SUMMARY. The region of Central Europe, as well the cities in this area, underwent radical changes in the 20th century: extermination of the Jews, evacuation/repatriation of the Poles, the Germans and the Ukrainians, homogenization of the communist system (in ideological, and demographic sense). After 1989/1991 it became possible to restore the cities’ “lost identity”. It is worth to compare two different, but similar cities in our region: Wroclaw as consciously upbuilding its identity on multiculturalism, openness to the world and at the same time struggling with the “amputated past”. On the other hand Lviv/Lemberg seems to be a city, standing between the national idea, the “alien past” (the Polish and the Jewish heritage) and orientation towards Central Europe.

KEYWORDS: Multicultural city, Wroclaw, Lviv, minorities, 20th century, symbolic spaces, heritage.

Central Europe, as we all know very well, is full of paradoxical situations in past as well as in present. In this article, I highlight briefly the phenomenon of two different, yet similar “Polish” cities, namely Breslau/Wroclaw and L’viv/Lwów/Lvov. One may ask, why I have chosen (as a researcher from Hungary) exactly this topic and these cities (one is in Poland, the other is in Ukraine). The answer is rather simple: in recent years, the Budapest-based Terra Recognita Foundation (Terra Recognita Alapítvány, TRA) managed to publish some books about the traditional multiculturalism in our region (Budapest, Kosice/Kassa/Kaschau and Bratislava/Pozsony/Pressburg). Through these case-studies we can explore the history of the region in the 20th century (in regional and even wider state/country contexts), its demographic situation, mainly from the point of view of ethnic and religious
diversity, and the memory policy after the independence (the past twenty years): how the city leadership/central government and/or civil society discover the city’s “alien past”, how they create the city’s identity, present it to its own citizens and domestic or foreign visitors. In this article, I briefly present the history of Lviv and Wrocław in the 20th century with a specific focus on the multi-ethnicity issue, and give a brief comparison between these two cities.

Lviv/Lemberg/Lwów

This city was, at least in the crucial 19th century, in the hands of the Habsburgs, and was the capital of Galicia – a region which was taken by Austria in 1772, as a result of the first partition of the Rzeczpospolita, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.\(^2\) During the Austrian rule, the city prosperously developed (Vienna-style architecture), but had no economic background. At the beginning of the 20th century, Lemberg, as the city was called in the Monarchy, was inhabited mostly by three groups: by the Poles, dominating in politics, administration and education (Polonisation of University and Politechnika), by the Jews, strong in economics (the centre of the Polonisation movement within the community\(^3\)), and by the Ukrainians/Rusyns, a peasant population dominating in the eastern regions of Galicia and fighting for their own nation-state and more rights within the autonomous, but controlled by the Poles Galicia. The ethnic diversity was complemented by the religious matrix, as Lemberg was the centre of the archdiocese for the Roman Catholic (the Latin rite) and the Greek Catholic (the Byzantine rite) Church.\(^4\)

Immediately after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918, the Poles gained the city (and the whole region of the contested Galicia), by defeating the Ukrainians and their independence movement (West-Ukrainian People’s Republic was established in Eastern Galicia for a few months). The turbulent days and the armed struggle between the Poles and the Ukrainians in the city itself caused a huge pogrom, in which the dozens of Jews were killed and injured by the Polish


soldiers and lower-class civilian population at the end of November 1918.5 These events (the fights between the Poles and the Ukrainians, pogrom) should be seen as a milestone in the mutual relationship between the city’s national groups – the Poles regarded the Ukrainians with mistrust, even with hostility and vice versa, the Jews were on “no man’s land” keeping distance from both communities.6

The restoration of the Polish independence in 1918 meant the possibility for the Polish political elite to construct a nation-state; however, the Second Republic (Druga Rzeczpospolita) in terms of population was not a homogenous country, as more than one third of the population were non-Poles. The events in November 1918 (regaining the city from the Ukrainians) and the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lwów (“orleta lwowskie”, “Lwów eaglets”, alluding to teenagers and students fighting on the Polish side) became an important part in the Polish national mythology. The city was seen as an antemurale (bulwark) of not Christianity but rather of Polishness; for example, after the First World War the motto: “Semper fidelis”, i.e. always faithful to Poland, appeared on the coat of arms.7

