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Wrocław residents about the multicultural character of their city — “crawling Germanisation” or restoration of the German heritage?

The capital city of Lower Silesia becomes an arena of interesting processes within the broadly understood and discussed issues of modern cities' identity. Especially interesting phenomena can be observed in the cities located in western and northern territories — taken over by Poland after WWII, where an almost complete exchange of population took place. These two circumstances (adding of territories and exchange of population), even though distant in time, prove to be crucial for the current processes of shaping local communities and creation of the city's image.

Today's Wrocław is often recalled as an example of a multicultural city, open and modern, which takes full advantage (thanks to the local authorities) of its resources — historical, cultural and human. The dominating discourse seems to show that municipal authorities understand modern challenges in accordance with the assumption that “nowadays the issues of local identity take on a special character. The creation, restitution or strengthening of local identity more and more often becomes a value, desired goal reflected in the authorities' policies”¹.

The problem still valid until today which Wrocław residents and local elites have had to face is the city's non-Polish heritage. Polish settlers in the post-war Wrocław had to deal with the unknown and strange space on their own and, moreover, in rather schizophrenic conditions — negation and removal of the German character by the authorities was accompanied by their constant encounter with it — in the streets and at home. The new context started when the entire

¹ M. Błaszczuk, “Rozważania nad lokalną tożsamością mieszkańców Wrocławia”. In *Sytuacja i rola wielkiego miasta w procesie transformacji*, ed. Z. Kurcz, Z. Morawski, Wrocław 2003.

social communication space was freed from censorship and the changes of the 1990s took place.

The last two decades have brought many practices opposing the myth of always Polish, Piast Wrocław, resulting today in the narration of a multicultural city, which occurred thanks to the possibility to notice and articulate the resources of its history other than Polish. The changes were initiated by the local authorities (who for example decided to change the city's emblem to one referring to its complex past), media (for example within the action by *Gazeta Wyborcza* "Oddajcie co nasze" [Give back what's ours] in which they tried to get back to Wrocław Prussian pavises and organised a contest for Wrocław's magical places) and the residents expressing deep interest in the city's history in various collective and individual forms (buying numerous books appearing on the market concerning the city's distant history or opposing the idea to process German tombstones from the Osobowice cemetery into cobblestones). Reaching out to the city's history from before WWII, learning about it, and understating it is new for Wrocław residents and it offers a field for individual and collective analysis. This issue is well illustrated by the polemics between Andrzej Zawada and Stanisław Kłopot, where the former claimed that the memory of Wrocław residents had been amputated and the latter replied that you can amputate only something that exists. All this authorises us to formulate a thesis that the awareness and knowledge of Wrocław's long history only now becomes an attribute of the local community and the creation of its symbolic universe — a political goal. This article touches upon, among other things, the discrepancies between the projects of elites and the social reception of these projects.

Restoring the memory of pre-war Wrocław and creating a narrative about that is usually provoked by common and easily accessible phenomena, clearly connected with the place, almost self-imposing, but at the same time specific, distinguishing it from other cities — such cultural resources as sculptures, monuments, technical infrastructure and sometimes figures or events. In Wrocław's public space among its historical artefacts dominate these of German origin. Hence this is an example of an attitude towards such elements of foreign cultural heritage

which were created in [...] situation of basic continuity of ethnic settlements and ethical neighbourhood accompanied by changes, conflicts and migration in transition areas. Hence these elements were created by a group which used to live in a given area and at present not only still exists and develops but constitutes geographical and cultural neighbourhood of current residents. In this situation the interpretation of the past heritage is directly connected with contemporary problems².

This poses a question: How do the residents and Wrocław's authorities deal with the heritage, especially German? Its domination results from the fact that the

² M. Ziółkowski, "Wspólnota przestrzeni i odmienność tradycji: sąsiedzkie kultury etniczne". *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 1, 1991, p. 62.

period of German rule over Wrocław corresponded with the period of industrial revival, hence the residential, sacral, industrial architecture is to a great extent of German origin³. At the same time we have to remember its negative semantic associations. After the war there was nobody to take care of the German heritage, and those who came to the city were more interested in forgetting it than remembering⁴.

This is important because

the social perception of material and cultural resources of a given city; its urban developments, infrastructure, green areas, monuments, sculptures and other objects, is one of the elements shaping the city's identity, that is collective identification of individuals with their place of residence. The creation of a clear and coherent identity is an important process for urban communities, because it leads to gathering of potential which in turn makes it possible to convert the existing cultural resources into a broadly understood capital, both economic and cultural⁵.

Hence it is worth finding out how the residents treat the objects, monuments and elements of space created by cultures other than Polish, what senses they carry, what meanings are assigned by the Wrocław residents to these elements and how they use them to create their own stories about the city. However, not all resources become a part of heritage, only these which Wrocław residents want to take over as theirs and include in the discourse created⁶. Since "participation in such a discourse is not possible without understanding the signs and senses given to the city. And even though these can be strongly individualised, certain patterns of communication with the partners in discourse (community members) have to be in some way socially shared"⁷ — especially when it comes to inheritance not being part of a national canon.

