

REGIONALISM, LOCALISM, IDENTITY

Marian Golka, Experiencing Identity under the Conditions of Multiculturality

Contemporary experience of identity began to undergo radical changes under the influence of numerous factors, multiculturalism included. Multiculturalism is understood here as an awareness of the co-occurrence of two or more social groups with relatively different cultural features within the same space (or in immediate vicinity of one another but without a clearly defined boundary, or in a situation when two or more such groups aspire to occupy the same space). Such an experience of identity is accompanied by a specific “multiculturalism of cultures” which increasingly tend to adopt a hybrid nature. It seems that the times of peace, equilibrium, stability, constancy and explicit identity are irrevocably gone – the rule of the idea of identity as something permanent, homogeneous and common has come to an end. Although identity has become problematic, doubtful and blurred it is also a creative and promising challenge. After all the fluidity, changeability, temporality and hybridity of identity correspond to the fluidity, changeability and diversity of the contemporary Western civilization.

Przemysław Pluciński, The ‘Right to the City’ as the Ideology of Radical Urban Social Movements

The idea of the ‘right to the city’ is currently experiencing a genuine renaissance and as an ideology of urban social movements it has become one of the key political categories. It has a long tradition which is rooted in social theory, particularly within the post-Marxist theory of conflict. The article reconstructs the basic premises of the idea of ‘the right to the city’, discusses the views of its main representatives (H. Lefebvre, M. Castells, D. Harvey, N. Smith) and presents related ideas (spatial justice, urban democracy, gentrification). Moreover, the prospects of urban social movements are indicated (the Chilean pobladores, the Brazilian metropolitan movements, the anti-gentrification movement) which operate actively within the public sphere and space.

Robert Kmiecik, Forms of Corporative Self-Government in Poland – Twenty Years of Experience of a Democratic State

One of the biggest achievements of the process of the socio-political transformation in Poland is a vast decentralization of the sphere of public power. From the perspective of administrative law, decentralization is understood as a system in which there is a large number of independent centres equipped with public and legal competences and one main centre. Decentralization is therefore a procedure of transferring certain public functions so far restricted to the competence of the central government to groups of citizens organized as corporations. The object of the analysis presented in the article is corporative self-government grounded in the union of persons with obligatory membership.

Corporative self-government which exemplifies decentralization is not a one-dimensional notion referring only to territorial relations. An essential role in the system of representing the interests of particular milieus falls to special self-government which is set apart by other criteria. According to this division, within the special self-government we further distinguish trade self-government and economic self-government.

The article emphasizes the fact that the success of the Polish self-government reform will be complete only when there is a harmonious development of all the forms of corporative self-government irrespective of the character of bonds between their members. As legal entities, self-governments will then be in the service of democracy and will strengthen the civic society.

Paweł Antkowiak, The Evolution of Self-Government in Poland in the Period of Political Transformation

The political transformation which was introduced in Poland in 1989 brought about the creation of a state founded on democratic rules and respecting basic human rights. It was a period of dynamic political changes. As a result, self-government appeared and continues to exist in its present shape. The electoral system is an essential part of political life on a local and regional level. However, this system can also easily be abused to achieve some immediate political goals which do not always converge with the aims of a democratic state. Six previous self-government elections have proven that electoral regulations often become the subject of a political game.

Piotr Cichocki, What is the state of regional identity in Wielkopolska?

The present paper takes up the discussion concerning the regional identity in Wielkopolska on three distinct but overlapping planes. Firstly, the author characterizes the available survey data pertaining to the sense of connectedness to the region. Secondly, the question of structure and range of those regional bonds is posed. In the final section, some

arguments are put forward concerning the functionality of regional identity with respect to the overall developmental challenges faced by Wielkopolska. The analyses lead to the conclusion that while the existence of comparatively strong regional bonds seems undeniable, this set of socially shared beliefs remains weak both in terms of its structure and content. In this sense, what remains the challenge for the research on regional identity in Wielkopolska is not so much the diagnosis of the commonly held subjective auto-stereotypes, as rather the question of the ways in which the regional identity could be enriched and strengthened.

Marta Gotz, The Potential for Coopetition in Wielkopolska Compared to Selected Voivodeships in Poland

Coopetition (coopertition) is described from a company's perspective as a strategy of a syncretic gain of profit, and from the perspective of a region it is a method of ordering the economic processes in such a way as to ensure optimal effectiveness of the whole system. In the literature of the subject this concept is most frequently described in business terms as relations between companies. The object of the present article is a preliminary reconnaissance of Wielkopolska's potential for coopertition, in other words a presentation of this region against the backdrop of three other wealthiest voivodeships in Poland in virtue of their capacity for coopertition. Existing conditions for the development of this type of interactions are assessed by reference to a set of essential factors suggested in the literature. The fourth position of Wielkopolska among Polish voivodeships in terms of per capita income corresponds roughly to its positions measured using the suggested factors that condition the development of coopetition, even though the potential to coopetition gives the region a slightly higher position than implied by its economic power measured as GDP per capita.

