

THE IDENTIFICATION PROCESSES OF THE URBAN POPULATION IN RELATION TO THE SOCIO-CULTURAL FEATURES OF URBAN DISTRICTS: THE EXAMPLE OF THE CITY OF POPRAD, SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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Cultural diversity and identity are topical issues related to the development of human society within communities at different levels – from international to local ones. This study focuses on the city as a basic socio-cultural unit and on the observation of the basic aspects of the ties of cultural identification among members of urban society. The City of Poprad in Slovakia is a specific example. This city is a conurbation of five originally independent towns, each with their own history and with various degrees of economic and cultural development, which is the primary basis and determining factor of the relationship between the local community and its environment. In this context, the study follows the aspects of formation of local identity at a diachronic level. At the synchronic level, it observes the identity phenomenon in the new globalisation conditions of the present.

Keywords: *Slovak Republic, City of Poprad, identity, local community, cultural heritage, city*

The issues of local communities in relation to identity can be viewed within the context of both urban and rural spaces. Compared to urban communities, the rural environment appears to be a more socially closed system. This relates to the concentration of – mainly – the economic, production, technical, administrative and political potential in larger centres, i.e. the centralisation of infrastructure in cities.

“Cities are more exposed to globalisation pressures than smaller localities, because they attract transnational capital and, therefore,

more jobs. These in turn result in the growth of tourism and migration – both internal and external – as well as in an increased diversity of lifestyles, cultural signs and representations” (Bitušíková and Luther 2010:5).

An important role in this process is played by a shift in culture from ties to one’s own society to a considerable commerce and “lease” or “purchase” of professional, “foreign” culture from larger centres. Compared to the urban environment, the effects of all these aspects are to a certain degree limited in the rural environment. The growing cultural and social diversity of towns can be viewed in this context (Krišková 2015:213).

The perception of a town in all its geographical, economic and socio-cultural relations is different from the perspective of the relationship between the town and the object itself. The external relationship of the visitor with a focus on the town as an element of the landscape and region with its natural and historical characteristics or with a prosaic focus on its infrastructure would differ from the internal relationship of the town’s inhabitants. The perception of any environment, including towns, is always subjective (Tonkiss 2005:113).

OBJECTIVES AND THE THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

In the context of the town as a socio-cultural system, we cannot leave out the issue of identity. It is one of the primary determining factors that affect the domestic population’s perception of the quality of life, yet it is also directed towards the external environment – for example, in the process of the development of tourism.

The strengthening or weakening of the local identity in the context of developmental aspects forms the subject of this study.

I chose the City of Poprad as the subject of my research (situated in the northern part of the Slovak Republic). The primary reason are its very specific features – it takes the form of a pentapolis. The current city of Poprad is composed of five formerly small, economically and administratively independent towns, which have lost their legal personality and have become marginal urban districts after being annexed by Poprad.

This fact largely determined the subsequent socio-cultural development and nature of the local societies of today's Poprad.

The aim of this study is to observe the cultural identification process of Poprad's current local societies against the backdrop of historical, administrative or economic changes. The identification process is observed from two perspectives. One of them is the ties to the local region, seen by members of society as a place for living with a special logic behind the relationship they have with it, which can be designated as identity (Pauknerová 2013:89). The relationship to the social environment in the context of the social and cultural identity is a priority in this regard. It is, therefore, not only personal identity, but also social identity that stands at the centre of our focus. Both of them are intertwined and develop together in mutual interaction. Personal and social identities, thus, create the identity system (Marková 1987).

It is also necessary to accept the very process of identification, resulting in self-identification with the collective, group or community. Social identities are created in the process of interaction, when individuals identify themselves as opposed to others and, at the same time, are identified by others in the same manner (Ferencová 2005:22, according to Connerton 1989:12). The issue of social identity was also elaborated by H. Tajfel and J. C. Turner (1986), who studied identity in the context of the shaping of a group.

The basic determining factor for the shaping or weakening of identity which we see in our case is the change of the primary position of the locality to a secondary one. Our aim is to observe to what extent the developmental changes influenced the identity of the studied local communities. The processes of internal and external migration, and the related influx of new population, are equally important.

