

## DESCRIPTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

The western and northern Polish territories, annexed to Poland after the World War II, still constitute an open research field, primarily due to their turbulent history, whose central element is the postwar almost total population exchange. In the Polish People's Republic, research on this new (and unknown) area was hampered by the propaganda of the return of Poland to its medieval borders as well as by the postulate of its internal homogenization and integration with the rest of the country. After the political change, from the mid-90s up to the present day, one can observe an increased interest in the region. The scientists and researchers try to verify and fill empty gaps in its history, whereas the inhabitants of the areas in a local-turn seek a chance to express, create or recreate own traditions and identity. The majority of the scientific and popular publications, however, refer to the first postwar decades, when the western territories became the big social laboratory where the processes of adaptation and integration went along with internal conflicts and intergroup antagonisms.

The initial research has shown that the present, dynamically transforming reality, which is primarily constituted by the constant looking for and changing the meanings of the surrounding reality (imagined worlds), has still not been thoroughly researched. One of the unexplored areas is the pre-war material cultural heritage - the microcosm of objects and things – in the present-day context of its existence and its relations with the contemporary inhabitants of the region. The heritage of the area could be called “difficult” or “orphan” not only due to the regions' past but also considering the multiplicity of narratives related to it now: from affirmation, through negation, to denial and rejection.

The aim of the project is therefore to examine the mechanisms of including material traces of a difficult, conflict past to the individual and local surroundings of today's inhabitants of the western and northern territories on the example of two cities: Wrocław and Szczecin. The general research questions are the following: whether and how the potentially conflicted heritage can become familiar, ordinary, or even appreciated? What status does it gain in the hierarchy of things and the immediate surroundings, but also in the institutional and official narratives? What is the relationship between people and objects and the role of this relationship in the creation of Wrocław and Szczecin's "imagined worlds"?

The qualitative research, conducted in parallel in Wrocław and Szczecin, will include three areas or dimensions of the functioning of the objects: private (private apartments and its inhabitants), commercial (traders and fly markets) and institutional (museums) ones. The distinction between these three different dimensions will allow us to examine transformations in the imaginary sphere, but also to differentiate the symbolic, economic and ideological values concerning the objects in question.