However, it was still a Polish-Jewish city (50% Poles, 33% Jews according to census in 1931), with a visible Ukrainian minority (not only in the city, but in general, the biggest nationality in the interwar Poland), who regarded Lwów “under the Polish occupation” as their cultural (Shevchenko Scientific Society, press in the Ukrainian language), political (several parties, right-wing and left-wing as well) and religious centre (here, a Greek Catholic metropolitan archbishop Andriy Sheptytskyj, the spiritual leader of the Ukrainians at that time, resided). During the interwar period, the Jews in Lwów made up a heterogeneous group in the aspects of culture (language, i.e. Polish vs. Yiddish, religiosity, press) and politics (Zionist, Bundist, conservative and communist influence within the community).

This world, which was not so perfect regarding the national coexistence but was otherwise rather predictable, perished during the World War II. In 1939-1945, the city had to bear the practices of two dictatorships (the Nazi/German and the Bolshevik/Soviet one). In September 1939, according to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Lwów (as well as the so called “Kresy Wschodnie”, the Polish “Eastern Borderland”) was incorporated into the Soviet Union. The Soviets immediately started reshaping the city’s administration, economy and education system, in which the Ukrainians were favoured (the Ukrainian language became official, instead of


Polish), and deportations of the former political and social elite, in which the Poles played a dominant role, took place. In the summer of 1941, the Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union. The district of Galicia, along with the discussed city, was incorporated into the General Government (Generalgouvernement). The new occupier had an evil plan to implement the Endlösung: during a short period of 1942-1943, the annihilation of the entire city’s Jewish population was carried out (in Bełżec death camp or near Lwów, in the forced labour camp of Janowska). The Polish population also suffered under the German rule, and the political and intellectual elite was persecuted (killing by Einsatzkommando – with the assistance of the Ukrainian radical nationalists – the university professors, for example, Kazimierz Bartel, the former Polish Prime Minister, and the former rector of Politechnika).

The Red Army captured the city in July, 1944. It was clear that Lvov would remain under the Soviet rule, and Moscow did not wish to be present in the biggest city of Western Ukraine, where a huge portion of the inhabitants of Polish nationality existed (with a hostile attitude to the Soviet system). The solution to homogenize Lvov was an agreement between the communist-dominated and provisional Lublin Committee and the leadership of the Ukrainian SSR on the population exchange. According to the agreement, the Poles from the Soviet Ukraine and the Ukrainians from Poland could be repatriated: 618,000 people chose a new life in Poland in 1944-1949, almost 100,000 Poles repatriated from Lvov. Those who remained in their birthplace (only a very small proportion of the Polish population, mainly of peasant origin), can be called “Yalta’s shipwrecked”.

The Soviet regime showed no mercy to the enemies: the liquidation of the underground, the nationalist and the anti-Soviet Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) in Lvov and in whole Galicia, where UPA was quite strong, and several waves of deportations on real or perceived adversary of the communist system immediately began. Another obstacle of the Sovietisation was the powerful Greek Catholic Church, which was subjugated to the Russian Orthodox Church (the Moscow Patriarchate) in 1946. Not only the Church, but also the region had to change after 1944. The city so far oriented to Europe and to the Western world became a part of an Empire with a centre in the East. A few kilometres from the Polish-Soviet border, a kind of “Iron

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9 Grzegorz Hryciuk, Polacy we Lwowie 1939-1944. Życie codzienne (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza 2000).
Curtain of Civilisation” appeared. The Soviets’ goals were clear: to establish an important industrial centre in the region of Galicia, which had never had serious economic background in the past. This new industrial environment needed skilled (and unskilled) labour force. According to experts, the newcomers can be divided into three groups. The largest was made up of the peasant population from the nearby Ukrainian speaking villages. Due to them, the city was Ukrainianized and not Russified. The second group came from the central and eastern parts of the Soviet-Ukraine, mostly the Ukrainians by origin, but strongly Sovietized. Their skills (as engineers and bureaucrats) were necessary to organize and operate the Soviet system in the newly acquired areas of the western Ukraine. The third group was made up of the newcomers from other republics of the Soviet Union (officers, economic experts), as homo sovieticus they were the strongholds of the Empire and the propagators of the Russian language. The population change in Lvov can be characterized by the following data: in the first days of the Soviet occupation (July 1944), the population of Lvov was about 149,000; almost ten years later, this number reached 380,000, and the proportions of the ethnic Ukrainians changed from 26% to 44%, respectively. During the Soviet period, the growth of the city’s population (in 1989, 778,000) and its Ukrainian character (in 1989, 79%) can be observed.

