Universities with multicultural disrupted past: what meanings current students attribute to them?

Olena Dobosh

Graduate School for Social Research,
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of Polish Academy of Sciences
Nowy Świat 72, 00-330 Warsaw, Poland,
E-mail address: odobosh@sns.edu.pl

Abstract

The changing of pre-war borders of Central and Eastern Europe after WW II caused not only belonging of certain territories to definite countries but also the massive forced relocation of population from those territories. The total change of the population in the multicultural cities affected also institutions, such as universities by changing their staff, language, and national profile.

Nowadays, when modern universities are facing post-modernity challenges it is extremely difficult to talk about role, mission, and meaning of this institution, especially in the context of disrupted historical tradition. Look at the problem from the different perspective, from inside **will show the tendencies of meanings current students** of the universities with long but disrupted historical past attribute to their Alma maters. Are they aware of the presence of representatives of different national groups that created university community before WW II?

This article will present results of three studies conducted at three universities that changed their national profile after WWII: Vilnius University in Lithuania (formerly a Polish university), Lviv University in Ukraine (formerly a Polish university) and Wrocław University in Poland (formerly a German university). Both at Vilnius University and Lviv Universiy 150 university students participated in the study. At Wrocław University 152 university students participated in the study.

The present analysis will try to explore the variety of meanings current students of those three universities attribute to their place of study. It will try to show if current students are aware of the university's complex history and, if they include/exclude historical meanings connected with representatives of the different national group? Also, it will look at the possible differences between meaning attribution and perception of the university past among representatives of these three universities. Lviv, Wrocław, and Vilnius Universities had similar historical traces, but currently, they are developed in three different independent countries with different cultural and historical politics which might have an influence on the perception of the place's past (Lewicka, 2011).

Key words: University; Place meaning; Central-Eastern Europe

Introduction

Political changes that occurred during XX century in Central and Eastern Europe caused not only formal border changes but first of all this time was filled by massive national and ethnic compositional replacement. Many places changed their statehood and quite often witnessed the change of their entire population. South-Eastern German territories were annexed to the Poland, while South-Eastern Polish territories were attached to the Soviet Union and after 1991 transformed into independent countries, such as Ukraine and Lithuania. From the perspective of history it is just facts and statistics, but actually, they hide by themselves tragedy of thousands of people who were forced to leave their homes and move to the new places. It meant that empty houses became inherited by new people and the buildings and cities became filled in with new meanings. Most evidently these post-war processes were seen at the scale of different institutions and social units. Universities became most sensitive in that context. Being one of the most representative personifications of collective memory, they painfully experienced crucial changes of internal national composition of the academic community during and after WW II.

Lviv University

Ivan Franko Lviv National University is the current name of the university that began its history in XVII century. The destiny of the University was inseparably connected with the historical paths of the city named: *Leopolis, Lviv, Lwów, גרעבמעל, Lemberg, Львов, Львів*. Those names represent changes of the official authorities in the city, but also mirrored national coloring of habitation that was part of the city community, but belonged to different national and religious groups. The year of university foundation (as officially represented by current university authorities) is considered to be 1661 when the king of Poland John II Kazimir empowered the Jesuits Collegium that was established in Lviv a few years before to be university and academy (Kmet, 2011).

During a more than three hundred year history, Lviv University as an academic institution was used by different political regimes to represent their view of higher education as a political tool. After 1772 Lviv was annexed by Austria, and University became a State Academy, later secular State University named by Joseph II, Austrian Emperor. From 1919 till 1939 it was officially a polish university, represented by the name of Jan Kazimir, the king of Poland. In spite of changing political regimes, the university in Lviv during all its history till 1939 was Alma mater for representatives of three major national groups residing the city – Poles, Jews and Ruthenians (Ukrainians) (Prytula , & Tarnavskyj, 2011).

During the WW II, Lviv was not destroyed and prewar buildings of the University survived. But social ethno-national composition of the popula-

tion of the city and of the university community changed crucially during and after war as about 80% of the academic staff and students disappeared: Jews were killed during the Nazi occupation in the city's ghetto (about 90 000 people); Poles were forcedly taken out to the Poland by realization of operation Vistula and other forced deportations as consequences of after war border-changes (about 100 000 Poles and 3,5 000 of Jews that survived after Nazi occupation of the city), numerous Ukrainians were imprisoned and deported to Siberia (about 30 000 people) (Redzik, 2015). Actually, only the fifth of the pre-war city population stayed to live in Lviv after WW II. The city population was constructed by the replacement of Ukrainians who were forcibly deported from their ethnic territories that became part of Poland to the Soviet Union and by representatives of other Republics of the Soviet Union who moved to the city because of job referrals, which was part of the soviet labor politics. So, the staff and students of the University also changed crucially.

