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Remembering Diversity in East-Central European Cityscapes

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SPECIAL ISSUE: REMEMBERING DIVERSITY IN EAST-CENTRAL EUROPEAN CITYSCAPES

On the Peripheries of Memory: Tracing the History of the Old Jewish Cemetery in Wrocław's Urban Imaginary[1]

Juliet D. Golden and Hana Cervinkova

Abstract: *The Old Jewish Cemetery in Wrocław offers a unique perspective on the changing tectonics of memory construction in a Central European city. In this article, we trace the little known history of the cemetery and the ways in which its position in the urban imaginary changed in the context of large-scale geopolitical transformations. Through the cemetery's history, we can follow the fate of one of the most prominent Jewish communities in pre-World War II Germany, starting with its emergence following the emancipation of German Jews in the last quarter of the nineteenth century to its demise under Nazi rule. After the city's transfer to Poland following the Potsdam Conference (1945), the cemetery became an increasingly isolated relic of the Jewish past of the city until its grassroots-led revitalization commencing during the 1980s Solidarity era. After this important period of civic-led renaissance tied to the city's Jewish heritage, today, the cemetery has been pushed again to the periphery, an outcome of a process we refer to as the policy of memory containment.*

Introduction

In this paper we consider the politics of memory in the Polish city of Wrocław, drawing on a site of remembrance in its built

[1] We would like to thank Tadeusz Włodarczak for generously sharing his recollections of the unique experience (1982–97) of protecting and restoring the Old Jewish Cemetery of Wrocław. The writing of this article was supported by the European Regional Development Fund-Project "Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World" (No. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734).

environment—the Old Jewish Cemetery. A monument to a vanished community and the multi-ethnic past of the city, the cemetery and its uses exemplify how the physical remnants of the destroyed German Jewish cultures have been both mobilized and silenced in the process of constructing the city's post-World War II historical memory. In our historical treatment of the Old Jewish Cemetery, we divide our considerations into several historical periods that reflect the different approaches to this site of memory since its inception to the present day. Our goal through the study of the Jewish cemetery is to illuminate the ebbs and flows of collective memory construction by following how the Jewish past fluctuates between points of centrality and marginality in the Polish city's urban imaginary.

Community (1856–1939)

The focus of our study is on the Jewish Cemetery established on what was then referred to as *Lohestrasse*[2] (now Ślężna Street) in the German city of *Breslau* in 1856 (further referred to as the Old Jewish Cemetery). This cemetery served as the main burial ground of the Jewish community until 1902 when a new, much larger cemetery was consecrated in the *Cosel* neighbourhood located on the city's western edge. At the time the Old Jewish Cemetery was opened, the Jewish population numbered approximately 12,500 (7% of the city's population) (Wodziński 2010). At the beginning of the twentieth century, when the new cemetery was established, the Jewish population of *Breslau* had reached 20,000, just under 4% of the overall population (Ziątkowski 2000).

Filled with exquisitely carved gravestones and monumental architecture including mausoleums to the wealthiest families who were patrons to the city, the cemetery reflected the growing prominence of the Jewish community of *Breslau*. In this period, which coincided with the full emancipation of Germany's Jews

[2] We italicize former German names for places that currently carry Polish names.

following the unification of Germany in 1871, the *Breslau* Jewish community blossomed and its members occupied illustrious positions, including membership in the city council (Wodziński 2010). Among the prominent Jewish citizens of *Breslau* buried in the cemetery, we find Heinrich Graetz, a historian and lecturer at both the University of *Breslau* and the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the author of the massive *oeuvre History of the Jews*, the first volume of which appeared in 1853 (Wodziński 2010; Ziątkowski 2000); the botanist Ferdinand Julius Cohn (1828–98), considered to be one of the founders of modern bacteriology and microbiology (Meidner 1985; Kisch 1954; van Rahden 2008); and pioneer medical researchers and physicians such as Leopold Auerbach (1828–97) (Kisch 1954; van Rahden 2008), and Hermann Ludwig Cohn, the renowned ophthalmologist (van Rahden 2008). Other notable figures buried here include the merchant, landowner, and philanthropist Julius Schottlander (Ziątkowski 2000) as well as Ferdinand Lassalle, philosopher, political activist, and one of the founders of the German social democratic movement (Perrin 1910). After 1902 when the new Jewish cemetery opened in *Cosel*, burials at the Old Jewish Cemetery on *Lohestrasse* became rarer but still lasted into the Nazi rule, with the last interment taking place in 1942.

