



Anna Rumińska

THE TOWNIE  
VS.  
THE CITY  
DWELLER

*We don't want to move out at all, we don't want anything to change, and what for, we don't want any strangers here – I want peace, I want to drink vodka in front of my house in the evening, I want to chat to my neighbours, and then I want to go to work as usual and I want my children to be healthy. And I want those snots from X street to stop coming here and breaking our windows and entry phones. This is our backyard; those snots are always coming here. The police don't give a shit about us.<sup>1</sup>*

What don't the police do about them? What can the police do about them? Who can the police do something about? In other words, how do the police identify them, and how do they identify themselves? What is more, how do we, anthropologists – researchers and commentators – identify them and us in this conversation? The above example is an extract from the field interview I carried out in the city centre housing estates in Wrocław. Giving information to an anthropologist who researches (not only urban) everyday life is associated with denunciation on an ethical level; yet the aim of anthropologists is to research the relationships by engaging in the discovery of the obscure, the invisible and unrealised, in the deconstruction of what only seems to be clear and comprehensible. In spite of great (and often learnt) attempts to remain detached and objective and to search dense descriptions of reality, the anthropologist too finds herself in an ethically fragile position of an engaged listener, transforming her own *I* towards a specific conflict, step by step. Geertz's dense description, from which anthropologists are no longer able to escape,<sup>2</sup> requires them to adopt an ambivalent attitude in the process of approaching a native – all the more so when he is a subject of the research in the culture whose participants are constituted to a small degree by us. Today, the anthropological research of an *urban local identity* is based on a methodological perspective understood in this way. The very term is an oxymoron, because the indicator of the urban quality, as defined by Jacek Gyurkovich and followed by many architects, is the existence of public spaces,<sup>3</sup> but it does not seem to be a category which refers to a semi-public

<sup>1</sup> This statement comes from the materials collected during anthropological fieldwork on the perception of space which was carried out by the author of the article in 2010 and 2011 among the residents of the Nadodrze housing estate. The research was conducted as part of the "eMSA Kulturka Podwórka" ["eMSA Culture of the Backyard"] project.

<sup>2</sup> C. Geertz, *Interpretacja kultur. Wybrane eseje* [The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essays], Kraków 2005.

<sup>3</sup> See J. Gyurkovich, *Miejskość miasta* [The Urban Quality of the City], "Czasopismo Techniczne Politechniki Krakowskiej" 2007, Issue 2-A, p. 111.

space which in the city includes particularly native (i.e. tamed) backyards. To use administrative language, inter-housing interiors are an indicator of strong territorialism for the natives, which makes the interiors devoid of public features. The opposition between the private and the public is greatly determined by the context and the scale of perception/reception: what is public for the researcher is private for the native. On the scale of the city, the backyard can be seen as a (semi-)public space only by its non-users, but on the scale of the housing estate and the local community, it will also be a private space in the sense of collective privacy, which is starkly visible in the behaviour of the users – the tenants of the tenement houses which surround the backyard. If you go there, you will immediately be recognised as an intruder. Should we then draw the conclusion that the existence of such a phenomenon in a settlement unit proves its non-urban quality? Does it make the city become a non-city?

From Gyurkovich's perspective, the privacy of the backyard can deprive the city of urban features – such a treatment of urban indicators is difficult to defend as, on the perceptive local scale, the space acquires features which are analogical with those that characterise the local life described as territorial, familiar, private, or simply rustic. "The Duchy of Leśnica" – this is what some of the residents ("townies") call their housing estate, situated about 13km from the market square in Wrocław. On a local scale of one building or one backyard, the difference between the urban and the rustic start to fade: everyone here is both a peasant and a townie (I use these expressions in a non-judgemental sense). The urban quality is in effect only a rhetorical device devoid of any significance in the local context, but the townie identity becomes a similar device when we attempt to ascribe an urban scale to it. In this context, the urban identity should be perceived, on the one hand, as a fluctuating and heterogeneous construct, and on the other, as a strongly equivalent and relatively permanent category which is attributed to a local group or an individual. However, the dialectic of the notion of identity does not call for equivalence: according to Wolfgang Welsch's interpretation, the pluralism of mutually complementing descriptions is dominant here.<sup>4</sup>