After 1944, not only the population change transformed the city’s landscape radically: new block houses were built (although the regime left the historical centre, which was saved during the war from destructions, intact), streets, squares and parks were renamed according to the Communist ideology (the main street, of course, was named after Lenin, he had a statue in front of the Opera), the new Soviet-style monuments appeared (and the ancien régime’s monuments disappeared), the city’s history was rewritten in the spirit of the Russian-Ukrainian eternal friendship. After 1944, based on the Soviet model, a typically Ukrainian Lvov was born from the former Polish and bourgeois Lwów.

After the independence in 1991, we can observe that the national consciousness in Lviv (and Galicia region) was much stronger, than in other regions of Ukraine. The local elite and ordinary citizens saw the city as a kind of “national and/or spiritual capital” of the country. This attitude manifested itself during and right after the independence: mass manifestations for the national independence in 1989-1990, the desovietisation of the public sphere (the first in the country city council made a decision to remove the Lenin’s statue from the centre). The city leadership had a clear objective: to respond to the Soviet-era “anti-national” policy by recovering

the Lviv’s Ukrainian character in the public sphere. Soon, the names related to the Soviet past disappeared in the public areas and the Ukrainian character clearly became dominant and suppressed the city’s multicultural past.\textsuperscript{14}

In the course of a process during the past two decades, the streets of Lviv were “conquered” by the national heroes (or antiheroes). For example, a 7 meters tall statue of Stepan Bandera (the leader of the Ukrainian radical national movement before, during and after the World War II, who died in emigration), looking like a well-done Lenin-monument, or naming a street after Dzhohar Dudayev (instead of Mikhail Lermontov), the former leader of the separatist Chechen movement, fighting against the Russian troops.\textsuperscript{15} These decisions by the city leadership can be treated as “politically incorrect”, as the figure and/or the memory of Bandera can easily irritate Ukraine’s two big neighbours, Russia and Poland.\textsuperscript{16} Nowadays, the strong national feeling (nationalism) is also palpable and can be seen in defending (sometimes in an irrational way) the “national truth”. For example, during the renovation and opening of the Polish military cemetery (the defenders of Polish Lwów in 1918), which was possible only thanks to the determined wish/ukaz of the president Viktor Yushchenko in 2005, who “defeated” the local politicians and their unfriendly approach to this important lieu de mémoire of the Polish national identity.\textsuperscript{17}

The multicultural past of the city is remembered by some NGO-s: Ji (“Й”) is the most important intellectual magazine in the city (the first issue in 1989)\textsuperscript{18}. In 2003, an entire issue (29) was devoted to the city and its multicultural past, through essays, scientific articles, memoirs and poems.\textsuperscript{19} The other significant actor regarding the multicultural past is an NGO, namely, Centre for Urban History in East Central Europe that focuses precisely on this topic, organizing workshops, conferences, exhibitions and publishing articles on the history of Lviv. It is worth mentioning that the Centre is running an interactive homepage (in the Ukrainian, English, Polish and Russian languages), which is very professional in content and in appearance.\textsuperscript{20}


\textsuperscript{17} Nathaniel Copsey, Remembrance of Things Past: the Lingering Impact of History on Contemporary Polish-Ukrainian Relations, Europe-Asia Studies 2008, vol. 60, nr. 4, 531–560.

\textsuperscript{18} http://www.ji-magazine.lviv.ua/.