Erasure I (1939–45)

In 1939, as a part of the growing repressions and marginalization of Jews in Germany, all aspects of Jewish communal life in the country were centralized under an umbrella organization called the Reich Association for Jews in Germany (*Reichsvereiningung*), a body that historian Saul Friedlander terms a prototype of the *Judenrats* that functioned in the ghettos of Nazi-occupied Europe: "For all practical purposes, the *Reichsvereiningung* was becoming the first of the Jewish Councils, the Nazi-controlled Jewish organizations that, in most parts of occupied Europe, were to carry out the orders of their German masters regarding life and death in their respective communities" (Friedländer 1997, 318). As stipulated under the Tenth Regulation to the Reich Citizenship

Law, the decree that brought the *Reichsvereiningung* into existence, Jewish communal properties, including cemeteries, were to be transferred under centralized control, thereby severing all links with now defunct institutions and organizations of the Jewish community. Prior to 1939, the Old Jewish Cemetery had been jointly owned by the following communal bodies: *Synagogengemeinde Breslau* (the Jewish Community of *Breslau*), *Die israelitische Synagogengemeinde für den Stadt und Landkreis Breslau* (the Jewish Community for the *Breslau* City and District), *Jüdische Kulturvereingung* (the Jewish Cultural Association), *Synagogengemeinde Breslau e.V* (the Jewish Community of *Breslau* Association) and *Israelitische Synagogengemeinde Breslau* (the Jewish Congregation of *Breslau*). However, for reasons that remain unclear, the Old Jewish Cemetery was never formally transferred to the *Reichsvereiningung*, and existed in a state of legal liminality.

By 1943, however, with the German Jewish community largely decimated, the *Reichsvereiningung* ceased to exist, and the city of *Breslau* moved to purchase Jewish communal property, including the Old Jewish Cemetery (Połomski 1987). In what appears to have been an attempt to wait out the low wartime value of land, the new administrator, a regional tax office, blocked the sale in defiance of the trend that such properties should be sold off to municipal authorities. In a maneuver to prevent the sale, the head of the tax office proposed to lease the cemetery to the *Viola Gärtnerei A.C. Ghur* gardening company for five years. The lease agreement with *Viola* was to remain valid until August 1948. Although the city submitted offers to buy the property (with the last such attempt made in 1944), the owner of *Viola* made it clear that he did not plan to leave the cemetery before his lease ended in 1948. In this conflict, the tax office took the *Viola* owner's side (Połomski 1987). Our elaborate recounting of the shifting of ownership status in the shadow of Nazi rule is important for understanding how, thanks to a stroke of fate, the Old Jewish Cemetery, unlike many other places of Jewish heritage central to *Breslau* Jewish life, remained largely intact until the beginning of 1945.

In the last months of the war, when *Breslau* received the status of a fortress *(Festung Breslau)* that the German Army was to defend to the end, the city was heavily shelled by advancing Soviet troops. During intense ground battles, the front line eventually passed over the cemetery grounds. To this day, the signs of combat are visible in shrapnel marks on the stone tablets, collapsed mausoleums, and the gaps made in the perimeter wall, which were refilled in provisional fashion in the post-war years.

Erasure II (1945–70)

After 1945, the fate of the cemetery was tied to the larger geopolitical transformation, which resulted in the shifting of Poland's Western border to the *Oder-Neisse* Line. This meant that cities such as German *Breslau*, *Stettin*, and *Danzig* were transferred to Polish authority, thus marking a new phase in their history under a new national authority. The ensuing process of Polonization of the formerly German lands included the expulsion of the Germans and an elaborate erasure of the memories of their German and multi-ethnic past (Thum 2011; Douglas 2012). Writing from Wrocław in 1966, the *New York Times* journalist Henry Kamm concluded: "One city has died. In its place, and in its stone, there lives another" (Kamm 1966). Politically, the 1945–89 historical era is the period of the Communist one-party rule in Poland and most of East-Central Europe, which has mainly negative implications for both the historical legacy of, but also the continued presence of ethnic minorities within the Communist nation-states.