A townie is not a city dweller; this distinction seems to be necessary. I will leave the well-known term "burgher" to researchers who use a sociological or

<sup>4</sup> W. Welsch, *Nasza postmodernistyczna moderna [Our Postmodern Modern]*, Warszawa 1998.

demographic perspective: an anthropologist is more attracted by the nuances and connotations of colloquial terms. A townie observes, that is, feels; a city dweller observes, that is, researches. When the former starts to research, he becomes a city dweller. By entering the zone of townies, an anthropologist-city-dweller has to suspend her urban quality and open up to the townie's interpretation by not becoming one at all. Giving a voice to townies seems necessary in the analysis of the urban reality. The world of ruined residential cubbyholes, squalid staircases, conflict-generating garages, vandalised benches and sprayed gates is a world which is constantly being discovered. It is a world of subtly preserved traditions, family and residential rituals, the elimination of distance, the narrative of bread and milk purchases, the significance of artificial flowers and other types of quasi-kitsch, a wealth of balconies and loggias, the alertness of dog-observers sitting lethargically on window sills, the seeming banality of hair bands, the anti-rubbish quality of an empty packet of crisps, the feast of dry Chinese soup, the community of spitting, the symbolism of entrance door and window accessories, the reflection on the disappearance of beer kiosks, the micro-mythologisation of local supermarkets, the macro-mythologisation of freedom and maturity. It is the world of the townie, the inhabitant of the city centre building development – the system of cooperating elements which is no less complex than the Hopi or Inuit culture. It is a real culture of the backyard which a townie decodes perfectly and which, following the definition of Christopher Alexander,<sup>5</sup> constitutes a part of a greater whole – the city which (as highlighted by Kevin Lynch) cannot be grasped or managed by either a townie nor a city dweller.<sup>6</sup> The structures of that world cannot be verbalised by the townie – the city dweller can do it, if he wants to decode it.

The language of the townie, which is perceived through the prism of the model of the city-dweller language and which creates reality,<sup>7</sup> tends to be excluded from a range of the research subjects; more often it is considered as an irrelevant element of the destination culture which can be eliminated. Michael Fleischer, a specialist on social communication, claims: "a district has to be cleared of the people whom we don't want. I have nothing

<sup>5</sup> See C. Alexander, *A City is Not a Tree*, in: *Human Identity in the Urban Environment*, eds G. Bell, J. Tyrwhitt, New York 1992.

<sup>6</sup> See K. Lynch, *Obraz miasta [The Image of the City]*, Kraków 2011.

<sup>7</sup> See E. Hall, *Ukryty wymiar [The Hidden Dimension]*, Warszawa 2009.

One can assess the condition of the street by the *plait's potential*, not by the intensity of the movement of pedestrians. On the photo: Szewska street in Wrocław during the Splot Szewska project.

against them, they are just like me, but they are not suitable for cultivating such places like Nadodrze". "Just like me"? Certainly not. Fleischer<sup>8</sup> is not the only one who proposes the objectification of the people who don't fit in with a top-down vision. This world is not granted the right to be an element which constitutes a group or place identity (the *genius loci* which all traditional architects long for) – all the more so because it undergoes gradual destruction and elimination. The spirit of a place IS still there, but it remains decipherable only for the chosen. The mind implosion dictates a dense description – the descent from the pedestal of "high culture" to the seemingly flat plain of "low culture". In the reality of the housing estate there is no room for the question "Can I join you?" – it will only be asked by a stranger: the researcher who enters the slippery ground of strangers. By taking a seat at the unfamiliar table we face a challenge of taking on the "table" identity or retaining our own – no matter whether or not you are an anthropologist, another specialist, or someone who "hasn't even completed high school."<sup>9</sup> The permanent status of the first option is an illusion for the researcher, but for the culture participant – the so-called informer or native – it is a necessity. Local identity, this metaphorical table, defends itself against a larger crowd. Everyone can sit at the table, but only a city dweller will ask if he may, whereas a townie will sit down ready to give an unplanned answer to that question.

