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**TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE IDENTITIES OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN POLAND AFTER THE TRANSITION FROM COMMUNISM TO DEMOCRACY**

*The urge to "write Poland anew" and the related discursive battles for the redefinition of collective identity have left their mark on the cultural landscape of Polish towns and cities. One of the dimensions of this recent process is the continued conscious act of regaining and recovering the uniqueness of regional and local identity with regard to historical experience. Diverse visions of collective identities are negotiated bottom-up, antithetical to the state-centric identity that was the order of the day before 1989. The equivalent of the post-communist "rebellion of the provinces" is the focus on the components of the heritage that are regarded by local communities as indispensable and worthy of re-evaluation and revalorisation. So far all the attempts to de-ideologise cultural capital in Poland have led to the dismantling of the anchor that steadfastly secured the sphere of the collective and symbolic imagination. These attempts have been accompanied by vibrant change and a blurred horizon of expectations. The aim of the paper is to illustrate this phenomenon.*

*Key words: Poland, person, place, deidealization, events after 1989.*

Once assigned, "belonging and identity are not assigned for ever" [1–2], writes Zygmunt Bauman [3]. They are dynamic, constantly-changing concepts; therefore a search for or a description of identity can be undertaken in almost any time frame.

This article belongs within an ongoing critical reflection over the potential of a post-dependency-oriented cultural approach to analysing identity in Central and Eastern European societies. The identities of societies entangled in dependencies remain in a state of transition [4].

The study of post-dependency discourses does not follow a complete research paradigm, but is an interesting epistemological area for an analyst of psychological, psychosocial, ideological and political phenomena designated by the "post-" prefix.

Reparation strategies can now be successfully analysed "bottom-up". The 1990s modernisation has led to a situation where the boundaries of the public sphere are defined by the formula of "civic participation" [5, p. 15–24], a notion whose key conceptual elements derive from the contemporary city. The democratisation of cities and the dissemination of urban culture as dominant has "in turn transformed the meaning and practices of national identification" [5, p. 21]. A classic region – nation [6, p. 52–61] type of identification is countered by a wider one, region – supranational (civilisational or cultural) community, and a narrower one, a signum loci identification (local identity, identity of a locality) [6, p. 61]. Dysfunctional [7] and stripped of a social and historical identity, individuals have been presented with a bundle of innumerable offers, which in various ways coexist with the multitude of identity strategies. Wojciech Burszta notes and highlights this problem, basing his conclusions on empirical surveys [8].

Burszta distinguishes at least two current types of identification: a form of traditional identity ("diffuse") and a complex ("situational") identity, based on individual choices and an individual evaluation of the contents of culture. In both cases, identification is based on recognising which contents of culture I identify with. Burszta believes that "behind every choice that is made, that is behind every evaluation, there is a certain potential of culture" [8]. Culture here appears as chaos [9, p. 84], an array of diverse contents, a product of multiple policies and subjects of culture; this favours development towards perfection, at the same time being conducive to distortions, to putting on and casting off masks [33].

This paper aims to illustrate the problem which has been theoretically outlined in the introduction. The narrative order is organised by narrations resonating Poland's dependent Communist past [10, p. 167] and by those constructed from the perspective of freedom [11, p. 45]. After a period of removing historical whitewash and deconstructing the myths of communism, numerous counter-theories and values are coming to the fore – "civilized values, secular-humanist values, modern values" [12]. In the light of current discourses these evince a new type of dependency.

"What sets the cities of Eastern and Central Europe apart from others, as Michał Murawski notes in his article, are combinations of material and non-material post-totalitarian traumas" [13, p. 85]. An analysis of this particular text against the background of Poland's reality enables a reading of the historical drama symbolically inscribed in it.

After the watershed of 1989, anything associated with the legacy of recent generation was deemed "post-communist" in popular understanding. Reclaiming this space was expressed through a negation and rejection of this legacy. Communism had been founded upon a one-sided vision of the nation's past; therefore, after the regime fell, there was a revival of the memory of the colonised: "the memory of people,

organisations and events that could not be commemorated before" [14, p. 134]. Rafał Stobiecki finds that "the re-valuing and re-interpreting of Polish patriotism consisted in a simple re-shuffling of signs" [15, p. 340–341]. In many cities they map out a post-dependency landscape, a claim borne out by Elżbieta Hałas's research on the changes of street names in 1988–1998 in 254 towns. She concludes that the Poles seek their identity in the exploits of the Polish Legions, in the Polish Underground State of the Second World War, the Warsaw Uprising, the myth of "Solidarity", finding "a clear nostalgic reference to the Second Republic" [16, p. 160]. There appears to be, therefore, a redistribution of contents within contents, a recourse to the imaginarium of a community at the point of being constituted. Poles have chosen the tradition symbolised by values standing in stark contrast with the ideology of the fallen regime: "[...] the colonial subject has returned as the post-colonial subject [...]. It evinces a wish, typical and widely-described by post-colonial scholars, to return to an "authentic self", or the self from before colonisation" [10, p. 85].