\textsuperscript{20} http://www.lvivcenter.org.
Today, L’viv is not a multicultural city as it used to be before 1939. The Polish and the Jewish minorities are almost invisible (0.9%, respectively 0.3% of the population). Nowadays, the city has a remarkable Russian minority (9%, 67,000 people), but these communities are newcomers, having no roots in the pre-war Polish Lwów.\textsuperscript{21} It is worth noting that the Jewish revival, which was possible during and after perestroika, had to face several obstacles. First of all, the L’viv’s Jews were rootless, having no image or knowledge about the bustling religious and social life before the Holocaust. Secondly, the Shoa itself was disastrous for the Jews (besides the annihilation of the community, almost all synagogues and prayer houses were destroyed by the Germans) and the Soviet regime did not tolerate the religious life in general (the one and only functioning synagogue after the World War II was closed by the authorities in the 1960’s\textsuperscript{22}). Today, there exists a Jewish cultural (but not religious!) society, one functioning synagogue (in service of foreign rabbis), but the community cannot ignore the majority’s or the city’s leadership’s indifferent attitude to the “erased” Jewish heritage.\textsuperscript{23}

In our days, L’viv seems to be a Ukrainian city with respect to the language and spiritually for the tourists, but it is also opened to Central Europe. There are monuments which remind us of the era of Austro-Hungary: restaurants, coffee houses and some visible monuments (for example, the statue of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, who was born in L’viv) are all trying to arouse nostalgic feelings.\textsuperscript{24}

BRESLAU/WROCŁAW

The region of Silesia, together with the city of Wrocław (Latin: Vratislavia) was in the early Middle Ages separated from the feudal Poland ruled by the Piast-dynasty.


Later on, it was in the possession of the Czech Crown, and then in the result of the battle on White Mountain, the Habsburgs, who in turn lost the city in 1741 to the Prussian rule which remained here for two centuries. In Prussia, then in unified Germany, Breslau developed quickly and became a strong intellectual centre (with the famous University, which gave some Nobel-prize winners to the world, for example, Theodor Mommsen, Philip von Lenard, Paul Ehrlich or Gerhardt Hauptmann). It also became a multiconfessional city: Breslau was inhabited mostly by the Germans, the majority of them were the Protestants and the minority were the Roman Catholic. There was also a considerable Jewish community, which chose the (linguistic and cultural) assimilation with the German people. The era of nationalism in the second half of the 19th century did not foretell a peaceful future – although the World War I ended in German defeat, Breslau found itself nearby the independent Poland, also with a small Polish community, which started to self-organize.

The Weimar period brought stagnation, but in 1932 election, NSDAP received 44% of votes. The Poles, the Czechs (due to the closeness to the Slavic ethnic territory, i.e. the independent Czechoslovakia and Poland) and the non-assimilated Jews were shown less tolerance than in other German cities. After 1933, there was a persecution of the Jews (Kristallnacht) and the Poles (expulsion of the Polish students in 1939 from the University, the liquidation of schools and press), regarded as Untermensch category. During the war, the ethnic structure of Breslau changed remarkably: the Holocaust destroyed the Jewish community (despite the fact, the Jews of Breslau were greatly assimilated, far away from religious rites). On the other hand, a huge amount of forced labour workers from the Polish, Baltic and Ukrainian territories appeared in the city against their will.

As the Red Army approached the Third Reich, the city became Festung Breslau (fortress) in 1945 and went through heavy fights. In consequence, the majority of the city had been destroyed. According to the decision of the Big Three (the winners), the eastern parts of Germany (and half of East Prussia), as a compensation for the lost Kresy, became Polish (this newly acquired region is known as “Recovered Territories” / “Ziemie Odzyskane”), and a new city was born: Wrocław.

25 On the history of the city so far the best synthesis: Norman Davies – Roger Moorhouse, Microcosm. Portrait of Central European City. (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002). In Polish language can be recommended Teresa Kulak's work (Wrocław. Przewodnik historyczny, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2006), which was published in Polish mythology maintaining and (re)creating series, under the title “A to Polska właśnie” (“And this is what Poland is”).


This decision at that time came as a surprise for the Polish, as Breslau or Stettin (Szczecin), unlike Gdańsk (Danzig), were not treated as Polish cities.