In 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union Lviv became part of the Ukraine with a mono-national population composition inhabited mainly by Ukrainians. The University became Ukrainian being one of the important educational and scientific centers in the country. After 1999 the full name of the University becomes Ivan Franko Lviv National University.

Wrocław University

The history of the University of Wrocław, a city in Lower Silesia, currently the Southwest part of Poland, has similar historical traces to the University in Lviv, with a unique complicated and complex fate. Officially its roots are counted from 1702 when Austrian Emperor Leopold I established a Jesuit Academy – Leopoldina, with the status of the university in the city of Breslau (Kulak, Pater & Wrzesiński, 2002).

During its 300-years history, it was a religious institution, later the secular center of German science, being a political tool firstly of Prussian state - *Schlesische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Breslau*, and later of Germany. In spite of its political and state subordination the academic community of the university in different periods of its existence till 1945 was multicultural, represented mainly by residents of Lower Silesia - Germans or Austrians, Jews, Poles and Czechs (Kulak, Pater & Wrzesiński, 2002).

During 1933-1939 the situation changed crucially as Nazi ideology that overfilled Germany started to define the University mission. During that time a lot of Poles and Jews were expelled from the University. Jews from Wrocław/Breslau shared a destiny of millions of victims of the Holocaust. In winter 1945 the University property, parts of the library and equipment were evacuated to the Dresden. During the World War II, the University buildings including main building were destroyed. After post-war agreements, the territories of Lower Silesia with Breslau as its capital became part of Poland.

After border changed the Poles from Lwów/Lviv settled down in Wrocław, including numerous academics from Jan Kazimir University in Lviv. Soviet troops of the Red Army that came to Wrocław in spring 1945 expelled the civil German population of the city and of all annexed territories. The university was reestablished as a Polish state university. After 1989 and the fall of communism in Poland, the University of Wrocław started to develop as powerful academic center of Polish science and education (Kulak, Pater & Wrzesiński, 2002).

Vilnius University

The roots of Vilnius University are hidden back in XVI century and as with the foundation of the two previous Universities are connected with the Jesuits. Due to the decision of the Grand Duke of Lithuania and King of Poland, Stephan Bathory a University as Jesuits Academy was founded in Vilnius in 1579. The history of the university was complicated and experienced periods of prosperity and decline. Its beginnings are connected with the establishment of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Bumblauskas A. et al., 2004). The changes of political status of the state and the city influenced crucially the status of the University and national composition of the academic community.

Germans, Poles, Lithuanians, Jews, and Swedes were students of the Vilnius University in the XVI-XVII centuries. The Partitions of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the beginning of XVIII century Lithuania and Vilnius as well were annexed to the Russian Empire. The University was renamed to The Imperial University of Vilna, and the processes of russification started. In 1832 after anti-tsarist movements the University was closed till 1919 when Vilnius became annexed by Poland and until 1939 University functioned under Polish patronage and got the name of Stephan Bathory. During that time famous Lithuanian, Polish and Jewish academics worked there as well as students mainly from these three national groups created the university community. The study language was Polish. In autumn 1939 Vilnius was occupied by the Red Army and the city with University passed under the rule of Lithuanian Republic. The official language for the first time became Lithuanian. Some Polish professors still were working at the university. In 1943 city was occupied by Germans which caused the closure of the University. A lot of professors were arrested and sent to the Stutthoff work camp. The German invasion caused also the elimination of Jews in the Lithuania (more than 200 000 Jews were murdered by Nazis) among them also were students and professors of Vilnius University. After the WW II, Polish tradition of Vilnius University settled down in Torun University in Poland, while University in Vilnius became the provincial University of the Soviet Union with Lithuanian and Russian language of study (Bumblauskas et al., 2004). After 1990 when Lithuania became indepen-

dent, Vilnius University continued its existence as the principal Lithuanian University.

So, these three currently national universities with multicultural past are in the focus of this article. Long history of the university is used to form powerful university image both for external and internal audience in each of three cities. Special attention of academic officials is paid to the fact of university foundation in late XVI or XVII century, while periods, of domination of another national group than current, often are erased from the official university history narrative. The official historical politics and issues of cultural memory (Assmann, 2008) within the universities with long, but disrupted history is quite an important issue, but will be a topic of different research. The focus of this article is to analyze how the current students of universities with disrupted historical continuities perceive the past of own Alma mater and how that perception influences the meanings they attribute to the university where they study? What meanings appear most frequently? To what extent are students aware of the complex multicultural past of their universities and how it is represented in the meanings they attribute to their place of study.