After World War II, Wrocław, as the largest city in the former German territories east of the *Oder-Neisse* Line, became a place important to the post-Holocaust history of the Polish Jewish minority (Szaynok 2000). Historians have estimated that approximately 100,000 Jewish survivors of the war returning from the Nazi concentration camps or from exile in the Soviet Union settled in Wrocław or the surrounding region of Lower Silesia (Ziątkowski 2000: 114). For some, the region served only as a transit point before departing for Israel, the United States, or

other locations. At the end of 1946, an estimated 15,000 Jews resided in Wrocław, making up 7.4 per cent of the population (Ziątkowski 2000: 114). As a consequence, sites tied to the German Jewish history of the city and the region were now used by the Polish Jewish community. This is especially visible at the *Cosel* Jewish cemetery, located now in Polish Wrocław on Lotnicza Street. As the youngest of the Jewish cemeteries with space available for new burials, in the post-war years, it became and still remains today the main cemetery for the local Polish Jewish community. The Old Jewish Cemetery on *Lohestrasse* (now Ślężna Street) has had a different fate. Significantly damaged by warfare and not in active use in the post-war era, it remained an isolated relic of the German and Jewish past of the city.

After several migration waves, the last of which occurred following the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968, Wrocław, much like the rest of Poland, lost most of its Jewish citizens, who had only just begun rebuilding their lives after the Holocaust. Their expulsion launched a dark period for Jewish historical sites in the country, many of which were confiscated or left to ruin. The Old Jewish Cemetery in Wrocław, no longer tied to any vital community, was subject to unmonitored vandalism and thievery, which did more to damage and erase the city-within-a-city than the war itself (Włodarczak 2016). We should stress, however, that the Old Jewish Cemetery does not share the fate of most other cemeteries from the German period, which were razed and largely converted into city parks. Of the seventy cemeteries from the German period taken over by Polish authorities in 1945, only the two Jewish cemeteries remain, along with a military cemetery for Italian soldiers, who died in Lower Silesia where they were sent as POWs after the Battle of Caporetto in 1917 (Burak & Okólska 2007). Against this backdrop, damaged and abandoned, the Old Jewish Cemetery remained a cast-off vestige of a no-longer existing world in the heart of a now fully Polonized city. As Karol Jońca, a professor of law and a researcher on fascism notes: "The cemetery's gravestones were witness to the destruction of the Jewish community by Hitlerism, and the tragic fates of the culture

of many generations of those who gave worthily of themselves for Silesia" (Jońca 1991).

Re-Emergence (1970–89)

The emerging prominence of the Old Jewish Cemetery in Wrocław's memoryscape during the late socialist period is closely tied to the figure of Ferdinand Lassalle and the burgeoning Solidarity opposition movement in Poland in the early 1980s. As the burial place of the founder of the first worker's party in the world, as early as the immediate post-war years the Old Jewish Cemetery provided an avenue to forge links between the city's German past and Polish present under the auspices of the new post-war Moscow-dominated political order. In 1947, the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) carried out the first of many renovations of the Lassalle mausoleum, which is located along the cemetery's eastern perimeter wall, and was almost totally demolished during *Festung Breslau*. To mark the occasion of the 27th Party Congress that took place in Wrocław in December that year, the PPS placed a large commemorative stone slab that enclosed the family burial chamber that had been left exposed after the war, and at the same time, provided a ceremonial site of remembrance where socialist dignitaries from Poland and around the world could pay homage to Lassalle (Polska Kronika Filmowa 1948). As a result, the cemetery became a distinguishable landmark in the sea of foreignness and destruction. Through the revival of the Lassalle cult centered around the Old Jewish Cemetery, the site became, in the early post-war era, a conduit to legitimize communist Poland's claim to political authority over the former German territories and a way "to canonize a new, Polonized view of local history and anchor it in the collective memory of Wrocław's Polish residents" (Thum 2011: 289).

The lack of communal care for the Old Jewish Cemetery in the aftermath of the 1968 anti-Semitic campaigns and the overall acceleration of the liquidation of German cemeteries in Wrocław in the early 1970s meant that in the post-war urban renewal program of the city, the Old Jewish Cemetery was due to be razed

