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The Past as Part of a City's Identity¹

In his book entitled *Spoleczne wytworzenie przestrzeni (The Social Production of Space)*, Bohdan Jałowiecki contends that “space is the permanent remembrance of a society, and hence what exists today is deeply entrenched in the more or less distant past”² (Jałowiecki 2010: 13). Along the same lines, Jałowiecki recalls the idea of Fernand Braudel, who writes that “any city as a tight society with its crises, intervals and disasters [...] must be placed and understood in the complex of its surrounding villages and the archipelagos of neighbouring cities [...] and hence must be situated in a lively motion, which more or less delves into the past, sometimes even into the distant reaches of time” (Braudel 1971: 65, in Jałowiecki 2010: 13). The recollection of these well-known thoughts by the two prominent humanists is intended to clearly indicate that the contemporary thinking about a city and the interpretations of the various aspects of urbanness cannot ignore the past.

Thinking about the past of a city may concentrate on its various elements. For instance, it may refer to the urban structure of a city, the urban society, the biographies of specific urban residents or their families associated with the city's history. In the last case, of particular interest is the interweaving of the fates of individuals and their families with the history of a city. A city's history can also be explored from the perspective of the present urban residents and one can consider which elements of the urban history, such as events or figures, are important for and remembered or cherished by the current populations. There-

¹ The text uses modified excerpts by Tomasz Nawrocki from the book entitled *Miasto. Przestrzeń. Tożsamość. Studium trzech miast (A City. Space. Identity. A Study of Three Cities)* (Bierwiazzonek, Dymnicka, Kajdanek, Nawrocki 2017).

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² All translations are made by the authors.

fore, one can consider to what extent a city's past encoded in the space, yet also originating from other sources of knowledge, penetrates into the awareness of its residents, thereby not only forming a handy body of knowledge about the city, but also creating an urban identity.

The present article will attempt to present how important the past is for the current identity of cities. The analysis will be based on the data obtained during the studies conducted in the years 2014–2015 in the cities of Gdańsk, Gliwice, and Wrocław. The empirical part of the text will be preceded by a brief theoretical and methodological introduction.

Urban Identity, History, and Collective Memory – Theoretical Contexts

In a typical dictionary-related context, identity is understood as a “collection of features belonging to an author/ a social entity in its own convictions” (Bokszański 2008: 16). Such an approach can be a successful starting point for the analyses of individual and social identities, because – in this case – consideration is given to statements or judgements of a self-defining nature. However, it is impossible to use such an examination for a city. The point is that a city will never define itself alone. In this case, the definition layout is created by urban actors, both those of an institutional nature and the residents of a city, and sometimes even temporary residents. It is they who make a selection from amongst the most essential urban characteristics and features, indicating those that create the urban identity (cf. Piotrowski 1994: 171). These features include, in particular, the history of a city and its society, geographical location, aesthetic values, art resources (both the art present in an urban space and the one presented at museums and exhibitions), architecture, and the layout of public spaces (cf. Żmudzińska-Nowak 2007: 73; Madurowicz 2008: 103, 115). The identity of a city, similarly to other identities (cf. Castells 2008: 23), is constructed through social interpretations of characteristic urban features. Such an approach to the urban identity also points out to the fact that it is not given to us once and for all, yet it is constantly being unveiled and reproduced (Massey 2005: 4).

The constructivist understanding of the urban identity, which has been adopted in this article, is of particular significance when we take into account the urban space as an important element creating this identity. While presenting the past of a city as a category that creates its identity, it is necessary to consider the differences between history and collective memory. Seen from this angle, history is interpreted as a “discursive structure, [...] in which all the faces are equivalent. It aims to present the so-called truth. In memory, on the other hand, the past, present, and future form a continuum where the subject is more important than the object. Memory is selective and evaluates facts, transfers values

and norms, and the category of truth is secondary to them” (Assmann 2009a, in Saryusz-Wolska 2011: 35). The aim of history should therefore be to pursue an objectified description and analysis of the past, while collective memory represents “a certain set (system) of convictions referring to the past, which belong to social awareness, in which the individuals’ own recollections are mixed with messages provided by other people” (Ziółkowski 2000). Hence, the analysis of the social importance ascribed to the past, as a category of the urban identity, should take into consideration not only historical texts but also, and perhaps above all, collective memory of residents associated with their city of residence.

Marek Ziółkowski highlights that collective memory “consists of socially shared attitudes towards the past, which always carry cognitive, emotional and evaluative as well as behavioural components” (Ziółkowski 2000). However, it should be noted that history is not completely free from the emotional aspect and hence, the proposal by Barbara Szacka is justified. According to the proposal, both history and social (but also collective) memory should be considered as Weber’s ideal types (Szacka 2006: 30, cited in Skoczylas 2014: 25). Such an approach is all the more legitimate since “there is not a single History [...]. In this regard, history is merely another interpretation concerning the past and, in addition, a non-homogenous one” (Skoczylas 2014: 21).

