych i bardziej zawierzają opowieści. Tekst staje się bardziej emocjonalny i pozwala osobie czytającej na własną pracę – zarówno współodczuwania, jak i współmyślenia.

Prezentowany materiał ukazuje zarówno zróżnicowane formy radzenia sobie z utratą, jak i na istnienie rozszerzonej wspólnoty. Jednocześnie autorka wielokrotnie pokazuje, jak żałoba po zwierzętach towarzyszących i formy ich upamiętniania zderzają się z tym, co społeczne, a mianowicie z kulturowo ustanowioną hierarchią istnień, w ramach której śmierć zwierzęcia poza-ludzkiego jest traktowana jako coś mniej istotnego. Tymczasem dla rozmówców badaczki zwierzęta te były kimś istotnym, a ich utrata miała charakter traumatyzujący, niejednokrotnie zaburzając funkcjonowanie jednostki i sprawiając, że cały jej świat się rozpadał. Śmierć zwierzęcia towarzyszącego nie raz traktuje się tu jak śmierć członka rodziny, śmierć dziecka – jedną z najbardziej dotkliwych strat, jakie można sobie wyobrazić.

Autorka dowodzi, że stany emocjonalne związane ze śmiercią zwierząt towarzyszących wskazują na istnienie wspólnoty rozszerzonej, wspólnoty ponadgatunkowej. Pisząc o cmentarzach dla zwierząt, stwierdza:

> Epifanie nagrobne, skierowane do konkretnego zwierzęcia oraz do wizytującego cmentarza człowieka, mają za zadanie z jednej strony podtrzymać pamięć o zmarłym, z drugiej przedstawić zwierzę jako istotę obdarzoną tożsamością, a zatem niejako je uczłowieczyć. Dzięki temu staje się ono niemal pełnoprawnym członkiem społeczności. Inskrypcje służyć mają również komunikacji, zarówno w obrębie rodziny ludzkiej – wyrażając wspólne dla wszystkich cierpienie w obliczu śmierci jednego z jej członków, jak i tej poszerzonej – ludzko-zwierzęcej, poprzez symboliczne formy komunikacji ze zmarłym zwierzęciem. (Roeske, 2025, s. 375)

Żałoba po zwierzęciu towarzyszącym i jej intensywność uzależnione są od siły relacji i stanowią świadectwo tego, jak istotne było za naszego, ludzkiego życia, jak ważną rolę pełniło we „wspólnocie śmiertelnych".

Książka jest, w mojej ocenie, ze wszech miar poprawna – to właściwa produkcja akademicka, pisana na stopień w Polsce. Praca nie budzi zastrzeżeń zarówno pod względem struktury - jakże typowej! - jak i wymaganej erudycyjności, ale także przyjętej metodologii. Niemniej perspektywa badawcza zdaje się nie podejmować potrójnego kryzysu – „reprezentacji, legitymizacji i praktyki" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009, s. 46) – badań społecznych i na nie również nie odpowiada. Autorka wprawdzie przywołuje również autoetnografię, ale w karłowatej formie i lokuje ją na marginesie swoich badań. Pomijam to, że nie zostają przywołane żadne kluczowe prace autoetnografów, chociażby aby wyjaśnić, o jakiej wersji autoetnografii mówi. To co bardziej problematyczne, to to że nie wyciąga z autoetnografii żadnych metodologicznych konsekwencji, jest ona raczej podporządkowana konwencjonalnemu sposobowi przeprowadzania badań. Tym samym otrzymujemy pod tym względem pracę poprawną, która w żaden sposób nie wykracza poza ramy ustanowione w polu nauki polskiej. Samo to nie jest oczywiście dużym zarzutem, chociaż trochę pracy, by przesuwać zastane ramy, jest zawsze zalecane – zwłaszcza gdy wchodzi się w przestrzenie nie-ludzkie, które prowokują do eksperymentów – prób oddawania perspektyw zwierząt innych niż ludzie (zob. Baratay, 2022).