The city, as an industrial and commercial centre, offers a lot, but its expansion is only decipherable and attainable for city dwellers, while townies stay in the microcosm of more narrow needs, resources and opportunities. The world of the townie is the world of an eternal traditional order, a night is a night, rubbish is rubbish, a stench is a stench, an idiot is an idiot, a pork chop is a pork chop, and those who try to change the order are lunatics. Here such clusters as a chemical connector are not created – there is either a connector (a metal tool) or a chemical (a non-tool, substance), and to describe this thing you can even use a good traditional word: glue. The mind of the city dweller easily absorbs postmodernist oxymora, for example, a chemical connector, biodegradable plastic, a soya cutlet, cold ice cream or non-alcoholic beer; from the townie's point of view, this is utter chaos. Therefore, the connec-

<sup>8</sup> "What lives here starts to dominate in the whole district": M. Fleischer used this expression during an event called "The Breakfast of Champions" at the Infopunkt at 5 Łokietka Street in the Nadodrze housing estate.

<sup>9</sup> This is a statement of one of the informers of the fieldwork carried out during the "eMSA Kulturka Podwórka" project.



PHOTO: A. RUMIŃSKA

tor is absolutely steel, glue – absolutely strong, plastic – absolutely permanent, new material (cornastik?) – absolutely degradable (it is not artificial because derived from nature), a pork chop, vegetable soya, a warm foam, cold ice cream, alcoholic beer, and other drinks – non-alcoholic (which you can get your "kid" to buy). The townie doesn't reject nasty smells; he tolerates them without any drama. Just like the city dweller, he dreams about scents – pleasant fragrances, as he constructs models of fragrance on the basis of the surrounding reality and the messages, mainly commercial, coming from that reality. Unlike his children, the townie looks for order, position and tradition – even when making an acquaintance. In this case, the ritual of getting onto first-name terms with someone during the night carousal doesn't end with becoming sober again and returning to the order of the day (the characteristic mode of city dwellers). The young generation of townies is undoubtedly more similar to city dwellers; as long as they don't define their identity as the identity of city dwellers, they see nothing inappropriate in oxymora and mixing orders. They eat mushroom potatoes, chew blueberry plastic, wipe themselves with strawberries, they want their floor to smell of the sea breeze and they use rose rubbers in their notebooks. There is no room for ordinariness, order, traditional divisions – life has to be modern, filled with multiple tasks and re-

Socializing benches are an excellent tool for analyzing relations in urban space as well as the scale of social capital and trust.

moved from nature. Several years ago some supermarkets (supported by newspapers) in Wrocław reacted drastically and jointly by protesting against the sale of so-called stinkers – fascinating dolls which balanced scents and stench and which were decidedly rejected by ambitious Parents of All Polite Children.<sup>10</sup> Olfactory education was therefore prevented. You could only purchase *Perfumella*, a doll “for girls” which smells beautiful. The stinkers – a version for boys – brought the lost harmony to the falsified reality of scent: a child could find out the smell of a rotten egg, an old sock, cowpats – and the stink was decoded through such nomenclatures as: *Kamil Cowpat*, *Poldek Mouldek*, *Gienio Dungheap*, *Garlic Czarus* (i.e. *Charmer*, trans.), *Puking Walduś*. Contemporary life prevents children from the possibility of knowing the smell of a rotten egg, just like knowing the origin of a bowl of cereal, dumplings or a pork chop. Children-townies, submerged in the postmodern mix of orders, reject even the contemporary understanding of rubbish. What I don’t want can’t be what I dream about: an empty packet of crisps or old hair bands are not pieces of rubbish, they are microtexts of culture, narrative carriers.

Sayings like “my home is my castle” or “old trees shouldn’t be replanted” contain as much love as the marriage vow “to have and to hold... till death us do part”. Identity is coherent with the love of Place which is an anthropological place for the townie;<sup>11</sup> it is burdened with the territorial affection. The townie, just like the peasant, will not leave the Place (his ordinary place) – he will complain, moan, grumble, fight, argue, but he will not leave it. Taking non-places for Places inscribed within the townie’s identity. The identity of the city dweller fluctuates, it is changeable, non-territorial, fluid, it provides more and more new opportunities to change the territory, social circles, the status or lifestyle, it provokes and encourages changes, it constantly reminds you that you “don’t have to be tormented here” – you don’t have to have precisely THIS identity.” It is the identity of a hotel guest where a hotel is constituted by a housing estate or a city. An urban wanderer, an architect or an urbanista moves past other people’s territories from the car’s perspective and strives for the non-stop changing aim. The city dweller is like a taxi driver – he never knows where he has to pick up his customer. He is in constant movement, and in the meantime, the townie sits and “rolls silver wrapping”... he observes, absorbs, feels, sees,

<sup>10</sup> It is a specific, separate type of urban culture.