The present study will be focused on the cognitive aspect of collective memory. In such a case, it is necessary to consider the fact that nowadays knowledge about the past comes not only, as noted by Ziółkowski, from other people but also from other sources. Therefore, the permeation of one’s own biographical experiences, family histories, but also knowledge of different origins, is becoming increasingly higher. It is worth noting that the emergence of a considerable number of accounts concerning the past, on the one hand, gives an opportunity to look at history from numerous perspectives, but – on the other hand – leads to fragmentation and selectivity of the knowledge about cities. The latter situation is favoured by the availability of information in the media, particularly in the Internet resources, which often – besides essential studies or historical sources – offer a set of fundamental data which are frequently more of a curiosity than a reflection of the significant and complete knowledge about a city’s history.

In the cognitive dimension of collective memory, an essential role is played by material vehicles of memory present in the urban space, such as monuments, commemorative plaques, information about a city’s history, permanent or temporary open-air exhibitions, as well as increasingly common popular science exhibitions located in shopping centres (cf. Skoczylas 2014: 30). Meeting the consumers’ expectations makes it possible to disseminate specific yet selected information and knowledge about a city, which is chosen by some social actors – most often those linked to the local authorities or related institutions (e.g., museums), thereby making it easier to obtain such information and, as a result, increasing the chances of such information being remembered and incorporated

into a handy body of knowledge about the city. This body of knowledge helps, in turn, in answering the following questions: What is a city? What is the city like? Why is it such and not different? Of course, these and similar questions are not posed by everybody and all the time. Sometimes, they do not appear at all and a city is defined as a space where one lives, works, and spends their free time. Sometimes, they appear during breakthroughs which are important from the perspective of individual biographies (e.g., moving home) or significant for the city's history (e.g., natural disasters, wars, changes in the political system, or in the affiliation to a particular nation). Such changes, which are often dynamic and dramatic, lead to the redefinition of both the individual identity and the identity of a city. Even the relatively undramatic change of the Polish political system in 1989 had identity-related consequences for the cities, proving once again that the urban identity is unstable. This is interestingly brought to our attention by Ewa Rewers who writes about the process of identity modernisation (Rewers 2012: 7–15). According to Rewers, this process has been divided into three stages in the case of Polish cities after 1989. The first stage “presented the past, along with its signs and traces, as an unproductive context” (Rewers 2012: 10), which manifested itself in the destruction of communist symbols. The second stage is related to de-traditionalisation, especially that associated with a national state (Rewers 2012: 10), which is visible in highlighting the significance of a city or region as a point of reference for identity. The third stage is related to the “production of material worlds, which leads to acceleration in the flow of products and meanings precluding themselves from being placed in historical contexts” (Rewers 2012: 10–11). Examples may include artistic installations in public spaces that are supposed to correspond with the presence, without references to history. All the stages of identity modernisation are driven by urban actors who redefine the urban meanings, thereby leading to changes in the identity of a city.

Methodological Remarks

The answer to the question of how much the past of a city constitutes an important element constructing the urban identity will be given on the basis of data collected during the research project entitled “The identity of a city and its residents versus the public space. A study of three cities,” carried out in the years 2014–2017 in Gdańsk, Gliwice, and Wrocław. The text will use selected data obtained through questionnaire-based interviews, free-form interviews with social experts, and content analysis of strategic urban documents. Three hundred questionnaire-based interviews were conducted in each of the cities studied. The studies employed the quota-based sample selection procedure (according to sex, age, residence, the situation in the labour market, and education), and the interviews were carried out in the spring of 2015. The interviews with social

experts were conducted from September 2014 to June 2015. There were twenty such interviews in each of the cities (with twenty-one in Gliwice) and the panel of experts included historians, architects, urban planners, sociologists, artists, and representatives of the authorities, all related to the city. The content analysis encompassed the most important strategic urban documents, with a view to finding references to the history of the cities, understanding of their identity, and relevance attached to public spaces. The triangulation of research techniques (Konecki 2000: 20) allowed us to obtain a rich and diverse research material, which made it possible to answer the following questions: How important is the past for the identity of the cities studied? and How is the handy body of knowledge about the cities' history shaped in the minds of their residents?

The selection of Gdańsk, Gliwice, and Wrocław for the studies was deliberate and the key variable determining their inclusion was that all these cities did not belong to Poland prior to 1939. Due to this fact, after the Second World War, each of the three cities experienced a practically complete exchange of their population related to the migration or displacement of the German population and the arrival of the Polish population in their place. This fact alone makes the questions about the urban identity and the role of the past in shaping it particularly interesting. The first generation of migrants most often arrived in a previously unknown city, destroyed by the war, as well as marked with symbolic elements related to the German culture and history. Therefore, such a situation required huge efforts put in the adaptation to the urban space (cf. Łukowski 2002), but also to the city's history. This process of adaptation, redefinition, and restoration of the pre-1945 events to the collective memory continues and the questions about the importance of the past for the construction of the urban identity are still relevant today.

Even though the selected cities differ in terms of the number of inhabitants, with Wrocław inhabited by 632 thousand people, Gdańsk by 461 thousand, and Gliwice by 185 thousand, as well as their geographical location, their historical similarity – which is crucial for the perspective adopted in the studies – makes it possible to draw parallels amongst them. This is also proved by the data which indicate that only 34 out of 900 people surveyed declared to be connected with their city at least two generations back (in Gdańsk, there were seven such people, in Gliwice – 16 and in Wrocław – 11).