Jak wiadomo, zbyt odważne postępowania metodologiczne mogą wiązać się z wykluczeniem i odmową nadania stopnia, by wspomnieć tylko o przypadku Mo Klosow (zob. Klosow, 2019), niemniej jednak omawiana praca lokuje się w ramach dogmatycznego obrazu myśli (Deleuze, 1997), w ramach nauki królewskiej (Deleuze & Guattarii, 2015), nie zaś anarchistycznej, która to wydaje się bardziej adekwatna dla nie-ludzkich wspólnot. Najzabawniejsze są fragmenty, w których autorka pragnie ustalać korelacje i zależności, jak gdyby prowadziła badania ilościowe lub/i eksperymentalne. Cóż, taki mamy metodologiczny klimat (zob. Szwabowski & Zańko, 2026) i widać, że nie tylko w pedagogice. Poruszając tego rodzaju tematykę warto podążyć raczej tropem Swietłany Aleksijewicz, będącej w moim przekonaniu mistrzynią ukazywania wielogłosowego rzeczywistości z perspektywy osób jej doświadczających (zob. Aleksijewicz, 2014), ale też po wirtuozersku pracuje na płaszczyznach intelektu i emocji, o ile sensowne jest ich rozdzielanie. Pod koniec książki Roeske zawierza opowieściom, oddając głos uczestnikom, bez pretensji do „analizowania" – i to są najmocniejsze fragmenty.

Pewien kłopot sprawiają też odniesienia do filozofii, po której Roeske prześlizguje się, nie pogłębiając żadnego z sygnalizowanych ujęć. Częściowo może to wynikać z tego, że opiera się w znacznym stopniu na cudzych interpretacjach, a nie na

samodzielnej lekturze źródeł, tak jakby dzieło filozoficzne było przejrzyste i dawało się zredukować do „głównych myśli". Również i na tym obszarze autorka pomija istotne publikacje – zupełnie nieobecna jest na przykład Eva Meijer (2021a; 2021b), która pomogłaby Roeske uporać się chociażby z Heideggerem, a może i pozwoliła na pogłębienie analizy, wliczając w to obszar relacji między ludźmi i nie-ludźmi.

Mimo tych uwag książka Małgorzaty Roeske jest warta lektury, zwłaszcza, że stanowi chyba pierwsze w Polsce na tyle kompleksowe opracowanie problematyki śmierci nie-ludzi. Sam problem śmierci zwierząt innych niż ludzie jest istotny nie tylko poznawczo, ale też z punktu widzenia polityki. Książka skłania do dalszych dyskusji i refleksji. Roeske zauważa, że nasza kultura jest hierarchiczna również w odniesieniu do śmierci, umierania i żałoby. Są byty, którym odmawia się umierania, ich śmierć jest czymś nieistotnym, niekiedy nawet nie zasługującym na określenie tym mianem[1]. Zwierzęta niebędące ludźmi nie tyle umierają, ile zdychają. Te byty zdychające zostają wyrzucone poza wspólnotę i nie są też godne łez. Te śmierci nie są „autentyczne", nie są dramatyczne, nie można po nich rozpaczać.

Judith Butler zauważa, że dzieląc byty na te warte opłakiwania i nie, ustanawia się znormalizowany byt ludzki. Ten ostatni jest tym, co można, a nawet trzeba, opłakiwać. To, co poza ludzką normą, „normalnym" podmiotem ludzkim, już nie jest warte żałoby, jej brak wiąże się zaś z brakiem twarzy, odmową uznania pojedynczości, a zarazem włączenia w obszar moralności. Butler wskazuje na publiczną dystrybucję podziału na byty godne i niegodne żałoby – jednym z jej narzędzi jest na przykład nekrolog. Nasza kultura – ludzka, „arcy-ludzka" – dzieli byty na te, którym przysługuje prawo do bycia opłakiwanymi, oraz te, które zostały z niego wyłączone; byty warte uwagi – posiadające twarze, objęte moralnością – i te wykluczone z tego rodzaju obszarów. Jak pisze Butler, „jeśli życie nie jest godne opłakiwania, to nie jest do końca życiem; nie kwalifikuje się jako życie i nie jest warte uwagi. Jest już czymś niepogrzebanym — jeśli nie wręcz niemożliwym do pogrzebania." (2004, s. 34). To, kogo uznamy za godnego opłakiwania, jest istotną kwestią – stawką jest uznanie go za istotę żyjącą i wartą uwagi. Byty niegodne opłakiwania to byty nie-ludzkie.