Wrocław became Polish in terms of citizenship (which belonged to the communist Poland) and ethnically: the German population, which did not flee with withdrawing Wehrmacht, was expelled by the Polish authorities, according to the Potsdam conference decisions. Let me mention a significant fact – by 1949, only 1% of Wrocław were the pre-war inhabitants. The remaining population settled here from Central Poland (mostly), and repatriated from Lwów/L'viv (and Stanisławów, now Ukr. Ivano-Frankivsk). The University and the University of Technology (Politechnika) were re-established by the intellectuals from Kresy, although according to 1948 data, at that time, only 10% of the population originated from Lwów.

The period after 1945 can be characterized as a Polonization and degermanization, that is the erasing of the German past and forcing the official Polish narratives (“age-old Polish city near Odra”), thus returning to the early feudal Polish borders (a country ruled by the Piast dynasty between Oder/Oder and Bug rivers, which Poland “recovered” from the Germans after 1945, although these regions always used to be Polish). The degermanization (in Polish: “odniemczanie”) on the surface was a quick process – the public space was given names in the Polish language and the heroes from the Polish mythology, the German monuments were also erased and replaced by the Polish ones. For example, the monument of Frederick William III, the king of Prussia in Main Square was demolished and replaced by Aleksander Fredro’s one (by the way, the Polish writer’s monument had been earlier removed from L'viv). During the restoration of the Catholic cathedral, which was hardly damaged in the siege of Breslau, the church was “Polonized”, that is the Polish saints and the Polish language memorial plaque appeared. The degermanization was partly accepted and supported by the newcomers, as due to the suffering during the World War II, everything which could be linked to the Germans was hateful.

At the same time, unofficially, some of the locals tried to explore the remnants of an alien, but attractive past. This attitude was called by Andrzej Zawada as an “amputated memory” in his well-known essay entitled from 1996 “Bresław” (i.e. Breslau and Wrocław):

30 Magdalena Helmich, Jakub Kujawiński, Margret Kutschke, Juliane Toman, „Odniemczanie” i polonizacja, czyli z niemieckiego Breslau powstaje polski Wrocław, in Philip Ther, Tomasz Król i Lutz Henke 82.
Wrocław is a city with an amputated memory. I had trouble getting used to this city because with every step I found myself unsettled and irritated by its crippledness. It was impossible to walk down the streets of Wrocław without thinking of it. Which is why it was healthy to get out the city and go elsewhere, where people remembered their past, where the present day was defined by tradition.\textsuperscript{31}

After 1989, it was possible to restore and recover the identity and to find a place in Poland’s new deep-rooted economic-political situation. Members of city council in 1990 restored the old coat of arms, the renaming of street names took place, and some publications were published on Wrocław’s history, without the communist or nationalistic manipulations. In the formation of the new local identity, thus accepting the Wrocław’s “alien past”, the restoration of the Main Square played a crucial role – the city centre became not only a place for entertainment for the local inhabitants or tourists, a kind of meeting point, but also the most important identity symbol for the old-new German-Polish city.

Wrocław’s democratic city leadership choose a unique solution – to build from a homogenous city a multicultural one in terms of image or self-image. The most important impulsion came from the above: in 1996, the city’s mayor (Bohdan Zdrojewski, the current minister of culture) asked a well-known British historian, Norman Davies, to write the story of Breslau/Wrocław. So, today, we have “Microcosm” on the history of Breslau/Wroclaw (and the region of Silesia/Śląsk/Schlesien), published simultaneously in three languages (English, German, Polish)\textsuperscript{32}, and becoming a bestseller in Poland. Also, other important books on the city’s recent history were published. For example, a German historian’s, Gregor Thum’s, monograph\textsuperscript{33}; Encyclopaedia, a monumental work (over 1,000 pages), where everybody is a Breslauer, no matter of origins.\textsuperscript{34} Besides, the mayor’s office supported the publishing of other books on the city’s history (on the Jewish community\textsuperscript{35}, about the city’s old [German] and new [Polish] street names\textsuperscript{36}).

However, not only the publications have formed the Wrocław’s image – there

\textsuperscript{31} Quote after Gregor Thum, 382.


\textsuperscript{34} Encyklopedia Wrocławia, red. Jan Harasimowicz – Włodzimierz Suleja (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2000).