in 1974 and the land reparceled for development purposes (**netha**° 2016; Włodarczak 2016; Włodarczyk & Kichler 2017). But that fate changed, most likely due to the rapprochement between West Germany and Poland that culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Warsaw in December 1970, which initialized a process of the entwining of national and particular interests between countries and people that had virtually been cut off from each other since the end of World War II (Garton Ash 1993; He 2011). Largely anecdotal evidence indicates that in the interchanges with Polish counterparts in the context of his new approach to foreign policy with the Soviet Bloc, known as *Ostpolitik* (Eastern Policy), Willy Brandt made discreet appeals to save the cemetery where Lassalle was laid to rest (**netha**° 2016; Włodarczak 2016; Włodarczyk & Kichler 2017). Whether this intervention on the part of Brandt proved central in the decision of Polish authorities to renege on the liquidation plans is unclear. The fact remains that in May 1975, the Old Jewish Cemetery was inscribed onto Polish Wrocław's list of protected landmarks, thereby putting a halt to any further discussions of its erasure from the city's landscape, and launching a period where local Communist-era authorities assumed some degree of responsibility for its care and protection. The work on reversing the process of decay progressed slowly in the late 1970s (Łagiewski 1991). Under the auspices of the Regional Monument Preservation Office, a conservation plan was developed, and initial cleaning efforts began, mostly focused on bringing order to the jungle of flora so that future works could ensue. Some of the gaps in the perimeter wall were filled provisionally, and a metal gate was installed at the main entrance into the burial grounds (Łagiewski 1991; Włodarczak 2016).

It was the birth of the Solidarity movement in Poland and the surge in its wake of popular interest in silenced pasts that paved the way for the transformation the cemetery went through in the 1980s. In September 1981, two individuals, Tadeusz Włodarczak, a leader of the branch of the Solidarity Trade Union of the Sports Academy and the founder of its underground newspaper *Wyboje* (Potholes), along with Maciej Łagiewski, that

publication's editor-in-chief, visited the Old Jewish Cemetery to take photographs to accompany an article devoted to the vanished German cemeteries in the city (Łagiewski 1981). The deplorable state of the only remaining cemetery of the German era in the city center prompted the two to pay subsequent visits to the Regional Monument Preservation Office as well as the Museum of Architecture to find out why the cemetery remained unkempt and so exposed, and to discuss steps to halt the continued devastation. Thus began a period of intense revitalization of the Old Jewish Cemetery, and its transformation into "a space of appearance and dialogue" (Matynia 2010: 9). It became a heritage site where Wrocław's Jewish and German pasts, long stifled by the Nazi and Communist totalitarian regimes, could now be explored freely. It is these two individuals, Włodarczak and Łagiewski, who would serve as the core team, augmented by other athletes, preservation specialists, architects, and builders, who would lead the clean-up and reconstruction efforts from 1982 to 1989.

In those eight years, which coincided with the last years of communist rule in Poland, a small team eventually reassembled and raised at least four thousand gravestones, and repaired and stabilized numerous mausoleums. It is important to stress that these restoration achievements were preceded by three years of intense clearing away of 720 tons of trash as well as the removal of urban and industrial debris (including both individual household and mass factory waste) along with dismantled stone funerary pieces that had been dumped into vandalized tombs. Another challenge was the taming of the greenery that had flourished unrestrained in this isolated city center enclave. Unexploded ordinances were also defused and confiscated with the help of military minesweepers, a process that would continue for nearly two decades. Based on interviews with Tadeusz Włodarczak who led these early reconstruction works, we are able to discern the crucial importance of these extremely arduous tasks of the clearing of the cemetery. It was these seemingly mundane efforts that created the condition of possibility for the recognition of the Old Jewish Cemetery as a heritage site in the

eyes and imagination of the non-Jewish population of Wrocław and of Poland more broadly (Włodarczak 2016).

Eventually, cobblestone alleyways were re-laid, and a series of wells was installed to provide water for the upkeep of the valuable flora, integral to the cemetery's historic character. In the mid-1980s, when funding sources from the Regional Monument Preservation Office dried up, the Old Jewish Cemetery was formally incorporated into the Museum of Architecture as an independently functioning unit (Włodarczak 2016). Key in the latter half of the 1980s were the public education programs that emerged from the preservation and research work emanating from the cemetery renovation program. In 1984 a small exhibit titled "The Oldest Cemetery in Wrocław" opened at the Museum of Architecture, and on that occasion, a guidebook through the cemetery, which doubled as an exhibit catalogue was published (Łagiewski 1984). In the same year, Wrocław residents were permitted to visit the cemetery with one of two guides, Tadeusz Włodarczak and Maciej Łagiewski, who had first ventured to the cemetery in 1981. This marked the reentry of the cemetery into the world of the collective memory of the current day Polish city. In the cultural pages of the local newspapers, among the theater, cinema, and museum offerings, Sunday tours of the Old Jewish Cemetery were announced, which began pulling in large crowds of visitors between May and October each year. Tadeusz Włodarczak recounts the extraordinary wave of public interest in the cemetery in the years following its opening. Under the political conditions of the still lasting Communist rule, the Old Jewish Cemetery in Wrocław became a place of open deliberation for diverse audiences. Each public tour, which normally drew between 60 to 100 people and lasted between two to four hours, became an occasion for critical historical discussion and exchange, otherwise impossible in the official space outside of the Cemetery walls due to Communist censorship. In this way, the Old Jewish Cemetery in Wrocław functioned as a public space for what Elzbieta Matynia refers to as the performing of democracy, a crucial element of the process of the building of civil societies