<sup>11</sup> See M. Augé, *Nie-miejsce. Wstęp do antropologii hipernowoczesności* [Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity], Warszawa 2010.



PHOTO: A. RUMIŃSKA

listens, smells, hears – he constructs his own I. He ignores the feeling of the far, the distance from his aims, if they are within his reach. For him there exists neither “the end of history” nor “the end of man”, as they always exist in the local and cyclic time. Children up to the age of ten are not allowed to walk about the city without supervision – therefore, city children are supervised, while townie children move beyond the district and residential housing area even when they are six years old. The city dweller will say: “a child without supervision, poor child”, and the townie: “an independent child, let him learn how to cope”. Sometimes the child doesn’t cope, sometimes it even tries to commit suicide,<sup>12</sup> but it certainly learns this peculiar concept of anti-education.<sup>13</sup> The range of his wandering grows along with him – according to the law, after the child’s tenth birthday, he can independently move through the public space, but this moment of initiation is rarely noticed by city dwellers.

For the child, and also for every townie and city dweller, the Home, the district, the street are always the reference points. Along with the increase of the scale and level of perception, the reference point expands and acquires a form which is proportional to the expansion of the zone or spatial point. On the scale of a

<sup>12</sup> This situation took place several times at schools in city-centre housing estates in Wrocław.

<sup>13</sup> See H. von Schoenebeck, *Antypedagogika. Być i wspierać zamiast wychowywać* [Anti-education. Being and supporting rather than educating], Warszawa 2007.

mouse (a house), a flat or a room is the heart of the cosmos; on the scale of a sparrow (a district or a housing estate), it is a house (a tenement, a block of flat, a villa); on the scale of a stork (a city), it is a district or a housing estate. The animal species are a differentiating metaphor which refers to different zones of their existence which is researched by the ethnologists mentioned by Edward Hall.<sup>14</sup> The Plac Grunwaldzki housing estate and its surroundings, researched from this perspective in several projects of mine, shows a vast divergence between the macro perception and the local one, while the contextual mapping used in this research leads to conclusions displaying the divergence in perceptions which operate on different scales.<sup>15</sup> The perception of Szewska Street, which was diagnosed in the place-making activity<sup>16</sup> and in the field research by means of a mental model method, allows for definition of the mode of coding space by city dwellers and townies as well as the mode of reading the signs of that space. The mental model, which is surprising for many, but easier and more attractive to prepare than a map, displays the semiotics of space in a three-dimensional way.<sup>17</sup> On that basis, many narratives can be conceived: we have lived until many Histories are created – the History of Wrocław, Lithuania, Poland, yet there is also the History of Szewska Street. What would the history of Nadodrże be like? Of Ołbin? The History of Plac Grunwaldzki? The History of the Housing Estate? These histories should be written by townies using city dwellers' pens, but it seems to be a utopia due to the divergence of orders and narratives which depend, among others, on the scale of perception.<sup>18</sup>

In the author's description of Jean-Luc Godard's films, Łukasz Ziomek quotes a statement from the film *Made in USA* and uses it as a motto for his text: "The drama of my consciousness consists in the fact that I have lost the world and

<sup>14</sup> See E. Hall, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> See the field research by the author as part of the following projects: PR.PRL.12.13.14. Manhattan, PR.PRL.Interpretacje, Przestrzeń dla ludzi, ludzie dla przestrzeni [Space for people, people for space], Kulturka Podwórka [The Culture of the Backyard] etc. carried out in 2006.