\textsuperscript{35} Leszek Ziętkowski, Dzieje Żydów we Wrocławiu (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2000).

are also several NGO-s functioning, with the material and moral support of the
city council, which aim to maintain and promote the city’s multicultural heri-
tage, or show (mainly for the younger generations) the city’s German and Jewish
past (for example, Fundacja Dom Pokoju/House of Peace Foundation promoting
the intercultural dialogue, based on tolerance and consciousness of own history
and identity37, or Edith Stein Society/Towarzystwo Edyty Stein, focusing on the
Jewish-Christian and the Polish-German dialogue38).

Not only organizations cultivate the multicultural world. Some other ways to
preserve the German heritage can also be mentioned. One of them is a monument
(“Pomnik Wspólnej Pamięci”/”The Monument of Collective Memory), which
commemorates the non-existing German cemeteries (during the “degermaniza-
tion” the graveyards were destroyed and blocks or green areas were built on them),
precisely in Park Grabiszynski, which is located in the former cemetery (Kommu-
nal Friedhof in Graebschen). On this lapidarium, we can see a suggestive caption
(both in the Polish and German languages): “To the memory of our city’s former
inhabitants, who were buried in the non-existing graveyards.”39 Other evidence for
the attitude towards Breslau in today’s Wroclaw is visible in the detective stories
written by Marek Krajewski, who leads the readers into 1930’s (the book “Śmierć w
Breslau”/”Death in Breslau” became a bestseller in Poland in 1999 and was transla-
ted into several languages).

A paradoxical situation can be seen in the multicultural projects run by and for
the majority of the population in Wroclaw. According to the census in 2002, 97%
of the population declared themselves as the Poles (621,000 people), the Germans,
the Jews, the Ukrainians, the Roma communities here can be counted in hun-
dreds.40 The common feature of Wroclaw’s minorities, that due to their small num-
ber and dispersed situation (a high number of mix marriages) the assimilation is in
advanced stage; however, the Jews, the Germans and the Ukrainians can maintain
cultural organizations and be present in city’s social life. It should be underlined
that the minority population, as well as the majority, has no roots in the pre-war
Breslau (neither the Germans, nor the Jews).41

It is paradoxical for a stranger in Wroclaw that the memory of the non-existing

37 Internet access: <www.dompokoju.org>.
38 Internet access: <www.edytastein.org.pl>. Edith Stein was born in Breslau into a Jewish family, studied here
at the university, converted into Catholic faith and became a Carmelite nun, died in Auschwitz concentra-
tion camp in 1942.
41 On the Jewish community: Agnieszka Zabłocka-Kos, In search of new ideas. Wroclaw’s „Jewish distict” –
yesterday and today in Reclaiming memory. Urban regeneration in the historic Jewish quarters of Central Eu-
Polish city Lwów is still alive in the former German town: the bookshops selling publications on Lwów, in restaurant the tourists can consume dishes from the Polish Eastern Borderlands. Moreover, some important Polish institutions located in nowadays Wrocław (for example, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich/National Ossoliński Institute, or a well-known panorama of the battle in Racławice) remind the heritage of the Polish Lwów, as after the end of the World War II not only the population, but also some pieces of the national cultural heritage were evacuated to Poland from L’viv.

**COMPARISON**

What is the common feature of both cities? These two cities were in the past, as well as in the present, *borderland cities* not only in a geographical sense (close to the Polish-German, or the Polish-Ukrainian border), but also in ethnical-cultural terms. They are good examples of classical Central European cities, with multicultural environment before the World War II (majority, smaller minorities, plus a sizeable Jewish community) and a peaceful or not so peaceful coexistence of the majority and minorities. Both cities had several owners from their foundation: Wrocław – the Piast-dynasty, the Czech Crown, the Habsburgs, the Prussians (Germans), the Poles; L’viv – the Jagellonian-dynasty, the Habsburgs, the independent Poland, the Soviet Union and the free Ukraine as well. During and shortly after the World War II, the region of Central Europe, as well several other cities in this area, underwent radical changes: the extermination of the Jews, the evacuation/repatriation of the Poles and the Germans, the Ukrainians, the homogenization of the communist system (in ideological, and also in demographic sense, by “internal colonization”). Traditional multicultural world, which characterized our region, came to an end.