So, does the process of negotiating the attitude towards the city's historical heritage between different entities run in Wrocław consistently, problem-free or rather may certain division lines be observed and if so where do they run? Observations so far authorise us to distinguish two planes, located not only in the local *milieu*, on which the attitude towards foreign cultural resources becomes problematic. The first, bearing the hallmarks of a dispute, is of a national character and in its arguments goes beyond local specificity. It is about a confrontation

³ J.L. Dobesz, "Ochrona dziedzictwa kulturalnego Dolnego Śląska". *Dolny Śląsk*, 1996.

⁴ Then it was supported by maintaining in the "collective memory the German anti-Slavism, anti-Polish policies of the Prussian state and anti-Polish practices of Wilhelmian Reich, the interwar period, and in the first place experiences of WWII present in the family biographies of Wrocław residents," also today, if such memory is still alive, it may impact the attitude towards the German cultural heritage; see: S.W. Kłopot, "Kreowanie mitu wielokulturowego dziedzictwa Wrocławia". In *Pamięć jako kategoria rzeczywistości społecznej*, ed. J. Styk, M. Dziekanowska, Lublin 2012, pp. 134–135.

⁵ M. Białous, "Społeczna percepcja zabytków w miastach heterogenicznych kulturowo. Przykład Białegostoku i Lublina". *Pogranicze. Studia Społeczne*, XVIII, p. 84.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁷ M. Błaszczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

between those who consider it right to include the city's pre-war history in collective awareness (then this awareness would not be limited only to the Polish history of Wrocław) and those who in such actions see a threat to the national identity of its residents. One side sees benefits for the local community in remembering and exposing the German heritage, the other underlines the dangers related to it, expressed in the quote about the "crawling Germanisation of Wrocław"⁸, which might undermine the Polishness of the city. Robert Traba considers the following phrases to be most appropriate for the description of this state "»national homogeneity« and »heroisation of history« *versus* »renegotiation« and »widening of perspective«"⁹. The former emphasises national values, rejecting the right to the regional creation of important issues — thus it is often stated that actors such as local communities or local authorities are not authorised to decide about the local memory, especially when they threaten "acceptable areas of dialogue"¹⁰, the latter allows for the pluralisation of memory.

While on the other plane the attitude towards the heritage is connected with the lack of coherence between the actions of local authorities and their internalisation by residents.

The awareness of intellectual elites and their activity is not and may not be identical with the awareness of residents for a very prosaic reason. For a greater majority of these elites learning about and promoting the German cultural heritage is a part of their professional roles or widening of these roles resulting from their personal predilections and passions¹¹.

The process of homogenisation of perception and valuation — in this case of a city — called (even though in a different historical context) by Zygmunt Gostkowski the integration of social space, may occur in two ways. First would refer to the local elites and this would be "integration based on historical self-knowledge and political awareness. It would be represented by people considering the Western Territories to be an integral part of their 'own' territory, but at the same time aware of the former status of this region and historical and political arguments supporting the present shape of the country's borders"¹². The second, represented by a large part of residents, would be characterised by "integration based on ahis-

⁸ This dispute has a face of certain persons: Beata Maciejewska from the Wrocław office of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, professor Klaus Bachmann, professor Jerzy Robert Nowak — author of the book *Pełzająca germanizacja Wrocławia*, publicist Piotr Semka; it may also be presented in the categories of a dispute between different visions of state's historical politics. The press content of the discussion on Wrocław's multicultural nature may be found in: K. Dolińska, J. Makaro, "Medialne aspekty wielokulturowości Wrocławia". *Media i Społeczeństwo*, 2013, no. 3.

⁹ R. Traba, *Przeszłość w teraźniejszości. Polskie spory o historię na początku XXI wieku*, Poznań 2009, p. 34.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 70.

¹¹ S.W. Kłopot, op. cit., p. 134.

¹² Z. Gostkowski, "Zmiana granic państwowych a integracja przestrzeni publicznej". *Przegląd Socjologiczny*, XVI/1, 1962, p. 69.

torical sense of the territory of one's own national group — connected with small or non-existent knowledge about historical arguments and historical experiences of the country, and hence conditioned solely by the experiences of present, current conditions of the group's social life"¹³. Without checking on what ground (common, base knowledge) the operation of social space integration will take place anew, it is unjustified to expect it to be successful. And it seems that the local elites sometimes overestimate the competences, possibilities and willingness of the Wrocław residents with regard to the reception of various identity projects.

In the last strategic document entitled *Wrocław in the perspective 2020 plus*, in item 2.6 "Culture — heritage", we can read, among others, that Wrocław is a

city of many cultures, where stones and books "speak different languages". A successful conglomerate of identities of different Polish territories from which new residents came to Wrocław after the war. In particular, the continuation of important motives of lost cultures of the Polish borderlands. Domination of Lviv traditions. Understanding of the city's obligations towards the cultural capital (recognition, taking care of, exposing and transmission of the Polish and universal values),

while in part 5.1 "Wrocław residents — symbolic community" the following are considered important: "restoring the city's historical memory. Strengthening the symbolic space (reference places, monuments, names). Sharing the sentimental space"¹⁴.