Podział na tych, którzy umierają, i na tych, którzy po prostu zdychają, nie tylko odróżnia ludzi od nie-ludzi; w istocie, jak każdy podział, ustanawia normę ludzką,

[1] Przykładem może być dyskusja, jaka wywiązała się po słowach Jerzego Bralczyka, który próbował dowodzić niepoprawności językowej stwierdzenia, że zwierzę poza-ludzkie „umiera".

przecinając też to, co człowiecze (Horta, 2024; Stirner, 1995). Odmawiamy twarzy nie tylko innym gatunkom, ale także przedstawicielom własnego – jak chociażby imigrantom, którzy nie wpasowują się w chronioną normę ludzką, skrojoną z myślą o figurze obywatela. Walka z gatunkowizmem (*speciecism*) to zatem jednocześnie walka ze wszystkimi podziałami – klasowymi, rasowymi, genderowymi – i na odwrót: walka z klasizmem czy rasizmem również może nosić znamiona gatunkowizmu (Singer, 2004; Horta, 2024). Książka Roeske stanowi właśnie tego rodzaju instrument walki o uznanie prawa do śmierci i prawa do opłakiwania bytów innych niż ludzkie.

W kontekście żałoby po zwierzętach poza-ludzkich Roeske pisze o „nieuprawnionej żałobie". Kulturowo wciąż nie ma przyzwolenia na przeżywanie śmierci nieludzi tak samo, jak ludzi, mimo że – jak pokazują między innymi badania zawarte we *Wspólnocie* – nie ma istotnej różnicy, kto odchodzi. Osoby rozmawiające z autorką podkreślały nawet, że śmierć nie-ludzkiego zwierzęcia towarzyszącego była dla nich znacznie intensywniejszym przeżyciem niż śmierć członka rodziny należącego do ludzkiego gatunku[2]. Nawet jeżeli śmierć zwierzęcia nie-ludzkiego nie była wydarzeniem bardziej istotnym, to jednak wykazywała wiele podobieństw do utraty członka rodziny, niezależnie od gatunku, do którego ów przynależy. Respondenci porównywali nie-ludzkie zwierzę towarzyszące do dziecka, do przyjaciela, nadając mu w ten sposób godność, którą niektórzy woleliby rezerwować dla „normalnego człowieka". Dostrzegają oni też indywidualność poszczególnych istot i to, że okazują się niezastąpione. Dostrzegają twarz tam, gdzie mamy do czynienia z kocią albo psią mordką czy szczurzym pyszczkiem (zob. Szwabowski, 2023). Tym samym podważają, jeśli nie wręcz odrzucają, kulturową narrację odmawiającą twarzy innym bytom niż ludzkie.

Dostrzeżenie indywidualnej niepowtarzalności każdej żywej istoty – niezależnie od gatunku, do którego przynależy – sprawia, że w chwili odejścia zmagamy się z intensywnymi emocjami. Świat nam się rozpada, powstaje niesamowita pustka, której nie da się łatwo zapełnić. W przypadku ludzi dysponujemy rytuałami społecznymi, zrozumieniem, ale też i prawami, które nie przysługują komuś, kto przeżywa stratę po nie-człowieku. „Mimo iż reakcje na śmierć zwierzęcia są zbliżone do tych, jakie występują po śmierci bliskiego człowieka – pisze Roeske – to w społeczeństwach zachodnich brakuje kulturowo usankcjonowanych mechanizmów pomagających

[2] „Również dla Zuzanny śmierć psa zapamiętana została jako silniejsze przeżycie, niż poprzedzająca ją utrata dziadków." (Roeske, 2025, s. 225)

opiekunom wyrazić swój żal, wobec czego zmuszeni są oni do poszukiwania alternatywnych sposobów radzenia sobie z żałobą" (2025, s. 216).