City Authorities towards the Past

The activities of the city authorities are crucial for the development of the urban identity. It is the task of the main actors of the urban politics to propose a certain type of narrative about the city which is confronted with the ideas of

its residents and city users. Local authorities also have the tools to impose a certain narrative about the city. This narrative shapes ideas and is used to put these ideas into practice by the residents and city users (Michałowska 2014: 223). This has a substantial effect on the development of the history of a specific city. An important role in shaping the city's identity by the authorities is played by their attitude towards the past of the "city of walls" and the "city of societies" (Wallis, in Jałowiecki 2010: 315). Together with Lech Nijakowski, we define this attitude as the remembrance policy, meaning "all intentional actions by [city – K.B., T.N.] politicians and officials, having formal legitimacy, the aim of which is to solidify, remove, or redefine the specific contents of social remembrance (Nijakowski 2008: 44).

The analysis of urban documents and interviews with experts made it possible to distinguish three types of approaches to the past in the cities examined. The first is known as the technocratic postmodernist remembrance policy of the Gliwice authorities. Remembrance is not the object of intentional actions taken by the city politicians and officials. This is not a subject *that is being developed*. [...] *Gliwice has no historical policy. This is not something consciously created and cared for* (GL_8)³. What counts is the postmodernist attitude towards the future and efficient fulfilment of the current needs of the residents. It is important for the authorities to raise the standard of living, rather than focus on identity-related issues. It is no coincidence that the promotional slogan of the city is: "The future is here." The tower of the radio station depicted in the logo of Gliwice is not intended as a reference to the city's past, but its idea is to show the innovative technical solutions present in the city. Adopting such a promotional slogan, in principle, *cuts out the history*, which was pointed out to us by an architect actively involved in the issues related to the city (GL_13). The thinking of the authorities is focused on modernity and the future outside the context of place and the past. The authorities of Gliwice solve the current problems related to the refurbishment of historical buildings (by investing considerable funds), and support the fully functional Municipal Museum, yet as long as there is no conflict with the vision of a modern city. Then, as with the construction of *Drogowa Trasa Średnicowa* (ring road) that intersects the old urban arrangement, or with the lack of approval for the initiative to commemorate former Jewish residents of the city by installing memorial stones (Stolpersteine) in the pavement, it is the future that matters, not the history. Therefore, the intention is to avoid conflict situations, and bringing up the German past or the Jewish issues poses a threat of having a serious impact on the local authorities and entangling them in supra-local disputes. We were told this directly by one of our interlocutors: *After pinning the label of a Germanophile on somebody, saying that he or she likes the*

³ Letters in brackets indicate the city: GD-Gdańsk, GL-Gliwice, W-Wrocław and numbers mean the number of interviews.

Germans, some percentage of the society is not going to vote for this person. And that's why I feel that here in Upper Silesia, it is still common for the rulers who oftentimes really have nothing [against the Germans – K.B., T.N.], but explicitly tell interesting stories, not to do so in an official sense, because they feel that they can lose something, some part of the society will not understand it, their interest (GL_07).

The essence of the city authorities' attitude towards the past was expressed by a sociologist who has been related to Gliwice for a long time. During the interview, he said: *If the city authorities are autocratic or technocratic, but at the same time sociotechnical enough to neutralise their opponents, the problem of identity and identification of residents is not undertaken, because it is not expressive as a catalyst that mobilises people to orient themselves to something more than the conformism of the daily life. This conformism and comfort of the daily life are predominant and do not activate any disputes concerning somebody's values that would create the feeling of community amongst residents.* This is how the authorities concentrate on the future, rather than the past of the city and fulfil no local historical policy.

An utterly different case is represented by Gdańsk. We are dealing here with the reflexive remembrance policy. The authorities of the city undertake deliberate and intentional actions to restore the city's remembrance. They do not impose a single narrative which serves their interests. This was the case, for instance, with Gdańsk liberals who would refer to the liberal periods in the development of Gdańsk. Instead, they propose continuous redefining of the city's identity through references to the works by the eminent German expert on Gdańsk, Peter O. Loew, or reading it through the books by Grass, Huelle, or Chwin. The Mayor of Gdańsk – Mr Paweł Adamowicz – told us: *The debate about identity should continue non-stop. When we were organising [...] the 1st World Reunion of Gdańsk Citizens, it was the beginning of the debate over the identity of Gdańsk. Every so often, the discussion about identity has got new chapters, new openings, new stories by Huelle, Chwin, Wajda, and Loew. New inspirations keep emerging, for instance, the Encyclopaedia of Gdańsk or the knowledge competition about Gdańsk. Such discussions help in developing the city's image, both internal and external in terms of how we are perceived by others.* In another part of the interview, he noted: *I think that the discussions about identity, about who we are and where we come from, form a set of fundamental questions. Each generation should be subjected to such a mental effort. This is not an intellectual exclusiveness. It is the alphabet of the man, the citizen. This can never end. New generations, new people are coming, and the issue is still being redefined (GD_15).* His close associate commented along the same lines: *Contrary to some historians, I believe that a myth is creative. And what happened thanks to Grass and the series of Tusk albums, thanks to Chwin, Huelle, Abramowicz, this is something extremely creative and something that shows how culture, art, tried to create something that pene-*

trated into people's hearts. People very often talk Grass, Huelle, and are aware of this, it doesn't matter at all whether it is the objective historical truth. Importance should also be attached to what has been created in various narratives (GD_7). Through literature and photography, the past returns and re-creates the city's identity and a new community of memory.