* * *

The object of our deliberations is *de facto* Wrocław's multicultural nature, emphasised in the quoted fragment of the Strategy¹⁵, as well as related history and heritage of other cultures. The recalled category of multicultural nature requires a commentary. From the theoretical perspective a multicultural nature is defined at the level of actual differentiation (many cultures and their representatives), social awareness (awareness of co-presence of the "other" in the closest social space) and politics (institutional acceptance of "otherness"); in this context we also have to distinguish the marketing level (promoting cities, regions as multicultural

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *Strategy Wrocław in the perspective 2020 plus*, http://bip.um.wroc.pl/wps/wcm/connect/398102804280289a965bd796e258c1d9/strategia_pl.pdf?MOD=AJPERES.

¹⁵ It should be emphasised that also in the Strategy for the development of tourism in Wrocław for the years 2008–2013 it is indicated that a tourist product such as the city's multicultural character consists of various objects: from restaurants in the Market Square offering cuisine from different parts of the world, to churches of different denominations, which leads to an impression that the multicultural character of the Lower Silesia's capital is of a monumental and culinary character, see J. Makaro, "Czy Wrocław jest miastem wielokulturowym? Socjologiczna refleksja nad potocznym i naukowym funkcjonowaniem kategorii wielokulturowości". In *Tożsamość na styku kultur*, vol. 2, ed. I. Masojć, H. Sokołowska, Wilno 2011, p. 116.

without justification in the actual ethnic, national and religious diversification). Trying to combine these individual approaches we can assume that a multicultural nature is a state where different persons (e.g. in terms of language, behaviour, clothes) co-reside in the same area; they have close relations (being aware of the differences) and mutually observe the separateness articulated by themselves (institutionally sanctioned)¹⁶.

Moving from the theoretical to the empirical level we have to note how Wrocław residents themselves define the city's multicultural character¹⁷. First of all, they refer to such categories as multitude and diversity of cultures (both in the context of representatives of these cultures as well as historical and architectural context, culinary or tourist), social relations with the representatives of other cultures (being/living next to the "others" or being/living with the "others") and institutional actions governing the noticed and accepted diversity. These categories are used to justify Wrocław's multicultural nature, recognised by 94.2% of Wrocław residents (51.3% out of whom definitely): they recall the diversification of post-war settlers in Wrocław, diversity of cultures in a specific place and time (rather incoming foreigners than native national minorities), geographical location (closeness of Prague and Berlin and being located on a migration route), architectural diversity (as evidence of a "multi-historical nature"), culinary diversification and social relations with the "others"¹⁸.

When it comes to the context for the opinions presented herein, it should be set by the data describing the actual ethnic diversity of Wrocław, pointing to its small scale — especially if we take into account the categories permanently related to and strongly rooted in the local community: post-war settlers and national and ethnic minorities (including religious diversification they constitute), who in total, based on numerous data and estimates, do not exceed 2–4% of the city's residents¹⁹.

¹⁶ K. Dolińska, J. Makaro, *O wielokulturowości monokulturowego Wrocławia*, Wrocław 2013, pp. 11–22, 59–60.

¹⁷ In this article we use the results of the studies conducted in 2011 within the project "Wielokulturowość Wrocławia w opiniach jego mieszkańców" — 86 qualitative in-depth interviews and 429 CATI interviews. In this case there was a simple two-stage random sampling employed ($n = 429$); the interviews were conducted at standard confidence level (0.95) and fraction (0.5) — as a result statistical error did not exceed 5%. The CATI research was financed within the 2nd Contest for Internal Research Projects at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Wrocław 1526/M/IS/11.

¹⁸ K. Dolińska, J. Makaro, op. cit., pp. 55–61, 80–86.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 40–54. Difficulties in estimating the actual ethnic differentiation of modern Wrocław are of a dual character: the existing data register solely certain phenomena describing such diversification and the access to some sources is limited, e.g. in 2013 the GUS (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny*; Central Statistical Office) published partial data regarding the number of representatives of the German minority in Wrocław (regarding one minority only, contrary to the earlier stance that such data will not be aggregated).

* * *

On account of the issue tackled, our deliberations focus on one of the categories indicated — namely “multi-historical nature”, expressed in the city’s architectural diversity, as an indicator of Wrocław’s multicultural nature. The analyses focus on the following issues: 1) history as an element constituting the city’s multicultural nature, 2) attitude towards the heritage of other cultures, 3) opinions regarding caring for the German heritage, and 4) opinions on restoring historical names to individual parts of the city, based on the example of the Centennial Hall.

1) Multi-historical nature

Wrocław’s diversified history is visible for example in the narrations about Wrocław which were revealed in subsequent periods in order to create the city’s image and integrate its residents. The level of their internalisation is confirmed by the answers of respondents to the question about modern Wrocław.