Roeske prezentuje te kontrkulturowe próby, opisując formy pogrzebu, upamiętniania, ale też rozmaite drogi „dochodzenia do siebie", a zarazem akcentuje napięcie między doświadczeniem jednostek a kulturowymi ramami żałoby. Dominująca kultura nie tylko często odbiera żałobnikom prawo do tego, co czują, ale też do myślenia i mówienia o własnych emocjach i przeżyciach. Nawet formy kolektywne, jak cmentarze dla zwierząt, zderzają się z przeświadczeniem o hierarchii wpisanej w umieranie. Z drugiej strony oddolne praktyki i głosy wyrażające się pomimo obojętności czy niezrozumienia, jakie napotykają w społeczeństwie, przekształcają powoli kulturę i obyczaj, coraz bardziej uwrażliwiając na istnienia inne niż ludzkie. Można powiedzieć, że związane z nimi praktyki żałoby są rodzajem uwrażliwiającej publicznej pedagogii.

Roeske zwraca uwagę na to, że mamy do czynienia z jeszcze jedną hierarchią dotyczącą umierania i prawa do żałoby:

> Psy i koty postrzegane są jako gatunki zdolne do nawiązywania bliższej relacji z człowiekiem. Predyspozycja ta miałaby wynikać z ich cech gatunkowych: bardziej rozwiniętego intelektu i wyższych kompetencji komunikacyjnych. Konsekwencją tego przekonania jest jeszcze niższy poziom społecznej akceptacji żałoby po gatunkach zwierząt towarzyszących innych niż psy i koty, w konsekwencji czego w przypadku tych gatunków spotykamy się ze zjawiskiem zwielokrotnionej nieuprawnionej żałoby. (Roeske, 2025, s. 228)

Hierarchiczny porządek opisuje także relacje między nie-ludzkimi zwierzętami towarzyszącymi, a tymi które towarzyszą nam jedynie w formie jedzenia; tymi, które są po stronie świata życia i tymi, które są po stronie świata śmierci (Konecki, 2022); tymi, które tkwią w obozach masowej produkcji i których życie trudno nazwać życiem – odmówiono im go, przemieniając w pasmo cierpień (Foer, 2019) – a których trupy wystawiane są na widok publiczny i konsumowane przy rodzinnym stole. Tych śmierci już całkiem się nie opłakuje, a byty pozbawia tak twarzy, jak imienia.

Roeske zdaje sobie sprawę z tego, że jej badania są zawężone do pewnej grupy osób, które dostrzegły pojedynczość istot żywych, które dostrzegają ich twarz i odpowiadają troską na etyczne wezwanie. Niemniej jednak można postawić pytanie, czy te osoby uwrażliwiły się też na inne byty, którym nasza kultura odmawia twarzy i które brutalnie wykorzystuje? Wiemy, że troska o nie-ludzkie zwierzęta towarzyszące niekoniecznie musi pokrywać się z troską o wszystkie nie-ludzkie zwierzęta

(zob. Singer, 2004), badania Roeske pokazują jednak, że do tego rodzaju poszerzenia horyzontów moralnych faktycznie czasem dochodzi.