and democratic citizenship (Matynia 2009). Tadeusz Włodarczak remembers:

> Topics not presented publically due to censorship were discussed [at the Jewish Cemetery] freely. It was Wrocław's Hyde Park. For the several thousands of people who visited the cemetery in the 1980s, thirsty to fill in the gaps in their knowledge about the city they lived in, it was Hyde Park and a university in one, a place to impart unknown knowledge to Wrocławians about the city they lived in and about the people who built the city before 1945. It was a time of extraordinarily intense, romantic work and adventure. The very search for information that interested visitors to the cemetery was inspiring for a wide range of professionals tied to the history and material heritage of the residents of the city of Wrocław (Włodarczak 2016).

In 1989 a second, and larger exhibit opened at the Museum of Architecture titled "Wrocław Jews 1850–1945" devoted to the Jewish Community of *Breslau* with particular emphasis on the prominent industrialists, scholars, intellectuals, and doctors as well as philanthropists and community activists buried at the Old Jewish Cemetery. After 1989, this exhibit under the German title "*Breslauer Juden* 1850–1945" traveled to the German cities of Mainz, Wiesbaden, and Stuttgart. In addition, it should also be mentioned that there were significant contributions made by the German Social Democratic Party and German foundations, such as the *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, that helped sponsor some of the renovation works. In this way, in the last decade of Communist rule in the Eastern bloc, the German Jewish cemetery in Polish Wrocław became a site of trans-border memory.

Before we move to the discussion of the Old Jewish Cemetery after 1989, we want to stress the importance of the largely overlooked civil action deeply grounded in issues tied to urban memory and heritage that took place before the political changes finally dismantled the one-party Communist system in East and Central Europe. Our account of the restoration and educational efforts carried out in the Old Jewish Cemetery in Wrocław challenges the dominant view that the resurgence of interest in memories of previously silenced histories took place only after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Old Jewish Cemetery

exemplifies the fact that the process of searching for and opening up the urban archives of cultural memory (Assmann 1995) began earlier, when we see the emergence of civil action that included the growth of interest in alternative interpretations of the past that helped create foundations for the processes of democratization that were launched on the political level in 1989 (Traba 2006). The re-reading of city spaces in places like Wrocław began in the last decade of Communism when issues tied to historical memory and forgetting began shifting from the private to the public realm (Krajewska & Kamieńska 1982, Sieroń-Galusek & Galusek 2012). We see this shift as the prelude that prepared the groundwork for the subsequent events and approach to memory in the immediate aftermath of 1989, which seemed to favor a bottom-up approach to the past and held a promise for pluralistic formation of public memories.

Marginalization (1989–present)[3]

In the early years of democracy in Poland, the urban spaces of Wrocław seemed to unleash intoxicating multilayered narratives that challenged the once dominant centrally commanded discourse of the post-World War II years. With eyes newly attuned, hidden contents in the battered and remade cityscapes revealed themselves. Local publishing houses were established that specialized in the printing and distribution of photographs and literature on pre-war *Breslau* that had long been locked away in the archives (Bińkowska 1993). Publications and conferences with international experts were organized on Wrocław's unique modernist architectural legacy from the interwar period (Lose 1998). Local historians started to reflect critically on the extent to which the city's pre-war German past had been silenced in scholarly work (Zawada 1996). To retell its history, the municipality itself ordered a new history to be written by outsiders—British historians Norman Davies and Roger

[3] Parts of this section appeared in Cervinkova and Golden (2017). Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

Moorhouse (Davies and Moorhouse 2002). A wave of German nostalgia tourism began, with people visiting their families' former homes, interacting with Polish inhabitants, and undertaking joint efforts at preserving pre-World War II monuments. Finally, in this period of birth of the Internet era, an enormous public forum—Wratislaviae Amici[4]—was created where people could share their own archives on the city that spanned the distant past to the Polish present. As a result, in this period of transformation, the long-neglected parts of the city's archive of cultural memory began to emerge as a palimpsest of cityscapes that seemed to invigorate new notions of collective identity and citizenship informed by new pluralistic imaginaries of place.