People-places relations. University as place

Time and space are two dichotomies that frame lives of people. Places as meaningful spatial locations play an exceptional role in human lifespan experience (Tuan, 1974; Tuan, 1977).

The last few decades have made a significant contribution to the understanding of people-places relations and a lot of authors are noticing terminological diversity within the field (Lewicka, 2012). Place attachment, place identity, sense of place and topophilia are just a few main theoretical concepts developed and researched recently by psychologists, sociologists, and human geographers to describe psychological ties people have with places (Altman & Low, 1992; Proshansky, 1978; Cresswell, 2004; Tuan, 1974). Place as concept actively developed within phenomenological approach (Tuan, 1974; Relph, 1976; Canter, 1977). Due to the cultural geographers, who were the pioneers in the place-based analysis, the place is a meaningful location with three main components: certain geographical *location, locale* or physical settings of place (a form of buildings, streets etc.) and *sense of place* or emotional ties with it, its meaning (Agnew, 1987). The third component, place meaning, shows the significance of the place to the person who experience it from inside (Relph, 1976; Lewicka, 2012). Location becomes a place when it provides some emotional significance to the person who is acting in it. Due to the expanded analysis around the issue "what is the meaning of the place" Maria Lewicka (2012) emphasizes that in the context of place psychology the most appropriate is to use phenomenological *experiential meaning,* meaning which is given to place by people experiencing it

from inside and which is common and understandable for everybody who is experiencing that place. So, analyzing the meaning of place is important to see its two dimensions: meaning as essence, as content (frequently represented in the naming process) and meaning as significance (describing why it is important). In empirical research, extreme interest is paid to the second one, which explains 'why a person is attached to the place'. Therefore, place meaning is the concept that lies in between physical settings of the place and place attachment - emotional bond between person and place (Stedman, 2003; Lewicka, 2012).

The recent focus of empirical research around the place concept was concerned mainly with attitudes to residential settings (Manzo, 2005), the concept of home (Rowles & Chaudhury, 2005) or relations with places of bigger scale as neighborhood, city, country and region (Lewicka, 2012). Being an integral part of European cities, the university is a special place that stimulates certain experience and behavior, influences identity-forming processes at different levels – personal, local, regional and national.

There are few main dimensions through which a university should be analyzed. Trying to look on the content, essence of what university is, the most frequently currently used definition is "an institution of higher education and research which grants academic degrees in a variety of subjects and provides both undergraduate education and postgraduate education" (Encyclopedia Britannica). But besides being an institution the university is also a community of people, a group. The etymology of the word "university" is derived from Latin *universitas magistrorum et scholarium,* which roughly means "community of teachers and scholars" (Pelikan, 2009). Being perceived as a group, the university could be analyzed in the light of group dynamics principles.

But, in spite the idea of a university takes its roots in ancient Greek with Plato's Academy, a medieval university in Europe was associated with cities and certain locations, creating architecture complexes of buildings. Universities became a certain place that provided meaning.

The focus of this article is put on the university as special kind of place that provides meanings.

In the case of historical places, meanings that should be attributed to them are enriched by the meanings connected with social groups whose life was part of the place in the past, but due to political changes or some historical circumstances they were displaced.

It has been researched recently that in case of places with disrupted history the most frequently attributed meanings are: personal (related to the self memories, family history or plans connected with place), local (concerned around past, present and future of the place), national (place as national symbol), meaning connected with other national groups, not present anymore in the place, but dominant or just present in the place during some periods in the past and also statements of mirrored absence of meaning or attribution of negative meaning (Lewicka, 2012).

Measuring place meaning

There are two well-known groups of the research methods for analyzing people-places relations: quantitative, measuring level of attachment to the place, and qualitative, going deeply into the understanding what kind of ties exist between person and place, and why the place is significant for the person or group.

Quantitative methods for people-places relations research are represented by a variety of scales dedicated mainly to measuring place attachment (Altman & Low, 1992; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Lewicka, 2010). While, place meaning, as phenomenon not so frequently researched by quantitative scholars', has not so many methodological tools to be measured.

Among not numerous scales dedicated to the place meaning there is an author Scale of Place Meaning designed by Maria Lewicka primarily created for measuring meanings of the neighborhood, city, and region (Lewicka, 2008; Lewicka, 2011).