The subsequent stories about Gdańsk, albums (*Był sobie Gdańsk [There Was Once Gdańsk]*), and historical elaborations inspired a multiannual discussion that led to *familiarisation with the Germanness of the city. This is a great job that has been achieved through the contribution of people of culture, writers, and artists. This is the way the city was, the way the history of Gdańsk is. We really have no need to fear that they will come and drive us out. Also because of the fact that we have accepted the history of Gdańsk, that we consider it, yet without getting into a discussion with the facts (GD_13).* First, the myth of the old city of Gdańsk was rejected in favour of the city's multiculturalism, only to realise that the city's multiculturalism masked the German past: *When we speak of Gdańsk's multiculturalism, it is even from the works by Peter Loew that we can learn that our so far existing structures of thought on the multiculturalism of Gdańsk are broken. Jewish, Mennonite, and Flemish admixtures were, indeed, present but as a 'seasoning,' rather than the essence or the foundation. It was difficult for us in the 1990s to say that Gdańsk had been German for all the centuries. It was even hard for the enlightened post-Solidarity elites to get accustomed to this history lesson. We forged the myth of multicultural Gdańsk. We see that there are still a lot of white spots (GD_15).*

The issue of the attitude towards the past and of the construction of Gdańsk's identity on such attitude is also present in urban programming documents. The strategy entitled *Gdańsk 2030 plus. Strategia Rozwoju Miasta [Gdańsk 2030 Plus. Development Strategy]* highlighted the importance of *protecting and strengthening the material and spiritual heritage of Gdańsk, reinforcing the community and cultural identity of Gdańsk citizens and creating conditions for neighbourly integration, building the position of Gdańsk as a multinational centre of culture, expanding the field and increasing the availability of culture as well as encouraging the development of creativity and art, stimulating passion and interest, actively participating in the culture and creating conditions for personal development (SRG2030+: 18).* The issues of culture, identity, and the legacy of the past are strongly present in the strategic urban documents. This also translates into concrete urban actions which, on the one hand, take care of the city's past and, on the other hand, support the debate over the identity of Gdańsk and its residents.

Yet another example is represented by Wrocław. The local political elites are very well aware of the fact that *the management of remembrance is part of making politics and strengthening their power (WR_18).* Therefore, they engage in the remembrance policy subject to the promotion of the city. Remembrance

and identity are not an autotelic aim in this respect, but they serve to create the image of Wrocław as a City of Meetings – a city open and available to others, welcoming diversity, both from the past and contemporary times. *Promotion... So there is pressure to be well-perceived and look good. And this awareness that you are amongst large cities* (WR_10). The same interlocutor adds: *It is good to have a positive narrative, even if it contradicts the facts. The city gave and still gives a lot of steam into this type of stories. They were produced beyond the residents. This is completely different than the project entitled "I remember that..." ["Pamiętam, że"] fulfilled in the "Secret Sets" ("Tajne komplety")* (WR_10). This is confirmed by another interlocutor who was engaged in the development of Wrocław's application in the contest to win the title of the European Capital of Culture 2016: *In my opinion, the city uses history selectively. References to history are rather incidental and instrumental, as part of the local policy and concrete decisions* (WR_18). Even one of the Mayor's closest associates told us that the pre-1945 history has: *no relevance. No relevance for today's society of Wrocław. We like to think of ourselves as part of a multicultural, centuries-old history. But it is bla-bla. I believe that it does not matter at all to young people. It can create a positive well-being to be living in such a city. But to feel a resident of Wrocław, it is not necessary* (WR_16).

This trend was also clearly visible in the language in which our interlocutors described the remembrance policy of Wrocław, irrespective of whether or not they represented institutions related to the local authorities. They spoke of *the city's image, of buying a marketing product (Wrocław as a society has been driven by the idea that it is very modern. I do not know whether it bought a marketing product or honestly believed that it is open and modern* (WR_17)), of the district of four temples as a created product, of creating the identity through marketing communication (*they create this identity through marketing communication and use it as a tool, what do they use it for?* (WR_11)).

In this way, the city's past has become an important element of its promotion. It serves to build both the internal and the external image, as well as to attract tourists and investors. This is the spirit in which the provisions of strategic urban documents, such as the *Strategy Wrocław in the Perspective 2020 plus*, should be read: *A city with a tradition of one thousand years, which bears the influences of various nations and cultures. A place regained by some and lost by others. A city anointed to build the European harmony above resentment (Davies) and, at the same time, to become a place of warning against the consequences of wrong choices* [13]. Similarly, the declaration from the same document claims that the city needs: *restoration of historical remembrance. Strengthening the symbolic realm (places of reference, monuments, terminology). Sharing the sentimental realm* [29]. The past can also be practically utilised because of the fact that it has left *encouraging proofs of former innovative undertakings in the urban fabric (historical technology monuments of prime importance), which is intended to inspire current*

residents to act, and the tool for this inspiration can be the “provision of success models.” Many of them can be found in the history of the City. They must be properly exhibited in the residents’ imagination [2020+: 28].