Polish cities, now under locally elected leadership and decentralized self-government, were empowered to take charge of their historical and heritage policy. For cities located in the former German lands, this marked a move away from the Polonization propaganda of the Communist period and toward a gradual opening up to their German legacy:

> Polish Wrocławians have since 1989 sought ways to integrate the German past into the collective memory of the city. This development has been accompanied by the democratization of the politics of the past, which within a pluralist society is determined not only "from above," but is also subject to powerful impulses from "below." In this way collective memory is continually reshaped and revised (Thum 2011: 10).

During this period, we therefore saw many formerly German monuments and buildings restored, including the City Hall, the *Rynek*—the Central Market Square, and the Prussian Royal Palace, as well as the UNESCO World Heritage Site—Centennial Hall, the Central Railway Station, and many others.

It was during this period of incorporation of the German history into Wrocław's post-1989 urban identity, that the Old Jewish Cemetery lost its singularity as a place linking the German past to the Polish present. This marginalization was supported by

4 See further the website: https://polska-org.pl (accessed 14 January 2019).

an administrative reform, as a result of which the cemetery became a peripheral unit of the Historical Museum of the City of Wrocław. Even though one of the two original curators of the cemetery from the 1980s, Maciej Łagiewski, now became the Museum Director, the team of civically minded activists and enthusiasts who saved the cemetery from physical destruction and turned it into a space of public remembrance, was largely dissolved. The tempo of work of the 1980s slowed to a halt, and the crowds coming for the public tours dissipated. By the beginning of the 2000s, the cemetery became overgrown. Poorly marked in promotional materials, the cemetery has become a destination largely reserved for the determined and the well-informed. The plaster on the perimeter wall is crumbling, and in the context of the new city landscape emerging in an era of rapid development, the Old Jewish Cemetery increasingly looks like a deteriorating ruin rather than a venerated landmark. On the cemetery grounds, the public displays for visitors have remained practically unchanged for more than twenty-five years, while the publications sold in the ticket office are graphically updated reprints from the 1990s.

In the landscape of booming urban development and rich cultural offerings of Wrocław, the Old Jewish Cemetery is both symbolically and physically left on the margins of official and public interest. This marginalization of the Jewish Cemetery is happening at a time when Wrocław, an economic success story of the post-1989 transformation, continues to cultivate its internal and external image as a place open to other cultures (Cervinkova 2013, Cervinkova and Golden 2017), largely through references to its non-Polish, multi-cultural past. The city's official promotional slogan *Wrocław—the Meeting Place* (*Wrocław—miasto spotkań*), has come to embody Wrocław's self-portrayal as an open and friendly place also to the outside and outsiders. This branding, we have argued elsewhere, has facilitated Wrocław's economic strategy focused on attracting foreign investments and large international events as the drivers of the local economy (Cervinkova 2013, Cervinkova and Golden 2017). Not only has the city celebrated great success in attracting investors, but it has

recently won several European and world-wide competitions to host large international events, including the European Soccer Championships (2012), the European Culture Capital (2016), and the World Games (2017). Wrocław is thus a good example of a Central European city that has been successful in the practice of place marketing, a key element of neoliberal urban economy, which thrives on intercity competition for a privileged position on the global market (Brenner & Theodore 2002, Harvey 2001).

The neoliberal containment of the Old Jewish Cemetery as a place of heritage is facilitated by its museumification. The cemetery does not belong to the local Jewish community but is an official institution of culture funded from the budget of the municipality, figuring as a branch of the Historical Museum of the City of Wrocław. The lack of ties to the historical legacy of the once prominent and active Jewish community and its members, and the emphasis placed on its role in the cultural landscape of the city is encapsulated in the institutional name: the Museum of Cemetery Art (Muzeum Sztuki Cmentarnej). The title, which contains entirely the ethnic and cultural provenance of the place, in effect banishes Jewish heritage, and reduces the site to a decontextualized museum artifact. The visitors' experience is framed as an excursion into the history of art and architecture and not into the past of the city and the people who have participated in the building of this metropolis on the *Oder*. Further, regardless of whether someone is visiting the cemetery to pay respects to family members buried there, they must purchase an entry ticket.