Authors who are doing research on place meaning more frequently are using qualitative methods which give the possibility to see deeper why the certain place is significant for people and what meanings people attribute to the place. Some researchers prefer in-depth interviews (Manzo, 2005), others choose verbal methods (for example, free-association technique or open questions), third - work with visual methods, such as photo-story, evaluating mapping etc. (Spartz & Shaw, 2011; Lewicka, 2012).

The current research methodology was a combination of Place Meaning Scale, designed by Maria Lewicka (2008; 2012) with using a technique of free-associations.

Initially, Place Meaning Scale (Lewicka, 2012, p.147) was designed to measure meanings people attribute to the cities they reside. The current study used the Place Meaning Scale for measuring meanings university students attribute to the place where they study.

This Scale was designed to measure personal meaning, local meaning, national meaning (in-group – Polish for Wrocław University; Lithuanian for Vilnius University and Ukrainian for Lviv University), the meaning of the national group that dominated in the city and in the university before WWII (German meaning in Wrocław; Polish meaning in Vilnius and in Lviv) and Jewish meaning, as Jews were the representative national group in all three cities and respectively in three universities before WW II).

The Place Meaning Scale consisted of the set of statements referred to five categories of university meaning (five sentences per one category). It included three categories devoted to national meanings: national meaning (Ukrainian/Polish/Lithuanian) ("University X is a place where famous Ukrainians/Poles/Lithuanians worked and studied"); meaning of national group dominated before WWII (Polish/German/Polish) ("University X is place were famous Poles/Germans/Poles worked and studied") and Jewish meaning ("University X is full of Jewish traces"), also there was category of

local meaning ("University X is a place with rich past") and personal meaning ("University X is a source of my personal memories"). Students were asked to choose if they agree or disagree with certain descriptions about the University. There was also additional category concerned "no meaning" ("University X is a place which past is not interesting for me").

This Scale was used to measure university meaning at three Eastern European Universities: Ivan Franko Lviv National University (Lviv, Ukraine); Wrocław University (Wrocław, Poland) and Vilnius University (Vilnius, Lithuania).

The study preceded by a pilot study realized in 2013 at Ivan Franko Lviv National University with (n=109) students participating in it.

The scale was accompanied by an open question: "What University X means for you".

Research objectives

The presented study aimed to examine the specific meanings students contributed to the university they study at and how those meanings refer to the complex perception of the place's past. The main question put behind this study was to understand if the students of currently national universities in independent national countries are aware of presence in university history representatives of ethnic groups that worked and studied at those universities before WW II.

The following questions were formulated:

1. Is the national meaning attributed to the university important for students as personal meaning? What meanings dominate? Or maybe in the context of post-modern tendencies of erasing place significance, university as the place is not any more meaningful for the students?

2. What is the role of national meaning in comparison to the meaning attributed to the representatives of ethnic groups working and studying before WWII? Are students of universities with long, but disrupted history, aware of the multicultural past of their Alma mater?

Data and sampling

Data presented in this article was gathered during three studies that were conducted at three universities with disrupted history: Wroclaw University in Poland, Vilnius University in Lithuania, and Lviv Ivan Franko National University in Ukraine. Research data were collected during November-December 2014. A number of participants both in Lviv University and Vilnius University was 150 students. In Wrocław University 152 students participated.

The average age of participants was: in Wroclaw University - 21,92 years (69,7% female; 30,3% male); in Vilnius University – 21,14 years (71,3% female; 28 % male); in Lviv University – 19, 27 years (79,3 % female; 20,7 % male).

Students, who participated in the survey, mainly were of the second to fourth year of study. Thus they definitely had a certain experience of spending time within the university. Students represented different faculties, both humanitarian and technical areas of study. Participants were representatives of one national group, currently majority group in the city and country (Poles in Wrocław; Lithuanians in Vilnius and Ukrainians in Lviv).

Research procedure was realized anonymously by voluntarily recruited students who were asked to fill in the questionnaire about their attitude to the university they currently study at.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data gathered during research by using Place Meaning Scale (University Meaning Scale) was analyzed statistically. The exploratory factor analysis run on meaning categories revealed two same factors in each university (one composed of personal, local, and national meanings and another based on the **meanings connected with ethnic groups that were part of university community before WWII**) (Table 1). Table 1 presents categorical meanings that belong to one of the factors in each university.

The Cronbach's alpha ranging was adequate for all six categories in three universities, with an exception for local meaning in Lviv university (=,261), which might be explained by cultural and historical politics of the city and university (Table 2). But this issue is also to the discussion, as both Lviv and Lviv University are more developed last decades as national centres then local (Lewicka, 2012).