Our interlocutors were critical of how these assumptions are put into practice. It was pointed out to us that the declarations of the city’s multiculturalism are intended to divert its attention away from the German past. Wrocław has not worked through (despite its declarations) this issue as it was done in Gdańsk. We were told about this by a journalist from Wrocław: *This Polish-German dualism is being replaced with a polygon, because the percentage of Poles in the dualism would be very small. The addition of other components serves to provide balance (WR_1).*

For the majority of our interlocutors, multiculturalism is a *phantom* which does not appear in the daily life of the city. This was bluntly stated by a university lecturer: *We have a heritage park – merely three streets and this is a district of four cultures, and one in which they cannot rebuild a synagogue, where there is no Rabbi, no community, but there are Nazis, yet they are currently against Islam and Muslims. There is a belief that the city is multicultural (80 per cent of the respondents in my studies believe so), it’s a conviction. However, there is no “live-ly” multiculturalism, with Japanese shops, Turkish and other cultures in the city’s image, in architecture... but we know that we have to be multicultural, so people think it is so (WR_9).* An art historian presented a similar view: *Another example, which is undeniable but it should be, is the myth of multicultural Wrocław, which is a complete non-sense, but it doesn’t disturb anyone and nobody is outraged at the fact that we call the District of Four... yes, that is right, Cultures. Denominations... temples all right, but cultures – it’s a discussion about phantoms. And everybody is happy that such a phantom has been generated and is happy that it exists. [...] It is just pleasant. And they want it to be nice. Wrocław – the meeting place and it’s nice (WR_11).*

Wrocław is a perfect example of what was described by Mateusz Błaszczyk, a sociologist coming from this city, who once noted that the identity policy may treat the city’s identity as “the object of activities that serve two general and interlinked tasks: the emergence (standing out) on the global market of locations and the construction of an attractive presentation for its users” (Błaszczyk 2015: 38). Translating the remarks by the Wrocław researcher into the language of David Harvey’s concepts, the politics of memory would serve to enhance the symbolic capital resources of the city (Harvey 2012: 146).

In summary, it must be stated that it is only in Gdańsk that the authorities’ policy with regard to the past performs the function of distinction, meaning that – as written by Aleida Assmann – it serves to shape the collective identity (2009b: 135). This is unlike Gliwice and Wrocław, where the remembrance policy legitimises the authorities’ activities and is subject to the urban narrative proposed by them.

The Past in Alternative Narratives

In the studies, we focused our interest not only on the official narratives by the city authorities, but also on the views about and activities towards the past as presented by other actors on the urban stage. Therefore, we are going to dedicate our attention to alternative narratives which were proposed by the groups and institutions not directly related to the official authorities. They contrasted their own stories about the city and its past with the official narrative by the authorities. There was not one such narrative, but it was common for utterly different urban narratives to clash with one another in the three cities examined. A city's past was looked at from the perspective of arrivals from the eastern borderlands of Poland (the Kresy narrative), there were attempts to prove its Polishness (the Piast narrative), references were made to local specificities (the Kashubian narrative in Gdańsk, the Silesian narrative in Gliwice), the cities' German past was evoked (the German narrative), and efforts were made to look critically at the dominant narratives and "work" upon the city's past (the discursive narrative). An example where various stories about the cities' past are interwoven might be the statement by one of our interlocutors from Wrocław: *And there is surely a large group of people who will intuitively pursue one of them and, without knowing the fact, will identify themselves with one of the narratives. It's about these three poles: raising the Polishness of Wrocław, "the Gomułka's successors," the stress on Polishness, because it is being neglected as there is too much Germanness, because Poland without Wrocław would be an incomplete country...; the German extreme, because it is never pure: we owe them everything that is good, buildings, urban layout, Poles only renovated something, but there is not much added value; we want to perceive everything and see the value in all three elements: in the multi-age and multi-national and cultural German tradition, in what we brought and in what we did with those two things after World War II and there is the genius loci. They [narratives – K.B., T.N.] never appear in their pure form. When we take such basic identity attitudes, then all the discourses can be boiled down to those three dimensions (WR_8).*

This interweaving of narratives does not actually appear only in Gdańsk, where the discursive remembrance policy has led to the marginalisation of different approaches to the city's past. The discourse takes place within the framework delineated by the activities of the city authorities. This helps those who refer to German traditions, those who favour the hanseatic tradition, and those who underline the city's connections with Poland to fit into the official narrative.