Monika Choroś, Bilingual Place Names Plates in the Opole Region: A Manifestation of Democracy or a Source of New Conflicts?

The law on national and ethnic minorities and regional language passed by the Polish Parliament regulates the rules of introducing additional place names and street names in German. It was commonly expected that adoption of this law would solve the problems, abate the emotions and mitigate apparent controversies connected with the expression of distinctness by national minorities.

An attempt to describe the introduction of German places names in Upper Silesia is presented against the background of similar experiences in Poland and Europe. They show that the problem of bilingual place names is related to the emotional rather than the pragmatic sphere of life and is a visible element of the "policy of remembrance". The most intense emotions and discussions were triggered by the introduction of additional names in German and Lemko. This demonstrates that the baggage of a troubled past has an enormous significance for the way in which those minorities are perceived today.

Iwona Jakimowicz-Ostrowska, Gdynia - History, Character, Identity

Cities young and old, big and small, rich and somewhat more humble – all bear features that once conditioned their development and now shape their image. In this context Gdynia does not appear to be an especially outstanding place. What makes it special is its legend and the emotions which have accompanied it ever since the construction of this port agglomeration started, myths about it which have intensified over the years and the capital that they yielded which is today used by the citizens. The myth surrounding the city, skillfully fuelled, continues and enhances the attractiveness of the place even until today.

A city is first and foremost its people – both its former citizens and the present generation. Here, in Gdynia, everyone is at the same time an immigrant and a native. It is a place of paradoxes, where modernity encounters tradition, development is connected with history, and today's citizens cultivate the memory of past generations. The history of the beginnings of the port and the city subtends decisions concerning the current directions of the city's development, its modernization or expansion. Images of Gdynia are linked with the modernistic character of its white buildings, the lifestyle of the sailors and dreamers who arrived here over eighty over years ago and dared to turn their visions into reality.

Paweł Lewandowski, Gorzów's Local Identity: Between German Heritage and Polish Everyday Life

The article concerns the formation of the local identity of Gorzów's citizens. As a city in the so called Polish "Recovered Territories", Gorzów constantly struggles with its history, interrupted in 1945. During the first post-war period, the new society, formed by a rapid migration was not very eager to accept a socially and culturally unfamiliar environment. In order to adjust, people were "domesticating" and "appropriating" the city. This attitude harmonized with the state policy, but did not promote positive identification with the new home. After the transformation of 1989, a new, more open policy toward former Gorzów's citizens and the city's German heritage has emerged. However, it appears that ordinary citizens do not consider recent political initiatives as the most essential for the city's identity and they regard Gorzów to be rather unattractive and a place to which it is difficult to ascribe any fixed local identity system.

Bernard Linek, The Silesian Institute (1934-1948): Historical-Ideological Circumstances, Social Roles, People

The article presents the genesis and the main trends within the Polish studies in the humanities conducted in Silesia on the turn of the 19th and 20th century with special emphasis on historiography. The main focus is on the activity of Instytut Śląski (Silesian Institute) based in Katowice during the Interwar period and directly after the War. The author analyzes the political goals set by Michał Grażyński, the then Voivode, as well as the main directions of the scientific research carried out by this institution at that time. According to the intentions expressed by M. Grażyński, the Institute was meant to constitute – beside Muzeum Śląskie (Silesian Museum) and Komitet Wydawnictw Śląskich (Committee for Silesian Publications) of Kraków – an element of the Polish political offensive in the field of historical politics.

The five-year-long activity of the Silesian Institute before the War ended with an impressive number of 270 published books of various length and character. The popularizing activity in the form of lectures, meetings and special radio programs was also carried out. Directly after the War, there dominated another form of activity, which was connected with the primary political aim of bringing the Regained Territories closer to the society inhabiting them.

Mikołaj Tyrchan, The Poznań Historians of Law and the Institute for Western Affairs

During the interwar period an autonomous scientific school of historians of law was created in Poznań by scholars grouped around Zygmunt Wojciechowski and the milieu of the initiators of the Polish Western thought. Its research traditions were continued after 1945 at Poznań University and in the intense activity of the Institute for Western Affairs. The Poznań historians of law took active part in research on the German Nazi occupation of Poland during the Second World War and in studies of the Regained Territories (in the aspect of their historical heritage and current political-economic issues). In the second half of the 1940s the Institute for Western Affairs was one of the most important Polish research centres. In the Stalinist period the scientific milieu of the Institute was subjected to numerous restrictions in terms of finances and censorship, and even to certain political repressions. Nevertheless, Zygmunt Wojciechowski continued to fulfill his leading role at the Institute to the end of his life. The article discusses the basic directions of research undertaken by the historians of law within the framework of activity of the Institute for Western Affairs.