Two factors revealed during exploratory factor analysis show tendencies **inherent for students from all three universities. The first factor** composed of personal, local and national meanings has vector direction focused on the present status of the university. It reflects the importance of these three meanings for identity forming, both personal and social, based on the personal meaning of the place, but also on local and national meanings. The meaning categories that form the second factor are focused on the past as they reflect representatives of ethnic groups that were part of the university community before WWII, but are not present anymore within university space.

Although factor analysis revealed just two identical factors in each city, we decided to analyze all five meanings separately in each university with special focus to the meanings associated with the current national character of the university (national meaning) and meanings of national groups that are not present at university anymore, after 1945 (Jewish meaning; meaning of the group that dominated before WWII).

The endings to the open question about university were categorized by meanings and later the frequencies of certain categories were counted.

Table 1. Exploratory factor analysis for three universities: Lviv University (n=150); Wrocław University (n=152); Vilnius University (n=150). Two factors extracted for each university.

	Lviv University		Wrocław University		Vilnius University	
	Factor		Factor		Factor	
	1	2	1	2	1	2
personal	,414		,476		,595	
national	,580		,548		,657	
local	,529		,623		,686	
personal	,416		,601		,501	
Personal	,457		,498		,334	
National	,484		,557		,476	
Local	,540		,421		,394	
dominant before WWII		,398		,544		,562
No meaning	-,537		-,605		-,522	
Jewish		,543		,439		,626
Personal	,395		,526		,494	
No meaning	-,414		-,404		-,594	
Jewish		,329		,422		,513
No meaning	-,596		-,685		-,810	
Jewish		,665		,681		,790
local			,306			
Dominant before WWII		,555		,643		,722
No meaning	-,640		-,624		-,636	
Jewish		,580		,565		,777
national	,443		,499		,533	
local	,454		,631		,612	
National	,625			,387	,387	,359
National	,375		,501		,386	,372
Personal	,687		,326			
local	,609		,540		,531	
Dominant before WWII		,525	,371			,506
No meaning	-,311		-,543		-,648	
Dominant before WW II		,662		,631		,762
Jewish		,758		,578		,707

The method of extracting factors - the main components. The method of rotation - Varimax with Kaiser normalization. a. Rotation of convergence reached in 3 iterations.
Source: Own research.

Table 2. The Cronbach's alpha for six meaning categories in three universities.

	Lviv University	Wrocław University	Vilnius University
Personal meaning	= ,591	= ,655	=,614
Local meaning	=,261	= ,618	= , 479
National meaning	=,504	= ,624	= ,642
Meaning of group dominated before WWII	=,582	= ,709	= , 737
Jewish meaning	= ,701	= ,711	= ,798
No meaning	= ,690	= ,707	= ,766

Source: Own research.

Lviv University Meanings

Among students of Lviv Ivan Franko National University dominated national meaning (Ukrainian) ("Lviv University is important first of all for Ukrainian history"). Also significant was local meaning ("Lviv University is a place with rich history") and personal ("Lviv University is a source of my personal memories") (Figure 1). Due to the results of factor analysis, we can assume that the components of the first factor composed of personal, local and national meanings dominated within students of Lviv University. Among three National Meanings, Ukrainian was the most significant (Mean =3,9; SD=1,389; N=150), then followed meaning of national group dominated before WWII (Polish) (Mean=1,69; SD=1,564; N=150) and Jewish Meaning (Mean=-,18; SD=2,017; N=150). Figure 1 represents the distribution of meanings within students of Lviv University.
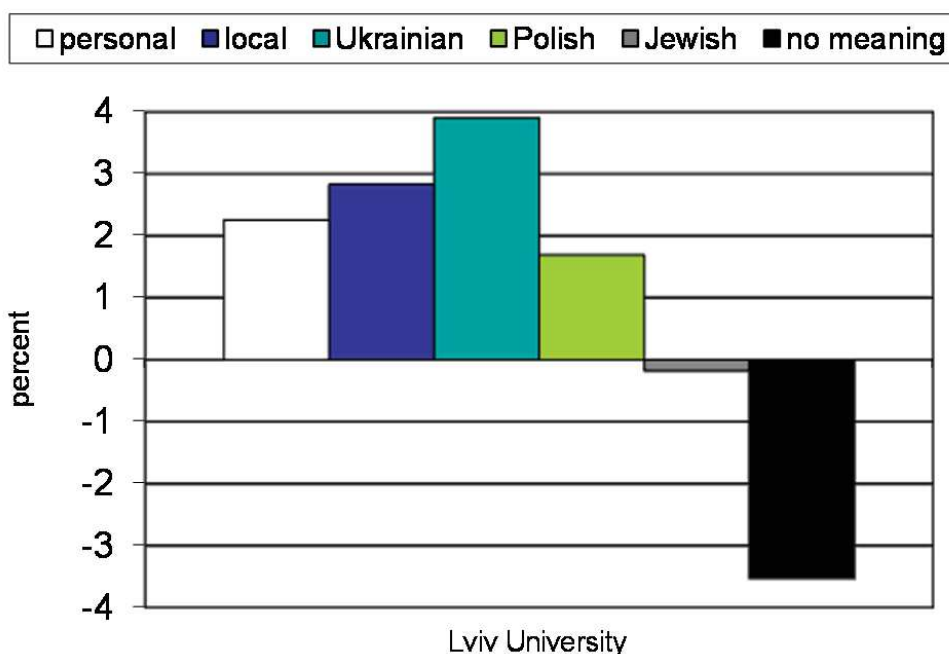