The situation is different in Gliwice, where – as opposed to the city authorities – people stand up for the German and Silesian past of the city. A great role in this regard is played by the House for Polish-German Cooperation and the groups revolving around the local museum. The narrative of the Polish former Borderland (Kresy), which was very strong in the post-war years, is losing its

significance. The same is true about the Piast narrative that proves the Polishness of Gliwice. However, the consequences of many years of this narrative being relevant are still present today. The following statement by a prominent writer connected with the city is symptomatic in this context. He said: *This is how the historical narrative of the Gliwice authorities goes. I organically hate it, it really gets on my nerves, this stupidly Polish-centric narrative. You know, on one of the buildings at the Market Square in Gliwice, there is a board, one meter by one meter, which commemorates the “extraordinarily important” fact that this tenement building had once housed the Golden Goose Hotel, in which – I don’t remember exactly – either Słowacki or Krasicki had slept the other day. On the one hand, I think it is stupid. Stupid in a sense that it is out of touch with the reality, it is a clumsy construct. But for me it is also somehow – I don’t want to overuse this word – offensive at a certain level. For me, and with the awareness of my family who has always been living here, if one can say so, since we can remember, and we can remember far back into the past, this Polish historical narrative completely ignores the fact that the Silesian historical narrative is entirely incompatible with it. Over the last thousand years, such turning points in the Silesian history were completely different than in Poland. [...] There is no historical awareness which would correspond to history in a one-to-one fashion. But I have the impression that this historical awareness of Silesian people living in Silesia is still a bit closer to reality than the awareness constructed in 1945, which offends common sense with Sobieski, the Piast Castle, and what not (GL_6).* This statement aptly shows the long-term marginalisation of the Silesian and German past of Gliwice.

Yet another example is represented by Wrocław, where the alternative narrative presented by the community involved in promoting the city, primarily concerns the critical approach to the *positive narrative which Wrocław citizens believed in* (WR_10) (cf. Makaro and Dolińska 2013). The attempts to discover the city’s identity do not only involve references to its more distant past. An important role in this regard is played by the deconstruction of the myth about the flood and renovation of the market square as the founding factors for the contemporary community of Wrocław citizens. It is only through departure from the faith in myths that the pre-1945 history of the city can be confronted.

Collective Memory of the Residents – Famous Figures in the City’s History

Nearly one hundred years ago, Stefan Czarnowski highlighted the importance of remembering prominent figures to make the human collectivity stronger and more profound (Czarnowski 1956: 234). Territorial collectivities need myths about heroes and great events from the past in order to strengthen their identity. Such myths are also needed by urban residents if they dream of being more

than merely a collectivity of inhabitants joined by a common place of residence. Therefore, an attempt was made to analyse the figures preserved in the collective memory of the residents in the three cities studied.

The studies revealed how much the cities, except for Gdańsk, lack such figures. Admittedly, a considerable part of the residents mentioned at least one person who was important for the city's history – 84.7 per cent, but two such persons were mentioned by only 56.5 per cent of the residents, and three – by only 27.6 per cent. This result was significantly influenced by the scores from Gdańsk, where at least one person was mentioned by 95.7 per cent of the residents (two by 70.7 per cent, and three by 42.4 per cent). In Wrocław, at least one person was mentioned by 81.7 per cent of the residents (two by 46.4 per cent, and three by 21.0 per cent). Gliwice performed the worst in this regard, with at least one person being mentioned by 76.7 per cent of the residents (two by 52.7 per cent, and three by 19.3 per cent).

The responses of Gdańsk citizens indicate that the inhabitants of this city are familiar with their own history. Their awareness includes both the nearer and the more distant past. The figure that dominated the responses in Gdańsk was Lech Wałęsa. The leader of the “Solidarity” movement received 71.3 per cent of votes (contrary to the previous study by Maria Lewicka (2012: 483)). The fourth place was taken by Anna Walentynowicz – another figure associated with the beginnings of this movement. The “Solidarity” chaplain, Rev. Henryk Jankowski, and Henryka Krzywonos were also mentioned, with the scores of 2.7 per cent and 2.0 per cent respectively. Besides contemporary figures of the Polish history, the leading places were also taken by historical figures related to the more distant past of Gdańsk. The second place was taken by Jan Heweliusz, the seventeenth-century astronomer and mathematician (who came in first in the studies by Lewicka). He was mentioned by 46.3 per cent of Gdańsk citizens, which was more than in the case of the leaders of the “ranking” in Gliwice and Wrocław. The next place was taken by the prominent German writer, Günter Grass – 13.3 per cent. Two other Germans were also indicated amongst the most important historical figures of the city, including the physicist – Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit (7.3 per cent) and the philosopher – Artur Schopenhauer (5.3 per cent). The lists provided by Gdańsk citizens were the richest and most often (when compared with Wrocław and Gliwice) included figures from a more distant history of Gdańsk. However, while analysing these results, one cannot forget that the city was linked to important figures that have marked their place in the contemporary history of Poland and are therefore present in the narrative offered by the central media and schools.

The indications were manifestly different in Gliwice. The results showed that most inhabitants of Gliwice function outside the history of their city. The highest number of votes was received by Oscar Troplowitz, the Jewish inventor of Nivea cream, who had lived in Gliwice as a child (18.3 per cent). Such results were obtained due to the fact that this figure has been fostered in the city. The second

and third places were taken jointly by contemporary figures, namely Zygmunt Frankiewicz – a long-term mayor of the city, and Jerzy Buzek – a former prime minister and the President of the European Parliament (17.7 per cent). The fourth place (16.0 per cent) was awarded to Horst Bienek – a German author writing about Gliwice, who was followed by Jan III Sobieski (13.4 per cent), who had once crossed the city on his way to Vienna. The score of more than 10 per cent was also obtained by Tadeusz Różewicz (11.3 per cent), who had lived in Gliwice for nearly ten years. Interestingly enough, Różewicz was less commonly indicated by the residents of Wrocław, where he lived until his death (5.7 per cent). John Baildon, the Scottish industrialist, scored 9.0 per cent. More than 5.0 per cent of votes was also achieved by Wojciech Pszoniak (7.3 per cent) – an eminent Polish actor, and by Fr. Marcin Strzoda – a 17th-century theologian connected with Gliwice.