Table 1. Ethnic and regional characteristics of Wrocław, *n* = 429

“Which sentence in your opinion best characterises the situation of Wrocław?”	Number	[%]
Since the end of WWII Wrocław has been a Polish city whose history goes back to the Piast times	126	29.4
Since the end of WWII Wrocław has had a borderland character as many settlers came from the borderlands	63	14.7
Wrocław is a “microcosm” where over centuries the influences of different countries have accumulated	199	46.4
Wrocław is first of all a German city because before the war it was the Germans who gave it the shape similar to the current one	41	9.6
In total	429	100

All of the obtained statements refer to the city’s history, although emphasising its different moments. The recalled data reveals that at present Wrocław is first of all a city — a “microcosm” (46.4%), then — Polish with Piast roots (29.4%) and “borderland” (14.7%); the smallest number of respondents stated that it was a German city (9.6%). The dominance of the opinion about Wrocław as a “microcosm” may be associated with considering the Lower Silesian capital as a multicultural city, even though other statements may also be the basis for looking for the sources of its modern multicultural characteristics.

According to the residents of Wrocław, the multicultural character of modern cities is proven by e.g. monuments, sculptures and cemeteries left by other cultures (90.7% of respondents think so, 63.4% out of whom expressed strong view in this respect) and also their historical affiliation to various cultural circles (88.3%, 47.1% out of whom definitely). This opinion is confirmed in case of Wrocław itself,

since for the respondents one of the premises of its modern multicultural nature is precisely its “multi-historical character”²⁰. History is the

key element in terms of multicultural nature [...] it is the main factor which was the reason why in our city we can see the influence of many cultures and if it was not for the history I think Wrocław would not stand out. (22, f 21)

Wrocław was a city which, well, was in various hands. It was ruled ... it was a German city, Germans ruled here [...] Wrocław was called Breslau. There were also... Wrocław was in Czech hands. Hence Wrocław's cultural heritage is very, very big and hence the multicultural character of Wrocław, from this heritage. (45, f 45)

personally, I think that history builds and cements, hence the fact that today our multicultural character is the way it is we owe to the history. (13, m 21)

The respondents emphasise that this “multi historical character” can influence modern processes: among other things it is about greater openness to “otherness” and its acceptance which might be derived from the shared experiences:

history in general, to a great extent makes the residents of Wrocław open to other cultures and in general, to other cultures, to religious minorities, because majority of people came here and come from various regions of Poland and they know what it really means to start from scratch. (66, f 21)

2) Attitude towards the heritage

The significance of history for the creation of the city's modern character, including the one defined as multicultural, can be seen both in direct experiencing of selected historical artefacts present in Wrocław, as well as in opinions about the heritage of other cultures present in the city.

In reference to first of the issues, we have to recall the statements of Wrocław residents regarding learning about this heritage. The respondents were asked about the places which they have visited in Wrocław and which objectively need to be connected with ethnic, national and religious diversity. Among the places that attract visitors' greatest attention are: the Centennial Hall, St Mary Magdalene's Church and the Jewish Cemetery. Less than half of respondents visited the White Stork Synagogue, Church of the Triumph of the Cross and any of the orthodox churches. The first three objects are very famous, apart from the cemetery — they act as cultural centres in which various events are organised attracting the city's residents. The churches which were visited the least are in fact located in the centre but their “visibility” seems limited: the synagogue is hidden in the yard, the Greek Catholic Cathedral from the outside looks like any other of the Gothic buildings in the area and Orthodox Churches seen from the outside do not create clear associations with buildings known from the East — thus as less spectacular they may be less known and more rarely “consumed” by Wrocław residents.

²⁰ K. Dolińska, J. Makaro, op. cit., pp. 80–82.

Places that the respondents have visited /multiple choice/ $n = 429$

Have you ever visited?	Number	[%]
Centennial (People's) Hall	425	99.1
St Mary Magdalene's Church (Polish Catholic Church Cathedral in the Republic of Poland)	382	89
White Stork Synagogue	203	47.3
Royal Palace (palace of Prussian kings, seat of the City Museum of Wrocław)	287	66.9
Any of Wrocław's Orthodox churches	197	45.9
Jewish Cemetery	326	76
Church of the Triumph of the Cross (Greek Catholic Cathedral at Nankiera square)	198	46.2

However, the attitude towards the heritage of other cultures present in Wrocław can be described not only by reference to the “consumption” of the said artefacts. It is also the respondents' opinions about the actions related to the protection of this heritage that are important here.

Attitude towards the heritage /1 answer/ $n = 429$

In Wrocław there are various buildings, sculptures, monuments and other works created by Germans, Czechs, Jews, and Austrians living here in the past. What in your opinion should be our attitude towards these?	Number	[%]
We should care for them as for our cultural and national heritage	320	74.6
We should care for them if possible because it is still foreign cultural heritage	106	24.7
We should not particularly care about them, they are not ours	3	0.7
We should eliminate them from the city's space, these are foreign elements	0	0
In total	429	100

The distribution of answers to the question clearly indicates the unanimity of Wrocław residents — 99.3% claim that we should care for the heritage of other cultures, even though 24.7% claim that we should do it with certain limitations “because it is still foreign cultural heritage”. These opinions may also be found in the collected qualitative materials. Here, however, we have to emphasise certain duality of approaches towards what history built upon — different towards the heritage of other cultures in general and the German heritage in particular.