Fig. 1. Lviv University meanings.
Source: Own research.

These tendencies were proven also in the qualitative part of the research, where students finished the sentence: "Lviv University is". Quite high was the frequency of national (Ukrainian) meaning students attribute to their University ("Lviv University is the best Ukrainian university", "Lviv University is the institution that educates Ukrainians", "Lviv University is my and all Ukrainians pride", etc.) (Tabl.3). Other national meanings were not attributed at all by students of Lviv University in the open question.

All answers from the open question were coded due to the categories (Tabl.3). Some categories were similar to the "experiential modes" proposed by Sixsmith (1986) and later used by Gustafson (2001) on the research about "meaning of home".

The most frequently appeared endings of the sentence had notions of personal experience of respondents or concerned their personal future. Actually, results of other researches also confirm that the most frequently given meanings to the place are personal (Lewicka, 2012). Among categories, which were defined within answers attributed to the personal meaning, the most frequent was a category of "professional and personal development" ("Lviv University is the place where I am getting knowledge and develop myself"). Also, quite often University was described as special place person is attached to ("Lviv University is one family", "Lviv University is the best university, home").

A lot of students didn't finish the sentence, which we can assume explains that they don't attribute a special meaning to the Lviv University.

Table 3. Ivan Franko Lviv National University Meanings, percentage distribution of coded categories from the open question.

Meaning categories: "Ivan Franko Lviv National University is"	Frequency, %
Personal	
I study here	11
Personal/professional development	25
Pride	7
Attachment	19
Social: University as social ties	13
Physical : Architecture	2
Institutional: University as education institution	2
National: In-group meaning – Ukrainian	11
Local: Great history	6
City meaning: University as part of the city	4
No meaning	26
Total 100; N=150	

Source: Own research.

Wrocław University Meanings

Among students of Wrocław University dominated meaning of the national group that dominated in university before WWII (German meaning) ("Wrocław University is a place full of German historical traces"), which was followed by local meaning ("Wrocław University is full of history") and personal meaning ("Wrocław University is a place of my personal memories").

Among three national meanings among students of Wrocław University dominated meaning of another national group – German meaning of the University, which was the most significant (Mean=2.4; SD=1; N=152). Less significant were Polish Meaning (Mean=1,46; SD=2,147; N=152) and Jewish Meaning (Mean=1,18; SD=1; N=152). Figure 2 represents the distribution of meanings within students of Wrocław University.
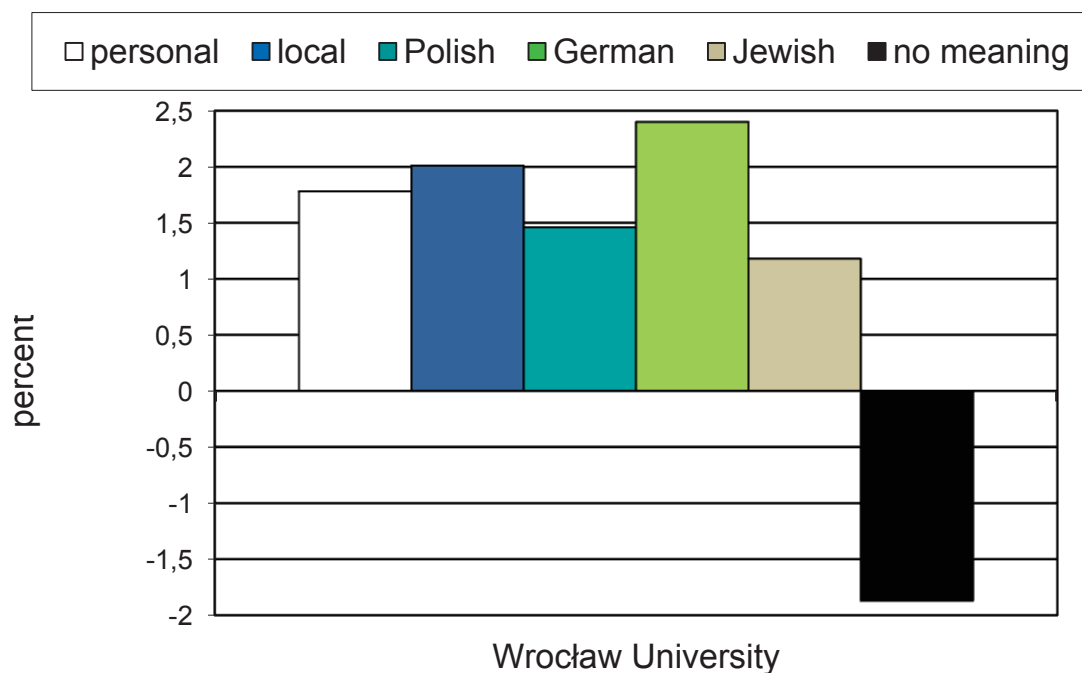
Fig. 2. Wrocław University Meanings.
Source: Own research.