Śmierć nie-ludzi niesie za sobą intensywne emocje, dla których arcy-ludzkie społeczeństwo – nie wiedzieć czemu przeświadczone o suprematyzmie człowieka i arbitralnie wykluczające szereg istnień – nie przewidziało adekwatnego miejsca we własnym obrębie. Śmierć istot poza-ludzkich ma między innymi charakter otwierający, transformujący – w wielu wypadkach pojawienie się nie-ludzkiej istoty zmieniało tych, z którymi wchodziła w interakcje. Odejście tego kogoś – danej twarzy, danego ciała, koniec określonej relacji nie do zastąpienia i nie do otworzenia – wytwarzało nowe powiązania, kierowało ku innym ciałom potrzebującym pomocy. Tak jakby doświadczenie śmierci otwierało na byty, które pozostają nieuznawane w ramach współczesnej kultury Zachodu.

To wątek interesujący z punktu widzenia pedagogiki, zarówno bowiem siła relacji z tym, co nie-ludzkie działa przekształcająco – wychowuje trochę kontrkulturowo, wyzwala ze schematów, poszerza horyzonty i czyni bardziej wrażliwym – jak i odejście tej istotnej osoby nie-ludzkiej rani nas, umożliwiając wspólnotę opartą na podatności na zranienie.

Trochę szkoda, że autorka nie pokusiła się o filozoficzną refleksję o tytułowej wspólnocie śmiertelnych. Na ile fakt bycia-ku-śmierci wpływa na konstytuowanie się wspólnotowości? Jaki rodzaj *my* wyłania się w cieniu śmierci? Gdy sięgałem po książkę, interesowało mnie, na ile koncepcja wspólnoty śmiertelnych różni się lub pokrywa z moją koncepcją wspólnoty cierpiących (Szwabowski, 2023). Nawet jeśli Roeske nie dostarcza odpowiedzi, to można jednak pokusić się o samodzielną pracę. Przedstawione przez nią opowieści ukazują horyzontalne struktury i kruchość relacji opartych na głębokim zaangażowaniu emocjonalnym. Śmierć, odchodzenie, cierpienie Innego, ukazuje *my* w nieustannym procesie wzajemnego zatroskania, w którego toku współbycie staje się równoważne ze stawaniem się na sposób nie-ludzki. Włączenie w ramy tego *my* odbywa się nie tyle na podstawie określonego zbioru cech zaklętych w Ideale, ile raczej przez podkreślenie podatności na zranienie, kruchości istoty czującej – śmierć staje się wydarzeniem w znacznym stopniu otwierającym, uwrażliwiającym, wymuszając delikatny sposób bycia właśnie z uwagi na zranienie.

Pomimo dążenia do „obiektywności" i „naukowości", książka Roeske jest ważną pozycją. Wpisuje się w publiczną pedagogię w imieniu nie-ludzi. To znaczy, wpisuje się w strategię nie-ludzkiej pedagogiki serca, podważając rozróżnienie na ludzi i nie-ludzi. Jest to głos, który pomimo „akademickiego" powstrzymywania się od

zaangażowania, angażuje się w horyzontowanie wspólnot i rozszerzanie naszego horyzontu o istnienia inne niż ludzkie. Roeske nie tylko przytacza „dane", udaje jej się – zwłaszcza gdy zawierza opowieści – uwrażliwiać osoby czytające. Dzięki naukowemu dystansowi, książka nie porusza tak dogłębnie i boleśnie jak reportaże Darii Grzesiek o żałobach po zwierzętach poza-ludzkich (Grzesiek, 2025), co może okazać się przekonujące dla tych osób czytających, które wolałyby uniknąć silnych wzruszeń. Książka Roeske wpisuje się w tendencję powolnego destabilizowania antropocentryzmu. Mówienie o prawie do żałoby po zwierzętach nie-ludzkich może oddolnie przekształcać dominującą kulturę. Upamiętnianie osób nie-ludzkich, które odeszły, snucie opowieści o tym, jak wielki wpływ wywarły na określone osoby, jak odmieniły życia i jak diametralnie ich świat się rozpadł (i przebudował) po ich odejściu, może stanowić publiczną pedagogię uwrażliwiającą na twarze inne niż ludzkie.

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