In the first case it has to be underlined that in fact there are no contrasting opinions. The respondents underline the importance of symbols, monuments and places confirming Wrocław's rich history from the perspective of the city's symbolic image and shaping its *genus loci*. They speak first of all about the need to care for the heritage:

I think that... that all the cultures that were ever present in Wrocław should revive, or continue living, they should never die, I think, because everybody knows that... that this makes Wrocław so special and also creates this multicultural nature that we have been talking about... [...] of course the memory about them should never die and it should be taken care of. History is history after all... [...] We should not forget that. (22, f 21)

The “revival” of history may also lead to the increase in social awareness and interpretation of what is happening now: “I think that it is very good that people try to dig this history out a bit and give it, kind of, new meanings. To make it visible and comprehensible for the residents” (48, m 36). This includes also the belief that “not only have we created this city but [it] grew on the motives of many cultures; many nations” (62, m 25).

There are also opinions confirming the creation of certain limitations to caring for the heritage of other nations.

If we don't like it we don't have to take it all. We can take what we like and what we don't like we can reject. We cannot be the gendarme of somebody's behaviour. Let everybody do what they consider appropriate. We can also promote, and it is happening, our culture in Ukraine or in Russia, Belarus. And they also will not accept all that we do there. There are disputes, arguments and subterfuge (6, m 75).

3) Attitude towards the German heritage

It is similar in the case of a separate issue which is the German heritage and discussion about caring for all which confirms the German roots of the city. Even though one of the respondents underlines that

history is one, there are many influences and here and now we have to take into account this diversity and emphasise all, I don't know, all sources of origin of our city, Wrocław, and try to carefully write down all these fragments of history thanks to which we can say that Wrocław is multicultural. [...] In my opinion we cannot say that certain influences are in the first place, true, as I said before, I think the German influences are stronger but still this cannot be an issue which favours any of the influences (54, f 20),

it is still necessary to deal with the issue so widely discussed in the public space.

In the gathered material three approaches to the broadly understood German-ness appear: we have to care for it, we have to care for it but in a limited way and we should not take any actions in this respect.

Focusing on the opinions of those who claim that we should care for the German heritage, it is worth showing on what premises it is built. It can be inferred from the residents' statements that the presence of the German heritage in Wrocław leads to its uniqueness:

It is good it is this way, because these are monuments, they remember old times, remind people what happened. It would be stupid if such buildings had to be destroyed solely because they were not renovated, were not protected. It does not really matter to me if these are German buildings because they in general make Wrocław unique and not the modern buildings, skyscrapers. (41a, m 20)

In this context first of all the post-German architecture is emphasised, “whose greatness corresponded [precisely] with the period when Wrocław was a German city [...] (27, m 46);

I really like what Germans left over their part of the history, when they were here. I really like their buildings, now monuments. I appreciate when the city finds resources or funds to keep them in appropriate state, because they are very beautiful (75, f 50).

In addition “buildings, i.e. Main Station or the Prussian Palace, are a characteristic feature and main point, a point in the guide around Wrocław. The look... with their look they enrich Wrocław” (43, f 20).

It is also worth recalling the statement of one respondent about her attitude towards individual places that create Wrocław’s modern image with their German origin as a secondary issue:

If they exist, we should reconstruct them [meaning: care for them], yes. What else could we do with the Centennial Hall? We absolutely cannot demolish it, just like the Royal Palace. If it is there, we have to keep it; it should exist for future generations. This refers both to the above-mentioned buildings as well as all others, monuments. Whether they are German or Polish does not really matter. If they are valuable in architectural terms, then they should be preserved. (31, m 29)

Even more so that — as emphasised by one of the respondents — “we do not have here anymore, apart from the architecture, in fact there are no influences, er, as to say, of German culture” (18, m 46).

What is left is a testimony of the city’s history which cannot — as it results from the above quotes — be erased, not only due to existing visible traces of the German heritage:

in Wrocław’s history the German accents are very clear, but this is our history and we cannot eliminate that from our awareness, that is, that Wrocław was a German city [...]. Certainly there is sorrow, because the history presents rather drastic Polish-German relations, but maybe due to such revival of these elements it will be easier for us to speak about... in quotation marks ‘deal with’ the sorrow. Through this we can show that Poles do not live only in the past, because of course you have to remember history, but you have to emphasise that. (27, m 46)

Caring for this special heritage is on the one hand a way to process the past, and on the other a chance to use it, in particular in the context of shaping the local community — since we can treat this heritage as an advantage:

we have the architecture, in the first place German, in the city because this was a German city, so we are not able to deny that, on the contrary this influences the spirit in general social spirit so we see that maybe we do not have to deny that, because it is different, but we can change it into something ours, that is know how to use it in a very reasonable and sensible way, that this is kind of our heritage, our good, and not something we should deny, demolish all buildings and build new ones [irony, laughter] because they will be Polish. What rubbish. Our history was the way it was and we are not able to change it. Let us focus on the future and not on this. (53, f 38)