Even though the majority of indications were obtained by Tropłowicz, the first six places were dominated by figures related to the Polish-centric narrative about the city. Much worse results were obtained by individuals linked to the more distant Silesian history of Gliwice, such as Fr. Marcin Strzoda. Attention is also drawn to the presence of Jan III Sobieski, who had merely passed through Gliwice the other day. The king was recognised amongst the top figures thanks to the presence of a long-term narrative that underlines any (even the smallest of) his links with Poland. Jan III Sobieski's stay in Gliwice is also recalled in the material vehicles of memory, including two commemorative plaques placed on the city hall, the first dating back to 1883, while the other – to 1983.

In Wrocław, the list of the most important historical figures for the city was definitely dominated by contemporary individuals. Those were people who embody the contemporary spirit of Wrocław's specificity – in the post-flood period, with its refurbished market square, investments such as IBM, Google, and major events (Expo, Euro, ESK, World Games, etc.). The score of more than 5.0 per cent was obtained only by the two subsequent mayors of the city (Rafał Dutkiewicz – 22.7 per cent, Bohdan Zdrojewski – 12.3 per cent), a prominent linguist and a well-known TV personality (Jan Miodek – 9.0 per cent) and one of the most outstanding Polish poets (Tadeusz Różewicz – 5.7 per cent). Max Berg, a German architect and local politician ranked as low as fifth, but he was only indicated by 4.0 per cent of the residents. Individuals related to the city before 1945 were only marginally indicated. These data provide further evidence that Wrocław functions outside its own history. These results are similar to those obtained in earlier studies by Maria Lewicka (2012: 481).

Collective Memory of the Residents – The Most Important Events in the History of the Cities

The above results were confirmed by responses to the request to indicate the most significant events from the past of the cities studied. The city of Gdańsk

stood out again, while Wrocław and Gliwice turned out to be the cities that do not have “strong” roots in their own past. A relatively high percentage of respondents in all of the cities mentioned at least one event (88.6 per cent), with at least two events being mentioned by considerably fewer respondents (65.6 per cent), and at least three merely by a third of the respondents (35.1 per cent). In Gdańsk, 96.3 per cent of the respondents indicated at least one event, while 54.3 per cent of the residents indicated at least three such events. Considerably worse results were obtained in Gliwice, where 80.7 per cent of Gliwice residents indicated at least one event from the city's past, while at least three events were indicated by merely 22.0 per cent. The situation is again similar in Wrocław, where 88.7 per cent of the respondents indicated at least one event, while 29.0 per cent of the residents indicated at least three such events.

The residents of Wrocław also stood out by their least frequent indications of events from before the Second World War (13.1 per cent) and most frequent indications of post-war events (58.7 per cent). The residents of Gdańsk and Gliwice more often referred to the distant past (18.6 per cent and 19.7 per cent respectively). The latter, in turn, were most likely to relate to the war period (43.8 per cent) and least likely to mention the post-war events (36.1 per cent). However, it should be borne in mind that these data were affected not only by the community of a given city being rooted in the past, but also by the significance of the events from the past (e.g., the Gleiwitz incident in Gliwice and the events related to the “Solidarity” movement). More information about the functioning of the past in the awareness of residents will be provided by the analysis of the frequency with which historical events were indicated in each of the cities.

Gdańsk is a city which experienced events of high importance for the history of Poland. This was reflected in the indications made by Gdańsk citizens. If, in the case of questions about the people who have marked the history of the city, they delved into the more distant past, in their responses to the questions about historical events, they indicated those which are important for the history of Poland. The narrative by Gdańsk citizens revolved around the workers' protest and the emergence of the “Solidarity” movement as well as around the events related to the outbreak and course of the Second World War. It was only the indication of the Free City of Danzig (12.3 per cent) that broke with this convention.

The narrative by Gliwice citizens about the past was dominated by the Gleiwitz incident (55.7 per cent). This was the event that took place in Gliwice and went down in the history of Poland. As a matter of fact, the knowledge of Gliwice citizens about the history of their city boils down to the provocation which was used by Hitler as a pretext to unleash military action. It is supplemented by the recollection of John Paul II's stay in this city (21.7 per cent) and Jan III Sobieski who was passing through (14.3 per cent). What is quite interesting is the latter event which, despite its historically marginal nature, has become deeply rooted in the collective memory of Gliwice citizens (for reasons already discussed). This

set of responses is supplemented by the establishment of the Silesian University of Technology (6.7 per cent). Attention is drawn to the almost complete absence of the historical narrative of Silesia and references to the city's German past. The event that attracted two hundred thousand residents, namely the landing of the Graf Zeppelin airship in Gliwice (1931), is not represented in the memory of the city's residents.

