

Social functioning of architecture of selected fragments of public space of urban centres in the Polish territories in the second half of the 19th century (until 1914) – popular abstract

Cities in the Polish territories saw huge changes during the ‘long’ 19th century (until 1914, that is, the World War 1), which began with restructuring their centres according to the rules of Enlightenment in the first decades of the century. An important case in point was Warsaw in the period of the renewed Polish Kingdom after 1815. Lviv was also subject to a transformation program conducted by the Austrians, who held the power here from 1772. New meanings related to the Polish and Austrian national and cultural tradition were given to the public spaces of both cities. The issue of this transformations was and is already dealt with in the scientific literature, there is a virtual lack though of research concerned with perceiving and decoding of meanings, and evaluating these spaces (i.e. their urban planning, edifices and monuments situated there) by contemporary people in the subsequent period. The latter spanned from about 1870s till 1914, when the political and legal situation of both cities changed. Warsaw, after the defeat of national uprisings in 1831 and 1864, was subject to the efforts of the Russian authorities to diminish its status and to make its features of a capital, Polish city, fade. Lviv in turn gained more spaces of a Polish character, after obtaining self-government under the Polish City Council in 1870. Simultaneously, in the last decades of the 19th century, a dramatic demographic development took place in both cities (the number of their inhabitants doubled) and their ethnical situation became more complex (development of the districts densely populated by the Jewish community despite formal freedom of settlement in the whole cities; emancipation of the Ruthenian community in Lviv). Urban planning practices in Lviv much developed, though in Warsaw – as the city lacked self-government and was controlled directly from St. Petersburg – a planned spatial development saw huge obstacles. Both magistrates lacked financial means too.

The aim of the research is to give answer to the question, how the changing space, which gained new meanings, was decoded and evaluated by its users in both most important cities in the Polish territories in the 19th century. Written and iconographic sources related to selected fragments of the public space will be investigated. This material is broad. A survey over selected memoirs, press articles, city guides, fiction, comments on architectural competitions, monographies on artistic, architectural, hygienic, monument preservation or engineering issues, along with photographic albums, drawings, postcards, and even advertisements, will be carried out in order to find the content regarding researched issues. By means of an analysis of all this, what the population (mainly Polish-speaking), as well as the intellectual elites, thought of the selected edifices and monuments, broader conclusions about human mentality, the ability of decoding meanings, and self-consciousness will be drawn. The project is in accord with the so called *Cultural History* trend (something different to the history of culture), which seeks for deeper context of social phenomena, far from the issues addressed by the political history, but of crucial importance for understanding people from that times. At least a partial answer will be given to the issue of taking shape of a specific ‘urban’ consciousness of city dwellers, independent from the type of mentality connected with the world view of a gentry, still dominating in the 19th century.

There is virtually no urban history research of that kind in Poland, which are present in the Western *urban studies* and in the so called *New Cultural History*. In case of Warsaw, there is still plenty of sources pertaining to the mentioned issues, despite the destruction of many archival sources during the World War 2. In case of Lviv it will be an attempt to look at its development in a more objective way, far from the ‘Polish perspective’ which dominated our historiography for many years. The aim is to describe cities as complicated organisms, which cannot be subject to any simple depiction or recapitulation. The project will add to the Polish research over urban history. It will be a comparative study, the need of which is still very big.