Even more so that we can still find — for example — German inscriptions on old walls and buildings:

this is also a kind of Wrocław's culture, so I am absolutely against denying and fighting it, because this [points to a building] is also German, the entire Nadodrze Station is German, all the tenement houses, all this, well, German. Very often on these walls, if we walked around the yards here, in the area of Nadodrze, Olbin, we will find inscriptions in German. I know that our authorities in Wrocław tell us to cover them and change them into Polish inscriptions, but on the other hand this is also a kind of memory, isn't it? Even the building of the Wrocław University of Technology, the Faculty of Architecture at Prusa street, vis-à-vis this Nowowiejski Park, there still is or not a German inscription that this is a construction university, building institute. So, we can get stubborn, fight but probably on the other hand we would also not like it if it appeared that in the countries that once were Polish traces are eliminated. (61, f 39)

The other stance on the German heritage is contained in the statement that we should take care of it but in a limited way. However, we have to show two ways of approaching the German heritage: not forgetting *versus* reviving. On the one hand

why try and erase this history. What happened, happened and these artificial attempts to remove it... Yes, I am very much in favour of [...] I like these actions very much and I support taking care of what is left, because it used to be a beautiful city, still is, but not so much. (72, m 21)

Hence we should not erase history, but recall it, strengthen. On the other hand we have opinions on limiting this process of remembering the German origins of the city:

I mean the German culture can develop here, revive, but in a way as not to outshine the Polish and Wrocław's culture. [...] Let it be noted that the Centennial Hall was built by a German that it was his design and it looks nice, but let the name be Polish. (43, f 20)

Of course, the German cultural heritage we should definitely take into account but I do not support changing... coming back to old names, because for many years these various buildings, various monuments, streets, sculptures could their, had their names and it is not necessary to come back to the old names; since we renamed the People's Hall back to the Centennial Hall, so... will it be followed by changes of the street names back to the German ones? I am against it, as I said. (45, f 45)

The third and last (least represented) stance is presented by those who think that the German heritage should not be cared for:

the revival of German culture is in my opinion a suicide. Because, er, simply, in Wrocław, well it is sad to say this, because it is not about that, even though I will tell you honestly, that I also have bad associations with the Germans but it is not because of the war but because of their horrible language, but I will omit this fact. So, many persons, have bad associations with the Germans [...] it is not a good idea, because the German culture in fact is not really especially fascinating in my opinion... as far as I know. (7, f 20)

The presented opinions correspond with the discourse on the attitude towards the heritage of different cultures existing among the local community, and — as underlined by one of the respondents — “it is good that such discussions take place at all, they also show that Wrocław is not homogeneous in this respect and the influence of history [...] is quite clear and it is worth presenting it to the Wrocław residents in some way” (54, f 20).

4) Centennial Hall

The indicator²¹ of actions undertaken by the municipal authorities and their social reception selected by us is the change of the name of Wrocław's most known and valuable historical object — from the People's Hall to the Centennial Hall. Recalling Aleksander Wallis and his idea of marking the urban space, Ewa Kaltenberg-Kwiatkowska notices that names act for example as "*testimonies* of existence of separate areas absorbed by the city or abandoned forms of activity; these can also be the names 'symbolising *live history*, that is these contents which for certain groups [...] are currently necessary for their social and historical self-knowledge'. Speaking in modern jargon — some of the names may also have a marketing meaning"²². Of course, the change of the Hall's name is part of a wider process of changing street names, patron names and other operations in the symbolic sphere, which took place in Poland after 1989. This case, however, is specific at least for two reasons — it refers to a very famous, iconic object creating Wrocław's image, and the new name is a direct reference to the German tradition of this building.

In order to find out what social resonance was caused by the implemented change we asked the residents of Wrocław about it. In the simplest way, the respondents can be categorised into three groups: those who are not bothered by the change, or even like it; those who are against it and do not like it and those who have no opinion about the examined phenomenon — have not thought or heard about it. This division, however, does not tell us much about the reasons for the opinions, their intellectual and emotional premises, knowledge creating the context for their forming and finally — revealed at the same time — the attitude towards the wider category, i.e. the German heritage in Wrocław.

Among the persons who positively referred to the change of the name from the People's Hall to the Centennial Hall there is actually nobody to assess this change very positively — it is more about expressing satisfaction that the former name was changed and no objections to the new one. First of all we have to separate these respondents who accept the new name because the old one is identified with the People's Republic of Poland.

Coming back. I would rather... I do not know precisely how it was, but I perceive it more like that this is a change of the communist name to the more Wrocław one, something like that. A lot of people, the older ones, say the People's Hall. It's just like with the communist names

²¹ In the face of scarce knowledge of Wrocław residents about its pre-war history, already signalled in many publications, we have decided to ask the respondents about the most famous, relatively widely discussed example of the change in relation to the German heritage which was to guarantee the possibility to reveal the respondents' actual attitude towards this specific project and more broadly — towards the German heritage.