<sup>16</sup> See the Splot Szewska project, [splotszewskawro.pl](http://splotszewskawro.pl) and other publications on this subject, e.g. <[http://issuu.com/emsa.relacje/docs/szewska\\_badania\\_ter\\_ruminska\\_2009-2010](http://issuu.com/emsa.relacje/docs/szewska_badania_ter_ruminska_2009-2010)> and <[http://issuu.com/emsa.relacje/docs/pytania\\_splot](http://issuu.com/emsa.relacje/docs/pytania_splot)>.

<sup>17</sup> See unpublished research of the author regarding the perception and reception of public space on Szewska Street, which was carried out by means of the mental model method, available on the website: <https://picasaweb.google.com/105259009233878765810/MentalModelMaquetteSzewskaStreet#>

<sup>18</sup> It is particularly conspicuous when the field interviews and the notes from "The Study of the conditions and directions of space development in Wrocław" are juxtaposed. See [http://wrosystem.um.wroc.pl/beta\\_4/webdisk/61529/3249ruo4201-Tomi.pdf](http://wrosystem.um.wroc.pl/beta_4/webdisk/61529/3249ruo4201-Tomi.pdf).



PHOTO: A. RUMINSKA

I want to find myself by losing myself in it."<sup>19</sup> This motto applies to all of us, from the moment we become aware of the lack of our own I, the moment we strive to construct our own and group identity. Being in the city, as in every other settlement unit, is based on the process of oxymoronisation, the creation of contradictions, even if (as shown in a more profound analysis) they are ostensible. The process of creating a conflict and the simultaneous determined attempts to eliminate it accompanies the city life (and not only), and it also plays an important part in the construction of identity – also based on the dichotomy, the dialectics, and the contradiction. "Urban identity" implies a lack of identity in terms of the local – claiming that a given person has an urban identity may mean that he/she doesn't feel connected with any local Place, but with a city as a model of life/being. By claiming that the person has an urban identity, he/she says that they don't have a local identity, but that they have a non-local identity, the macro-identity – and this itself is a dichotomy as the macro-identity comprises many local identities with which the carrier of the macro-identity doesn't identify himself/herself, without denying their existence. The term "urban identity" is therefore a simple and closed (seemingly) oxymoron and a complex construct of personality and the model of being.

<sup>19</sup> See Ł. Ziomek, Godard. W poszukiwaniu straconych tożsamości, [Godard. In search of lost identities] "Kino" 2011, Issue 10.

Marking one's own body is a practice well-known among young girls living in Wrocław's Otłbin. Especially important are bonds of friendship and sisterhood. They are particularly developed among the girls trying to build up their still weak identities.



PHOTO: A. NOWEŁ-SMIGAJ

Can something like an “urban local identity” exist, since the urban quality (freedom, liberty, extensiveness, fluctuation, changeability) imposes a non-local quality, and the non-local quality (limitation, attachment, tradition, custom, cyclical nature) generates a non-urban quality? If we decide to look closer at the dialectics of these categories, we will notice that the adjectives used in this notion refer to two separate orders. If the term “urban” refers to a territory, and the adjective “local” to consciousness, then the construction becomes acceptable. In other words, through “the urban local identity” we can express the awareness of being in local conditions included in the wide collection of macro conditions. The notion of “think globally, act locally” is similar – another oxymoron of a way of living in the urban (or even metropolitan) and rustic space which is a popular part of the terminology of public administrative units and EU funding programmes.

In city-centre tenements, there are tribes consisting of around fifty members, but they are not considered the basis of the modern urban, national and European identity by city dwellers. It is not this local identity that Bronisław Geremek had in mind during his interview with Philippe Nicolet in 2008, when he identified the joint projects of people from different

regions with common identity, whereas he saw the rejection of the national country as a necessary condition of European integration.<sup>20</sup> The EU/national country opposition corresponds structurally with the discussed city/housing estate (or even the district) opposition. The NIMBY<sup>21</sup> formula can be referred to at various levels of analysis and interpretation. Similarly to what Bronisław Geremek said about the European community, “the true Europe is the Europe of many identities”, we can say – on an overall city scale – that “the true city is a city of many identities”. Yet does it have its own identity?