In the case of Wrocław, the collective memory is focused on the war and contemporary events. The city's past begins along with the Second World War, and the key "places of memory" (as understood by Pierre Nora 2001) are the flood from 1997 (22.7 per cent), the Euro 2012 (20.7 per cent, with 5.7 per cent in Gdańsk) and the papal pilgrimage (11.3 per cent). When the Piast narrative failed, Wrocław was left – as a matter of fact – without any former history. A symbolic component of Wrocław citizens' memory heritage (cf. Hahn and Traba 2012: 15) is, on the one hand, their tremendous commitment during the flood and, on the other hand, the commercial sporting event of Euro 2012.

Communities of Memory?

The studies reveal different images of collective memory in the cities studied. They also differ in terms of their remembrance policies in force. Gdańsk is "immersed" in the more distant past, trying to face this problem. The remembrance of Gliwice and Wrocław basically dates back only to the Second World War. It is from that period onwards that the remembrance of these two cities begins. This is not changed by the passive remembrance policy, or rather the lack of it amongst the local authorities. Only few entities are involved in the alternative discourse concerning the city's past. Therefore, we believe that the remembrance of the war and the annexation of Gliwice and Wrocław to Poland are the founding memories that, according to Jan Assmann, relate to the very beginnings of the cities (2009: 84). This means that it is only in the case of Gdańsk that we are facing the cultural memory, or the stored history, which goes beyond the recollections of the closest past and transforms itself into a myth. The remembrance of Gliwice and Wrocław citizens is more of a communicative nature, referring exactly to the shared remembrance of the recent years (cf. 2009: 80–88). Such remembrance fails to meet one of the two criteria for collective memory, namely duration (Szpociński 2006). According to the studies, the contents relating to the more distant past are relatively little known to the residents and, as already stressed before, they are basically not the subject of commemoration and discussion.⁴

⁴ According to Andrzej Szpociński, these criteria include: duration – the memory is known to the members of a community, intrigues them and encourages their reflection; as well as functionality – it is significant for the functioning of a community (it is conducive to identification and legitimises order in a group) (Szpociński and Kwiatkowski: 2006: 28–29; Kwiatkowski 2008: 21).

According to Aleida Assmann, remembrance can perform the function of legitimation (of power), delegitimation (of power and official remembrance), and distinction (shaping the collective memory) (Assmann 2009a: 133–135). In the case of Gliwice, we are dealing with a typical example of legitimation of the Polish law in the city and forgetting the non-Polish past. The example of Wrocław seems to be similar. However, there are elements on which the residents of the City of Meetings build their identity. In this context, the city which stands out is Gdańsk, where the collective memory of the past is used to shape the identity of its residents. Gdańsk is also the only city that permits the “remembrance of the losers.” The collective memory of Gdańsk citizens considers an alternative reception of the city’s history, whereas Gliwice and Wrocław represent typical examples of the “remembrance of the winners,” which is based on “an affective treatment of historical facts and becomes resistant to an alternative reception of history” (Assmann 2009b:164). The inconvenient past from the pre-war years was obliterated from the politically instrumentalised collective memory. It was forgotten for fear that it would hinder the legitimation of the dominant narrative of the city (cf. Ankersmit 2003).

This facilitated the mythologisation of the past. Such mythologisation becomes possible thanks to the fact that, as noted by Dawid Lowenthal: “When we recollect something, we are aware of this and it does not matter whether the recollection is true or false – what is important is that it refers, in some way, to the past” (Lowenthal 1991: 13). In such recollections, as noted by Szacka, time is not the linear historical time, but a mythical timelessness (Szacka 2006: 92). Such functioning in a mythical timelessness emerges from the results of the studies. It is Jan III Sobieski that is embedded in it (in the memories of Gliwice citizens). Similarly to John Paul II, this figure is losing its individuality and undergoes sacralisation. It is becoming a personification of specific values (Jan III Sobieski – Polishness), rather than a historical figure (cf. Szacka 2006: 92–93). The collective memory of Gliwice and Wrocław citizens bears the strongest hallmarks of mythologisation. This is less visible in Gdańsk, which is working on its past.

It is also worth reiterating here the formal typology of the local remembrance of the past presented by Andrzej Szpociński. Then it turns out that Gliwice and Wrocław represent the classic type of remembrance, in which the memory of individuals and events related to the city is functioning mainly because they represent the values which are important from the point of view of the national community. Such a role is performed by recollections of the above-mentioned king, Jan III Sobieski, or the prominent creators of the Polish culture. The case of Gdańsk is closer to what is defined as *signum loci*, in which the vehicle of meaning is derived from the local culture in order to raise the importance of the city and highlight its inherent characteristics (Szpociński 2006: 52–57).

However, notwithstanding the above, the analysis of the significance of collective memory for the identity of the residents in the cities studied allows the

conclusion that Gliwice and Wrocław basically do not form any community of memory. The residents are not linked by the past but, at most, by historical experiences within their individual biographies (Assmann 2009: 88). Therefore, one can speak only of communicative remembrance, rather than of cultural remembrance. The latter, on the other hand, is being restored in Gdańsk, which is gradually becoming a community immersed in its past. This demonstrates that the influence of the past on a city's history can vary. Much depends on the remembrance policy of the local authorities and the actions undertaken by communities themselves, as well as on the narratives offered at school and in the media. Sometimes it is possible to create identity based on the past. Sometimes, however, it is the city's future that is more important.

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