²² E. Kaltenberg-Kwiatkowska, "Pamięć w przestrzeni miasta — wprowadzenie i wymazywanie 'zapisów'". In *Pamięć jako kategoria rzeczywistości społecznej*, ed. J. Styk, M. Dziekanowska, Lublin 2012, p. 119.

of streets, which were changed..., it happened in all the cities and it is difficult to remember all these... (71, f 22)

I think before it was called the People's Hall, so I think it is better called the Centennial Hall [...]. Because the People's Hall brings to mind some very unpleasant and backward period in the history of Poland. The hall was built by Germans and I have personally nothing against its name being associated with the Germans. For me it can be even called the Angela Merkel Hall. I do not pay too much attention to the names of such objects. (73, f 27)

In the second quote the respondent demonstrates a certain distance to the name change, shows lack of emotional reaction to it — in the following statement another Wrocław resident even says that she does not feel offended by it:

I mean, I do not know if this will be accepted because this People's Hall seems to be strongly rooted in the language. I think that both names will function in a parallel way but I do not feel offended that, that this name functions, because this is how it was called in fact, historically, as it was built, it was called the Centennial Hall. Why was it "centennial" this is another matter, but I do not mind, to be honest, I do not know, I do not think these are my German inclinations, to Germanise our city. No... maybe my nature is such that I do not suspect some anti-Polish conspiracy. (99, f 48)

Maybe acceptance of the German tradition in the names results from looking at it from the perspective of decommunisation processes and not Germanisation, as others would see it. This may also be another argument for the ongoing discussion about the memory of the residents about their city — prioritising modern history in a way confirms this periodisation and valorisation of their city's history as more important. This is confirmed by the following quotes:

It is just a name. This is not... A lot of names of streets, or even... were simply changed after... after the war, to the names favouring the authorities at the time and after 1990 it was organised differently. This is... this is standard course of things. In fact, it does not really matter, to be honest, if this is Centennial or People's Hall. This... well this is just a name, well. (33, f)

When we are talking about the Centennial Hall I personally think that the name Centennial Hall instead of the People's Hall is related more to the collapse of communism in Poland than influence of Germanisation, or the German influence on Wrocław itself. [...] I would not support the version that giving this Centennial Hall its name is an attempt to attract attention to the German side, but rather emphasize the origin of the building itself, the fact that Wrocław was at the time, when the Centennial Hall was built, a German city, so it is hard to argue about that, these were the facts and you cannot falsify that. Well the fact that this name functions also today, in my opinion, I would not look for any such theories here. (54, f 20)

The latter statement mentions another argument repeated by Wrocław residents, which may be closed in a slogan that you do not discuss with facts and you accept them. In other words, with a kind of obviousness, the respondents agree that some cultural resources were created in times of German Wrocław and should be treated as such. Even though expressed differently, they come down to a common belief:

But we cannot say and forget that the Centennial Hall was built by Germans, when in fact the Centennial Hall was built by Germans, the fact that we called it the People's Hall, well this

can be called the People's Hall, but we have to respect that it was built by the Germans; it is a beautiful building and such a big one, so huge that it can host thousands of people, various exhibitions may be and are organised there. (20, f 54)

Scepticism towards the change of the Hall's name is not expressed directly and very decidedly and the question about the change of the name leads the respondents to consider a broader issue of the way the German heritage should be treated.

I mean, I think that such returns e.g. to names I think that this is something good because this is a kind of... A building was built then and then and was called that way. It also depends here, because this way we could come back to German names of the streets, right? And I think this would be going too far. I think that when we are talking for example about the Centennial Hall the name of the hall is connected to the centennial exhibition, that is like with a cultural event and I think that here the change of this name was kind of more appropriate because the People's Hall was the name given during the communist times, so also not very well associated by us. While the return to this name is related namely to the event itself in Wrocław and it kind of shows why this building was built and for what. And I think that this is something good, while you cannot continue with that, I also think that you cannot go too far with this, because for example change, well one could say that you could change the street names to German names or other things of this kind. I think this would be going too far. (59, f 22)

A lack of decisive and unanimous opinions of the respondents may be explained by their small involvement in the discussed issue. This is visible in many statements which refer not to the ideological but the practical side of the name change of one of the city's most important buildings. The problem appears to be not the new name and its semantic load but the change of name in itself — in particular for middle-aged and older persons who got deeply used to it.

Well, everybody has seen the Centennial Hall, the centennial Hall — all say the People's Hall — and I think it will stay this way. (53, f 38)

But I am not sure if this is... I mean I still keep, I can't switch to the "Centennial Hall." For me this has always been the "People's Hall" and practically when I am talking about it with friends, or when we make an appointment, it is always the "People's Hall," only later I wave — ah, right, it is the "Centennial Hall". No, in general I am... I do not know why, I do not understand sometimes why we keep, we decide to change something that has functioned and I don't know maybe some had bad associations with the word "People's". And I do not understand why, since people are the most important. (61, f 39).