Once the meanings of the carriers of historical memory have been objectivised, a resistance is created; this process occurs from the moment when reparation processes release the resources of social and individual – "sensitive" – memory. An interesting example infused with diverse meanings is Stawki Street in Warsaw's Muranów district with its monuments and sites of remembrance: "Stawki Street, writes Elżbieta Janicka, was adjacent to Umschlagplatz, where in 1942 and 1943 Nazis gathered Jews for deportation [...] A monument-tombstone of Jewish Warsaw was placed there in 1988. The relation between the sign of historical memory and its site is direct and simple here. [...] in 1995 another monument was erected nearby – a memorial to Those who Died and were Murdered in the East [...] the installation commemorates events bearing no relation to the site, street, district, city. [...] The memorial is, however, described – and popularly known as, the carriage of crosses – a Golgotha of the East" [17].

The association of Muranów's "Golgotha of the East" with the monument-tombstone of Jewish Warsaw may appear an example of external attribution, a sign of a post-1989 reorientation of the Polish memory of World War II, where Katyń would be the focal point of a "living" martyrological memory". This claim, however, is undermined by the local interpretation of the symbolism of the site: "Before the Nazis decided to enter the Warsaw Ghetto (19 April 1943), [...] on 13 April 1943 the press and radio announced news of the Katyń massacre. As the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto died lonely deaths in the fire, the press and radio bulletins listed witnesses who allegedly spoke of a "Jewish" appearance or behaviour of the executioners. [...] A poster with the word "Katyń" splashed on it appeared in the towns and hamlets of the General Governorate. [...] And so, at Easter 1943, the myths of "Jew the God Killer", "Jew the Ritual Killer" and "the Yid-Commie" converged" [17].

At present, as noted by Elżbieta Janicka in her discussion of the case, the central axis of Muranów's system historical signs is drawn by the conflict of memory over the scale of suffering. A number of celebrations held by veterans, "with a slight or less slight tinge of antisemitism, as well as a reconstruction of the Katyń execution, were held at the memorial. These took place on 19 April 2009, an anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising" [17].

As evident from this example, the democratisation of memory both revives and alters memory, intensifying social tensions related to this process. Memory becomes a playing field where culture games are played; a battlefield for "negotiations of meanings, symbols and discourses used by various groups or institutions, often in conflict with each other" [18, p. 39–40]. Here is another example: "The day before 11 November, Independence Day, the memorial to the glory of the Red Army in Nowy Sącz was splattered with red paint. [...] The memorial, regularly picketed by local veterans and patriotic associations, is vociferously defended against removal or transfer to the cemetery by the mayor" [19].

Local conflicts and animosities become more pronounced wherever resources of memory have been thawed and released, where "convictions differentiating and accepting cultural dominance" [20, p. 20] are accepted and preserved. This is despite history's contemporary idiom and methodology being more accepting of heterogeneity, of "a difference which constitutes the discourse of unity and not of exclusion or stigmatisation [...]" [21]. These processes are at the same time accompanied by regions and local communities regaining an awareness of their separate and unique historical experience and seeking to de-ideologise and revitalise their cultural capital, as a reaction to the state-centric identity politics of the communist People's Republic of Poland. An openness to a dialogue with others is evident. Further, new subjects of culture, representing the civil society, join the negotiations over the identity of cities. A new type of community is thus constituted – a communicative community.

This conclusion can be illustrated with an example of post-dependency game-playing over the "new" identity of Warmia and Masuria. Since 1990, the "Borussia" association has been attempting to rationalise the post-German legacy of the region. In the words of the founding members of the association, "Borussia" was formed in order to "search for answers to questions asked by first-generation Poles born in Regained Territories: where are we living? and who are we?" [22, p. 24]. After World War II, as Robert

Traba notes, the symbols and archetypes of the Warmian-Masurian landscape of the former Prussia were "dead", "mute", "Prussian-Teutonic" elements of history. They symbolised "evil, which culminated in a murderous war" [23, p. 212]. Several initiatives have proved invaluable in altering this: Polish-German dialogue, a number of joint publications [24, p. 32–44] and the non-heroic slogan promoted by Borussians – "a Borussian is not only a resident of Warmia and Masuria, but of other regions of Poland, and even of Russia or Germany" [who – D.S.] "is aware of where he or she comes from [and – D.S.] makes an effort to get to know the place where he or she lives" [24, p. 37].

An analysis of the ongoing transformations must take note of the influence of external phenomena. Since historians and those wielding political power attempted an assessment of the collapsed regime, a debate over the past has intensified; this has been paralleled by an intensification of emotions in local communities. One example concerns a memorial in Poznań: The memorial to General Świerczewski has been in Poznań for 30 years. Its less glorious elements have been obscured by greenery, with the important message exposed – an inscription about the fight for the Homeland [25].

Changes in attitudes towards acts of commemoration also shed light on the aspirations to build a new model of community. Official celebrations with their *de rigueur* wreath-laying and military parades are increasingly being supplemented with spontaneous events: Several races – from the Baltic to the Tatras – took place on 11 November to celebrate Independence Day. The Independence Run, a marathon, is a "new" urban tradition" [26].