In the interview, Professor Geremek only highlighted the role of a citizen – the inhabitant discussed here – to whom he attributed the function of a being that constitutes a community. The “European citizenship” leads straight to the local citizen attitude, and is not only a game of nouns with adjectives, but a reference to the hierarchical model of identity interpretation. Some coherence can be provided by the slightly journalistic theory of local globalisation of Thomas Friedman.<sup>22</sup>

Friedman’s theory of the flattening of the world, realised through the Internet and the subcontracting system (which had been discussed one year earlier, but in a less categorical way, by Benjamin Barber<sup>23</sup>), is based on a global perception which loses its significance on a local scale. The local globalisation, according to Friedman, “shows its own culture to the world”. In the analysis of music and cuisine products, Friedman concludes that “the fact that educated people in developing countries can work in their own profession, without the need to emigrate, contributes to greater chances of saving local cultures.”<sup>24</sup> It is evidence that Poland is not a developing country, as many well-educated and very talented people – for example architects – emigrate to the West in search of ambitious and creative jobs. The system of academic education supports them through the Erasmus programme, which allows them to go abroad, but they often do not come back, complet-

<sup>20</sup> See B. Geremek, *Głos w Europie* [European Voice], Kraków 2010.

<sup>21</sup> The abbreviation NIMBY stands for Not In My Backyard, and constitutes a symbol of particularism in the identity discourse.

<sup>22</sup> This expression is borrowed from a globalisation and cultural identity expert born in India, Indrajita Banerjee. See T.L. Friedman, *Świat jest płaski. Krótka historia XXI wieku* [The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century], Poznań 2006.

<sup>23</sup> See B. Barber, *Dżihad kontra McŚwiat* [Jihad vs. McWorld], Warszawa 2005.

<sup>24</sup> T. L. Friedman, *op. cit.*, p. ???

ing their studies in the West or working without completing their studies, which cease to be their objective.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, Friedman claims that “cultures are set within the environment” – and perhaps also identity, set in cultures, is based on the local environment, owing to the flattening of the world not being endangered. I agree with him, but only in the context of the townie identity, the resident of the tenement house on X Street. In the case of the city dweller, whose identity fluctuates between territories, cultures are set in the consciousness of an individual who changes territories and introduces them to a new region – how strongly and effectively is another matter. Young architects living in the West assimilate to a limited degree with the local identity of a place or a group. It happens that in spite of global activities, they still think locally, following the criteria of their own group which they have left out of necessity that limits the freedom of choice. The distinction between a townie and a city dweller is a tool of description – it is good if it achieves the appropriate profundity and displays its own complexity. Friedman also notices this, claiming that the abovementioned architects “can use the flattening of the world not to lose touch with their own culture.”<sup>26</sup>

Finally, the author gets to the coherence which I longed for: “the differentiating forces are today almost equivalent to the forces that unify the world.” Therefore, the force of impact of the book title may also seem a commercial technique which is otherwise really effective. The aforementioned townie does not seem affected by dilemmas, as his local quality certainly never becomes global. The townie lives through the mass media fiction which he spontaneously uses to construct his identity – he is filled with myths about potential models of his own life, about the city as his land of happiness, and finally about happiness at all costs, which he often blindly strives for. At the same time, he performs activities which are described as mundane and which constitute his local I in the strongest way that he is not aware of – he buys bread and milk (rolls are too expensive and seem the least efficient), he drinks beer on a bench or vodka shots with other natives, he talks about the hopeless activities of politicians and officials who constantly prevent him from achieving the

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<sup>25</sup> See A. Rumińska, *MEA Odjechani?*, Wrocław 2009; see also [http://issuu.com/emsa.relacje/docs/mea\\_odjechani/1](http://issuu.com/emsa.relacje/docs/mea_odjechani/1).

<sup>26</sup> T. L. Friedman, *op. cit.*, p. ???

imagined happiness – the mythical happiness he is conscious of. On the other hand, the abovementioned fiction is fully an identity construct as it constructs the local culture of a townie. If the fiction wasn't there, he would have nothing to strive after. This dichotomy endows the townie's everyday life with a tragic dimension, the dimension of constant dissatisfaction, of striving for a Better Life. In this respect, the townie is no different from the city dweller, who sees fiction as a feasible plan, and not a distant, unreal, Arcadian aim.