What we can see especially in Wrocław and to a lesser extent in L’viv, is the restoring of both cities’ “lost identity”, which was possible after the independence, overcoming the communist decades in political, cultural, and in mental terms. That is why, in Wrocław, and, partly, in L’viv, the cities’ leadership and the civil society are building a kind of “virtual multicultural world”, based on a “used to be history”. Not surprisingly, as it was proved by Maria Lewicka’s sociological research conducted in 2000’s, for the majority of Wrocław’s and L’viv’s citizens, the local history starts right after 1945, and the local heroes are solely from their own nation.42

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Wrocław undertakes the German past, even if it is alien to the Poles, but visible in the streets (built by the German architects). Still, the city has a contact with and interest to the East – I would say a strong, still unilateral love to the Polish Lwów (and the Ukrainian L’viv), generally to lost Kresy. We can say that Wrocław (the political elite, together with the civil world) choose the European (proximity to Berlin and Prague), regional (emphasizing the capital of Lower Silesia, which is also an “amputated region”, without continuous tradition and remembrance) and national (a homogenous Polish city in terms of population) direction. For the local citizens, who settled here only a few decades ago, on the one hand, the local history is tragic, violent and unpleasant; on the other hand, Wrocław’s “amputated past” makes an opportunity to accept the city’s new narratives and identity.43

On the contrary, we cannot say this about L’viv, which cultivates a kind of a hybrid self-image. The city emphasizes the Ukrainianess and its importance in using the national language in everyday life, in science, in culture (nevertheless, failed in the past two decades to “convert” the central and eastern regions of Ukraine to the national idea from Galicia), sometimes its local character (L’vivness), regional character (Galicianess) or even Central European features (Austrian, what is important to underline here: not the Polish past). This controversial multivectoral orientation appears to be insoluble, but the experiences in the present-day Ukraine suggest that parallel, but antagonistic historical discourses may exist.

Since the independence the municipality (namely, the above mentioned mayor Bohdan Zdrojewski, 1990–2001, and especially Rafał Dutkiewicz, 2002-) working on Wrocław’s image as a European, young, dynamic, open to the world (also to tourists and foreign capital, investors) city. It is worth mentioning that the city has been selected as a European Capital of Culture for 2016. Such a success story (a persistent and consequent organic work on behalf of the city) can not be applied to L’viv, where the civil society in the years of the independence seems to be rather weak (but the post-Soviet and the national attitude strong). The NGO-s in recent years could not “translate” for the majority the city’s multicultural heritage in a understandable way. However, on the city’s official logo we can see an identity shaping motto (“L’viv – Open to the World”), which seems to be more a marketing trick, than a real and sincere self-declaration.44

A visible difference between the two

cities can be seen in the following: Wroclaw, its leadership and civil society can afford a certain degree of freedom of self-image; moreover no need to emphasise permanently the city’s Polishness is seen. However, Lviv is the only municipality in Ukraine where the national language and culture plays a dominant role in public life, and in consequence, the city’s national character must be stressed.

It is worth to compare the two different, but similar cities in our region: Wroclaw as consciously upbuilding own identity on multiculturalism, openness to the world, and at the same time struggling with the “amputated past”. On the other side, Lviv seems to be a city which stands between the national idea and the “alien past” (the Polish and the Jewish heritage), and is oriented towards the Central Europe. In both cases, we have an example of Central European tragic historical experience – how the 20th century condensed in one particular city and/or region: the colourful mixing of nations, languages, religions, prosperity in the interwar period and in the era of independence, along with brutal dictatorships (the Nazi or the Soviet one), the annihilation of the entire Jewish community, senseless destructions during the wars, the expulsion of the majority population due to the change of state borders, and homogenization of the city regarding the population and public sphere.

Gábor Lagzi

DAUGIAKULTŪRĖ CENTRINĖS EUROPOS MIESTŲ PRAEITIS IR DABARTIS: VROCLAVO / BRESLAU IR LVIVO / LEMBERGO / LVIVO ATVEJAI


RAKTÀŽODIAI: daugiakultūris miestas, Vroclavas, Lvonas, mažumos, XX amžius, simboli-nės vietos, paveldas.