A lot of people say People's Hall, the older ones. It is like with the communist street names which were changed... it happened in all cities and it is difficult to remember them all. (71, f 22)

The small distinctiveness of the views presented may also be connected with the lack of base (grounded knowledge) to have one's opinion about something. This lack of knowledge is declared directly:

Well I think that these are so old times that I do not even know this now, who created the hall, who built it, while [pause 3 seconds] I really like walking there, these are beautiful areas, there are promenades, you can walk around... there is the ZOO near, you can walk in the area, see something, relax, while it does not really bother me, but I think that this is not the People's Hall, but as I have already mentioned, this is a Millennium Hall, this somehow fits better for me (66, m 48),

or we can infer so from such respondents' statements as:

I often use the name People's Hall, because for most of my life I have called this building the People's Hall..., which obviously later when communism collapsed had bad associations because everything that was people's, that... and so on, this was associated with that period and they changed it to this Centennial Hall. Is it associated with Germans... my God... well... some people associate everything with everything (36, f 57),

and from other, already recalled quotes on the ways of interpreting both names. However, there is also such a category of respondents who correctly identify historical events, crucial from the perspective of the meaning of symbolism of the hall's name:

I relate positively, because in particular the funniest was the conflict with the Centennial Hall formerly People's because hm, the Centennial Hall was a name to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the battle of Leipzig, or a centenary of awarding a medal. But also this People's Hall was called so by the Nazis — folks hall. Hence this is like a Nazi shift to Polish communists. (62, m 25).

Conclusions

History for the respondents is undoubtedly an element creating the modern image of Wrocław as a multicultural city. However, summing up their statements, we have to emphasise that in terms of relation to the heritage of other cultures they go beyond the conflict axis described at the beginning of this article — thus they are neither strong admirers nor strong opponents of making the heritage of other nations the main element of their private homeland, even though they appreciate its importance both for Wrocław's history and its contemporary situation. This translates into a belief that it is worth caring for traces of other cultures in the city, even though not necessarily without any limits.

The attitude towards the German heritage has a regional, local character — “German traces’ are remembered differently in Central Poland and differently in Wrocław or Olsztyn”²³, for example in reference to architecture. These traces are important, because — on the one hand — they determine the visual uniqueness of Wrocław and on the other — they shape the feeling of local community whose important element is awareness of the history of one's own *milieu*. For this reason, for example, one needs to care for the German heritage even though some people set limits for its protection/revival.

Changing the name of the People's Hall to the Centennial Hall was justified by the city authorities with symbolic, prestige and marketing arguments²⁴. Re-

²³ R. Traba, op. cit., p. 161

²⁴ The question of the functions that the change of name may fulfil — informative-guiding, symbolic, prestige, marketing and informative — was touched upon by E. Kaltenberg-Kwiatkowska,

storing the historical name before the building's entry on the UNESCO list was aimed at responding to its global perception — this architectural achievement functions in professional studies as the Centennial Hall. In short, the new name was to, on the one hand, increase its prestige, but also make reaching it easier for potential tourists. These arguments, however, were not internalised by the respondents — in the analysed research these aspects do not occur. While from the residents' point of view the informative-guiding functions become important. The change of name in their opinion introduces confusion, this important landmark may function in at least two versions, and the adoption of the new name may be at least problematic. The symbolic function seems to play an interesting role in this case. As it has been said, at the level of elites the change of name led to a conflict and polarisation of opinions. While the residents of Wrocław do not pay too much attention to the meanings that both names carry, and what they evaluate negatively is rather the communist connotation of the People's Hall than the hundredth anniversary of winning over Napoleon and his coalition partner Poniatowski that the Centennial Hall commemorates.

The last issue, called, following Gostkowski, the "integration based on ahistorical sense of territory of one's own national group", is confirmed in the gathered material. The examined residents of Wrocław in general terms spoke about the city's own history and the arguments about Wrocław's multi historical nature, including the heritage of other cultures (mainly German still), were rather superficial and referred to the most visible, even symbolic, historical objects in the urban space. This is a conclusion corresponding to the deliberations of Maria Lewicka who wrote that the awareness of events related to the city's history is scarce — the memory of Wrocław residents does not go far back and in fact is limited to the times of Polish Wrocław²⁵.

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²⁵ M. Lewicka, "Dwa miasta — dwa mikrokosmosy. Wrocław i Lwów w pamięci swoich mieszkańców". In *My wrocławianie. Społeczna przestrzeń miasta*, ed. P. Żuk, Wrocław 2006.

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Wrocław residents on the multicultural character of their city — "crawling Germanisation" or restoration of the German heritage?

Summary

History is undoubtedly for the respondents an element creating the modern image of Wrocław as a multicultural city. However, when summing up we have to emphasise that in terms of relation to the heritage of other cultures they go beyond the conflict axis described at the beginning of this article — thus they are neither strong admirers nor strong opponents of making the heritage of other nations the main element of their private homeland, even though they appreciate its importance both for Wrocław's history and contemporary situation. This translates into a conviction that it is worth caring for traces of other cultures in the city, even though not necessarily without any limits. The examined residents of Wrocław in general terms spoke about the city's own history and the arguments about Wrocław's multi historical nature, including the heritage of other cultures (first of all German still) were rather superficial and referred to the most visible, even symbolic, historical objects in the urban space.