While in qualitative research among students of Wrocław University, category 'national meaning', neither in the context of the own national group nor for other, not presented national groups, didn't appear at all. Also disappeared categories of Meaning for the city and Physical Meaning mode (significance of architecture) (Table 4).

Table 4. Wrocław University Meanings, percentage distribution of coded categories from the open question.

Meaning categories: "Wrocław University is"	Frequency, %
Personal	
I study here	26
Personal/professional development	21
Pride	1
Attachment	12
Social: University as social ties	8
Physical : Architecture	-
Institutional: University as education institution	7
National: In-group meaning – Polish	-
Local: Great history	2
City meaning: University as part of the city	-
No meaning	15
Problems:	6
Total 100; N=152	

Source: Own research.

Vilnius University Meanings

Students of Vilnius University same as students of Lviv University have national in-group meaning that dominated. In this case, significant was Lithuanian meaning ("Vilnius University is full of Lithuanian historical traces", etc.) (Figure 3). Then it was followed by local meaning and personal meaning. Same as in Lviv, among students of Vilnius University dominated factor composed of national, personal and local meanings. Among three national meanings attributed to the Vilnius University the most significant was Lithuanian (Mean=3,6; SD=1,671; N=150), then quite weak was Polish Meaning (Mean=,87; SD=1,717; N=150) and Jewish Meaning (Mean=1,03; SD=1,879; N=150).
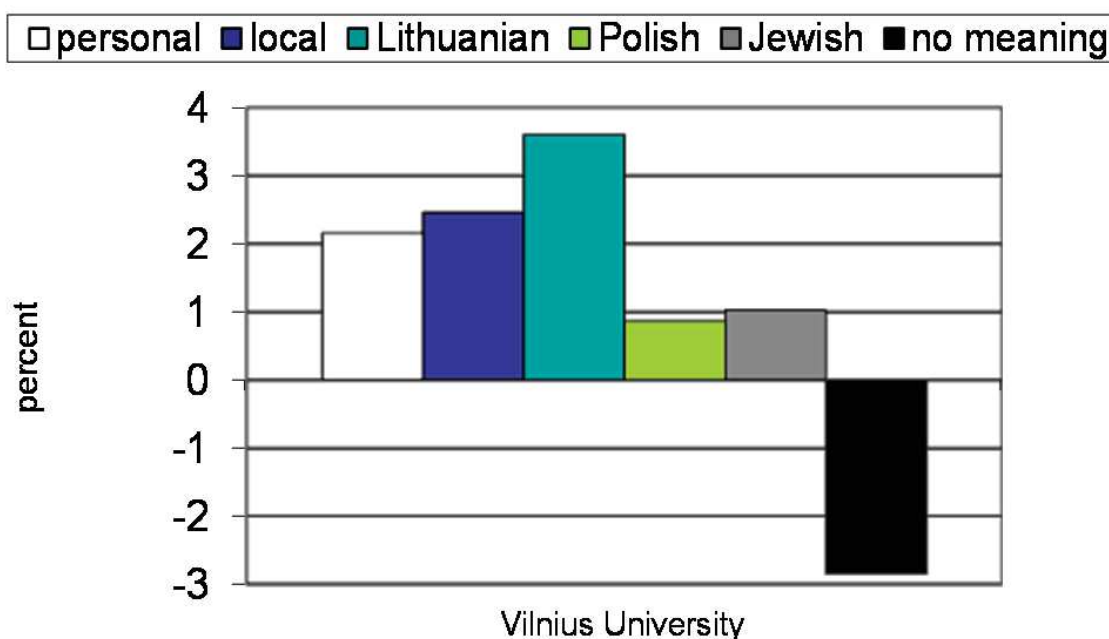

Fig. 3. Vilnius University Meanings.
Source: Own research.