The awareness of finding one's own I has no right to be fully realised; the greater the awareness, the greater inability of finding the I – just like in Godard's dilemma of identity and subjectivity. The townie's identity is like an animist unawareness of one's own human life, the conviction that one exists in the spirit of an animal, a cloud, wind, a tree or a rock. The townie is mostly a person who desperately tries to be a city dweller whose awareness of living in the city comes down to the structure of zones (districts) and the network of routes (streets) between them. The awareness of what the city offers carries with it an immediate transformation from townie into city dweller, a dichotomous distance from the city as the identity territory and moving closer to the city as the hyper-atom full of electron-offers. A tragic fate, but also a dialectic fate. Two scholars writing about glocalisation, Roland Robertson<sup>27</sup> and Waldemar Kuligowski,<sup>28</sup> refer to Friedman's interpretation of locality.

Thinking about the macro and global identity in the research of urban identity, it is necessary to refer to the scale of the territorially expansive city – I refer to this scale metaphorically as the scale of a stork. Only on the scale of a mouse, that is, in the perception on the level of an object, can we see the identity nuances which are impossible to discover using the first approach. The tenement communities constitute a strongly integrated group and have a strong local identity (based on a specific building, point, object<sup>29</sup>),

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<sup>27</sup> See R. Robertson, *The Conceptual Promise of Glocalization: Commonality and Diversity*, [http://artefact.miz.hr/\\_ao4/lang\\_en/theory\\_robertson\\_en.htm](http://artefact.miz.hr/_ao4/lang_en/theory_robertson_en.htm).

<sup>28</sup> See W. Kuligowski, *Gdzie coca-cola ożywia zmarłych* [The place where coca-cola resurrects the dead], *Polityka* magazine 25.09.2006, Issue 30; <http://www.polityka.pl/spoleczenstwo/niezbednikinteligenta/193087,1,czy-uzasadniona-jest-teza-o-rozrastajacej-sie-zachodniej-monokulturze.read>.

<sup>29</sup> For this reason local (so-called residential) communities fight for the tenement renovation regardless of the value that these buildings have from the art history perspective. The contradiction of these two orders was proved by mental maps used in the research of the Plac Grunwaldzki area which was carried out by the author in 2008-2011.

perhaps even stronger than a large group of the residents of the so-called block of flats. The sociology of high-rises provides examples showing that a block of flats does not have to be a synonym of disintegration.<sup>30</sup> However, not all the residents of a block of flats are conscious members of the community. One good example is a tenement house at 5 Rejtana Street in Wrocław, where the Kochel family have lived for 58 years, and which was described by Magdalena Piekarska in July 2009 in the *Gazeta Wyborcza* newspaper.<sup>31</sup> A statement by one of the residents, quoted by the author of the text, saying “we will not admit strangers”, presents a known anthropological opposition on which local identity is based. The number of residents living in farm labourer quarters or in big tenement buildings seems too small to form a basis for the integration and construction of the group local identity. In view of a conspicuous (due to a low number) conflict of interest it is difficult to reach an agreement or to get a considerable majority of votes necessary to make a potential final decision. Therefore, not much has changed – we live in a tribal structure, only with slightly different forms and masks.

Discussing the issue of retribalisation, Marshall McLuhan was several years faster than the MP Anna Mucha, who mentioned – facing sorry consequences – elderly people who go to the doctor not to get treatment, but “for entertainment”. This is not politically correct if a politician says so, but this is not the case for an anthropologist. Anna Mucha is right – GP’s practices, pharmacies, post offices and greengrocers are the largely underestimated centres that shape the local identity, the centres of diversion for townies in which gender, social status or appearance divisions become blurred. It cannot be said that the last category is not important, however... but that’s another story.

*My thanks go to my friend DD for all our conversations about identity and consultation on this article.*

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY AGATA MASŁOWSKA

<sup>30</sup> The Superjednostka building in Katowice is an interesting example in this context.

<sup>31</sup> See M. Piekarska, *Na Rejtana chce się żyć* [You feel like living on Rejtana Street], “*Gazeta Wyborcza*” daily, 10.07.2009.

