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# Visual Identity of Place: History as Emotional Element of Political Games in City Space

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## Abstract

In this paper I'd like to discuss the role of images in shaping contemporary identity of chosen cities in the Polish 21st century reality. Images serve to make sense of space, and everyday life of community. During the communist era walls of buildings were used as a field of ideological fight between official powers and underground forces. Posters, pattern and stickers art, prepared by political opposition were quickly removed. Documentation of this fight survived in private photo-collections and in some archives (e.g. "Karta"). Official policy in Poland had also visual aspect, not only in propaganda posters, but also in visual propaganda of socialist welfare. Some murals documented this phenomenon are still present in the city landscape in Warsaw, Łódź, Kraków, and other cities; and they can be treated as testimony of past. Nowadays, history is used in political games to create the sense of national identity, pride, etc.; and is present in a lot of special outdoor exhibitions to celebrate anniversaries of important events, in murals to stress unique identity of place. Contemporary visual practices, intentional processes of beautifying the city space by murals, stands, sculptures, create sometimes also "memory lessons", and remind about history. New heroes are now celebrated, to the other events then in the previous era gain in importance. Łódź and Warsaw will be *case studies* here for showing how history is located in the visual landscape of temporary decorations. On the example of two cities, very different in character, it will be demonstrated how events, people and phenomena are represented (despite some similarities, e.g. in both cities ghetto was organized by Nazis during the WWII); and how they participate in shaping identity of place, and the policy toward history. Visual material became mostly from the period of 2014-2018, 25 years after transformation (authors photographs, however, to comparison some archival photos will be used).

**Keywords:** visual identity, city, murals, history, postcommunist country

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