Results of qualitative research just give an illustration to the questionnaire results. Same as among students of Lviv University among students of Vilnius University appeared category national meaning (In-group meaning, Lithuanian) ("Vilnius University is study place where the intellectual youth of Lithuania gathers"; "Vilnius University is the oldest university in Lithuania" etc.). But, the same as among students of two previous universities there was no category connected with other national meaning, concerned around attributing the university as a place connected with representatives of other than own national groups.

Also among students of Vilnius University disappeared categories Architecture and Importance for the city.

Table 5. Vilnius University Meanings, percentage distribution of coded categories from the open question.

Meaning categories: "Vilnius University is"	Frequency, %
Personal	
I study here	23,3
Personal/professional development	33
Pride	3
Attachment	13,3
Social: University as social ties	4
Physical : Architecture	-
Institutional: University as education institution	5
National: In-group meaning – Lithuanian	7
Local: Great history	3,3
City meaning: University as part of the city	-
No meaning	17,3
Problems:	1
Total 100; N=150	

Source: Own research.

Conclusions and discussion

In three universities from three different independent countries, we checked to see if the objective historical discontinuities in the university's past affected the meanings students attribute to the places of their study. The theoretical concept of the place was applied to the university, understanding the university as a place that provides continuity and meanings. The principal interest was paid to figuring out what National Meanings students attribute to their universities during the long history those universities' academic communities consisted of representatives of different national groups. In the present study, we tested the significance of five meanings among students of three universities with disrupted history and multicultural past. Particular attention was paid to the status each university has currently (national meaning) in comparison to the meanings associated with national groups residing cities and respectively being part of an academic community before WWII.

There was visible domination of current national group meaning, respectively Lithuanian and Ukrainian, in Vilnius and Lviv University. Thus, we can assume that students of these universities perceive the university past mainly in the light of their own national group narrative, concerning university development due to the own national group merit. Polish and Jewish meanings attributed to those universities were comparatively weak and during the qualitative part of the research were not mentioned at all.

We can assume that educational institutions both in Lviv and Vilnius are influenced by national policy on identity building. Thus historical nar-

rative around the city's past and also university's past is mainly concerned with currently dominated the national group, respectively Ukrainians and Lithuanians.

Results of Wrocław University's students showed that the most significant for them was another national group meaning, respectively German meaning. So, we can assume that students of Wrocław University are aware of the German past of the University and include it into a narrative about their University. However, Polish and Jewish meanings students attribute to the Wrocław University are comparatively weak. Quite interesting are results of qualitative research which showed that students of Wrocław University mainly perceive their university via personal experience, by not attributing any national meanings to it.

Results of our research show that Wrocław University's students are aware about German past in university history. This fact might be a product of numerous cultural and educational programs performed by national and international institutions in Poland to retrieve complex past of the cities and to make cultural memory alive. There is still a lot of controversy around Jewish presence in all three cities and dispelling stereotypical image around their input in the development of Eastern European cities with prominent universities.

In all three universities most significant was personal meaning followed by local and national. It might be explained by understanding the personal experience as most significant even in the case of historical places. Students in Lviv and Vilnius mainly associated their universities by attributing personal, local and national meaning, while Polish and Jewish meanings were visibly weaker. It approved the fact of numerous data from public opinion pools, about controversial attitude to the Polish past in those two cities (Lewicka, 2012).

Bringing back the memory of other ethnic groups inhabiting the places in Eastern Europe before WWII through various cultural and educational programs may increase interest and expand the historical knowledge about the places whose existence merits different national group's representatives.

Limitations

The present study is one of the first studies we know applying to the concept of a place to universities that experienced historical replacement of academic community and respectively historical discontinuity.

Nevertheless, it has a number of limitations. One of the limitations is relatively small and non-representative sample with 150 participants in Lviv and Vilnius Universities and 152 participants in Wrocław University. That makes a difficult generalization of results attributing them to the whole university.

Also, the qualitative part of the research consisted only of one sentence. Of course, in-depth interviews with participants would have been a benefit for the richness of research, but it was physically impossible to make interviews with so many people.

How the meanings attributed to the universities influence on place attachment and place identity should be the next step for research in this area.

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