Disturbingly, in the context of neoliberal transformation, the Cemetery grounds have been opened up for multiple commercial purposes. The City Museum has rented street-side sections of the cemetery along Ślężna Street, one of the principal city communication arteries, to an outdoor advertising company that has placed large, free-standing billboards advertising products and services of retail shopping centers in the city. More shocking, perhaps, is the opening up of a part of the former burial grounds razed after World War II to a private monument company specializing in the production of gravestones. Dominating the street view of the cemetery is a large backlit

marble sign featuring the logo of Thust stone manufacturing company, with no additional information available for visitors that this area is actually the site of the Old Jewish Cemetery. On display along a section of what were once family burial plots within the cemetery grounds are dozens of models of stylized hand-carved and machine-made contemporary Christian grave markers for sale to the residents of Wrocław. Part of what was once workshop space used by the staff renovating and maintaining the cemetery has been adapted into an upscale sales office and a showroom for the Thust company's staff and customers, while a section of the very small parking area in front of the entry gate has been reserved for Thust company operations.

This highly problematic act of appropriation through commodification is compounded by the fact that the choice of this renter was made by a publicly funded municipal institution of culture. In addition, the situation is made more disturbing by the lack of any critical reaction to this infringement on the site of memory on the part of the city authorities, the media, of Wrocław's citizenry. Known in pre-war *Breslau* and Lower Silesia as a prominent stone producer and quarry owner, the Thust company benefited from numerous orders for large, highly symbolic public works projects of the Nazi era (Thust 1994), including: the monumental stairs for the Zeppelin Field; the iconic Nazi rally grounds in Nuremburg; the imposing stone façade of the Nuremburg Congress Hall, which now houses the Documentation Centre for Nazi Party Rally Grounds; and the swimming pool built for the 1936 Olympics.

The local population took a notably uncritical view of the inauguration of the Thust company's business at the Jewish Cemetery in Wrocław. Announcing the grand opening of the point of sale in the early autumn of 2012, in a highly visible piece, local journalist Beata Maciejewska hailed the return of the "Legendary Thust Company of Breslau to Wrocław." Focusing on the Thust company's contributions to the stone architecture in the city, including gravestones at the Old Jewish Cemetery, Maciejewska concluded her article with the following: "On Saturday, the descendants of Carl Thust will re-open the office of

his company in Wrocław at the Old Jewish Cemetery. This means you can see the oldest and newest products of the company in one place" (Maciejewska 2012). It is important to note that the piece was published in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the most opinion-forming of Poland's dailies and one founded by leading figures in the pre-1989 opposition movement. Moreover, Maciejewska herself enjoys a reputation as one of the leading local authorities who popularizes the city's history and its multicultural past, which makes her lack of a critical take on this highly problematic appropriation all the more glaring.

It is these multiple strategies of containment that suppress the potential significance of the Old Jewish Cemetery as a site of memory important for the shaping of Wroclaw's contemporary urban imaginary. In our understanding of containment, we follow the work of Shari Popen (2012) who uses the term to refer to the practices of silencing and suppressing of critical democratic school culture in American classrooms after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the ensuing War on Terror. In our approach, we see containment as a form of heritage politics that appropriates the multicultural past of the city for marketing purposes, subduing its critical potential for the shaping of a democratic historical and civic imaginary (Cervinkova & Golden 2017).

Conclusion

The Old Jewish Cemetery, one of the few existing material remains that so evocatively tells the story of the multicultural roots of *Breslau*, is muted by the practices of containment embodied in the cultural politics of the municipality. The containment of this place of memory, which could provide continuity between the actually existing multiculturalism of pre-World War II *Breslau* and the nominal openness to other cultures flagged by the present city marketing strategy, happens on multiple levels. Little has happened to reinvigorate the site after the 1990s, letting the process of physical dilapidation of this historical area to continue. The absence of markers in the city

landscape and promotional materials leaves finding the cemetery to the hearty and the determined. Finally, the permission to open what for many is sacred space to the development of commercial enterprises tied to the Nazi destruction of Jewish heritage and the very community to whom the cemetery rightfully belongs, has allowed for the denigration of this area as a site that might otherwise actively contribute to the shaping of culturally inclusive imaginaries of history, memory, and urban space.

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