A peculiar feature of this kind of forms and practices of participation in culture is the need to speak of how communitarian values could be implemented "again" [27]. It has to be noted here that the acknowledgment of a right to a certain liberty with regard to history can be treated as a guarantee of a commitment: "In the listed building of a historical brewery in Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz, a group of aficionados from the "Kultura Miejska" association has been recreating the histories of nearby buildings and open urban spaces which disappear as developers make new investments" [28].

Onomastic research into the "language" of cities against the backdrop of last decade's transformations points to the weakening after 1989 of symbolic nationalism [16, p. 149–150]. The waning of this phenomenon, as noted by Hałas, is to some extent evident also at the level of social life, increasingly influenced by local elements: In the small town of Kościan in Wielkopolskie there is "(a nameless bridge) behind Łazienki [which] already has the folk name "swine bridge", probably because swine used to be driven there on their way from the farm belonging to the former starosta's castle. The name stuck. [...] The renovated bridge in Piłsudskiego Street – Nowak Bridge, because that was the way Second Lieutenant Nowak always took to work; the bridge in Wrocławska Street – Igłowicz Bridge, because Professor Igłowicz always took this route home from school [...] [29].

It appears that, along with generational change, there is a waning of post-dependency symptoms of repossession which mandated a rejection and negation of anything and everything that could resurrect the memory of the past: "Save the remaining relics of PRL (the People's Republic of Poland). Saving something from the legacy of PRL is the mission of the Białystok social action "Flowers in concrete". [...] The grey, concrete reality of PRL did not destroy people's need for beauty" [30].

In conclusion, the diversity and dynamics of psychological transformations in local communities has to be emphasised. An interrogation of the relations between contemporary identity narrations and "the locality", as well as the relation between identity and post-dependence inscribed in these narrations, reveals the existence of a liminal sphere between the traditional historian's ground and the sphere of participant observation, typical for cultural studies [31]. One aim of this paper has been to note this problem. The multitude of the signs of time and events recalled corresponds to the plurality of interpretation. The argument traced above legitimates the conclusion that there is a growing "bottom-up" tendency to form post-dependency communitarian bonds; to re-claim living space and the sites constituting identity; it outlines the relations between the signs of identity and the time stimulating this inter-relation.

The above-mentioned conclusive statements have been aptly illustrated by Jerzy Świąch: "At the very end of his agony, an outcast, as observed by J. Świąch, took full control of the imagination that, during his misanthropic phase, he was unable to come to grips with, and which, once it became his remit, started to play the role of his cornerstone conceptual tool, his worldview lens. Admittedly, this worldview pivots upon the village or county of his childhood but the said village or county expands, propelled by the sheer force of imagination, spilling onto the entire world; it is capable of teleporting itself to any chosen place on the planet (...) this is the ultimate destination that the outcast identifies himself with" [32, p. 15].

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## Домініка Сташик

### САМОІДЕНТИФІКАЦІЯ МІСЦЕВИХ ГРОМАД В ПОЛЬЩІ ПІСЛЯ ПЕРЕХОДУ ВІД КОМУНІЗМУ ДО ДЕМОКРАТІЇ

*Прагнення "писати заново Польща" та у відповідних дискурсивних боях за перевизначення колективної ідентичності, залишили свій слід в культурному ландшафті польських міст. Одне з вимірювань цього недавнього процесу є продовження свідомого акту відновлення унікальності регіональної та місцевої ідентичності у зв'язку з історичним досвідом. Різні бачення колективних ідентичностей обговорюються, суперечать державній ідентичності, орієнтованій до початку 1989 року.*

*Еквівалент посткомуністичного "повстання з провінцій" знаходиться в центрі уваги дослідників, які розглядають місцеві громади в якості необхідних для переорієнтації. До цих пір спроби деідеологізації культурни в Польщі призвели до їх демонтажу, що супроводжується яскравими змінами та складними персептивками у їх реалізації. Метою статті є пояснення цього явища.*

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*Ключові слова: Польща, особистість, населений пункт, деідеологізація, події після 1989 року.*

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**Доминика Сташик**

**САМОИДЕНТИФИКАЦИЯ МЕСТНЫХ ОБЩЕСТВ В ПОЛЬШЕ ПОСЛЕ ПЕРЕХОДА ОТ КОММУНИЗМА К ДЕМОКРАТИИ**

*Стремление "писать заново Польша" и в дискурсивных боях за переопределения коллективной идентичности, оставили свой след в культурном ландшафте польских городов. Одно из изменений этого недавнего процесса является продолжение сознательного акта восстановления уникальности региональной и местной идентичности в связи с историческим опытом. Различные видение коллективных идентичностей обсуждаются, противоречат государственной идентичности, ориентированной в начале 1989 года.*

*Эквивалент посткоммунистического "восстание из провинций" находится в центре внимания исследователей, которые рассматривают местные общины в качестве необходимых для пиереоцинки. До сих пор попытки деидологизации Культурном в Польше привели к их демонтажа, что сопровождается яркими изменениями и сложными перспеткивами в их реализации. Целью статьи является объяснение этого явления.*

*Ключевые слова: Польша, личность, населенный пункт, деидеологизация, события после 1989 года.*