Marginally, our intention is to capture the mutual relationships between the inhabitants of the current urban districts at both the emic and etic levels. At the emic level, it is the self-evaluating introspection of the members of society themselves, and at the etic level, it is the external view of uninvolved individuals. "In the culture vs. ethnic identification relationship, culture is not necessarily primary." (Jakubíková 1993:63).

With respect to methods, I sought to apply the phenomenology method based on the intention to get to the phenomena without attempting

to have any preliminary understanding of the issue. As a researcher, I also attempted to preserve the criterion according to which one must “resist the seduction of using the learnt ways of perception or my previous reflections on the issue” (Pauknerová 2013:95).

The basic elements of the methodological approach to the issue included the use of literary sources, mainly for tracing the links of historical development. My research was focused on the period 2012–2017. The interview method, in combination with structured interviews, was partly oriented towards the original population of the middle and older generations (45–78 years), living in the studied urban districts. Subsequently, I compared their statements with the generation of the recent newcomers (aged 25–35 years) in these locations (today’s urban districts). I conducted 50 interviews in total (65% women and 35% men).

Last but not least, I used the participatory observation method by means of direct participation in certain activities, as I have long had a personal relationship to this city.

In this methodological introduction, I would like to highlight a very important fact with respect to the researcher as such. In spite of the clear objectivity criterion in the obtaining of data, I nonetheless agree with Peter Salner’s statement that

“the personal relationship of the researcher to the studied city can be considered one of the characteristic features of ethnologic research in Slovakia (regardless of the specific topic). Researchers often work in an environment that they are familiar with from their own experience. They take advantage of the fact that they are not unknown there” (Salner 2013:73).

This element, however, poses increased demands on the researcher, as it places him/her on the fine line between the objective and subjective, and can also be considered one of the determining factors of the researcher’s professionalism. His/her relationship to the city can be fundamental in the interpretation of the topic.

THE POPRAD CONURBATION

Poprad is a former provincial town within the current territory of Slovakia, located in the Spiš region in the foothills of the High Tatras Mountains, originally marked by the prevalence of rural-agrarian, craft and trade features. Following the large-scale civilisation changes mainly in the 20th century and, most significantly, in the past two decades, the town has transformed into a modern city with developed infrastructure. With the size of its population,¹ Poprad is among the ten most populated cities in the country today. Its supra-regional functions are being expanded, and the city has become an important economic, political and cultural centre with a unique natural environment, precious historic monuments and a considerable concentration of tourism. Thanks to these qualities, Poprad's position is constantly growing and is acquiring importance within transnational relations, as well (Sulaček 1998:353).

In its current form, Poprad can be regarded as a relatively young city. This relativity is due to the paradox that the individual parts of the city have a long and rich independent history dating back to the 12th – 13th century.



Picture 1: The current centre of Poprad. Photo: Z. Krišková, 2010

¹ As of 30 September 2010, the population of Poprad was 52,377.

The current territorial unit of Poprad was created after 1945 by gradual annexation of the surrounding towns: Spišská Sobota (1946), Veľká (1946), Stráží pod Tatrami (1960) and Matejovce (1974). Other than rich historical development, these small towns also complemented each other from the economic perspective (Kollárová-Švorcová 1998:355).

SPIŠSKÁ SOBOTA

In the context of the development of the original five small Spiš towns, Spišská Sobota was the most important centre, having become the centre of crafts and trade, mainly through regular weekly markets (Chalupecký 1998:55). This was true far before the market privilege charter was issued in 1380. Spišská Sobota also housed several inter-urban guilds, thanks to which it was not only an economic, but also a cultural and historical centre. It was one of the rich royal towns in the Spiš region. Its most precious features include well-developed burgher architecture concentrated around a lens-shaped square, with the prevalence of German influences, and a Gothic-Romanesque church, with its main altar of St. George, made in the period from 1503 to 1505 by one of the most famous masters of transnational importance, Master Paul of Levoča,.

The decline of Spišská Sobota was mainly due to the decline of craft production during the course of the 19th century, as a result of the growing development of industrial mass production. After World War II, when Poprad began to strengthen its position, Spišská Sobota did not manage to restore its forgotten glory and, moreover, there seemed to be no interest in doing so within the local self-government; consequently, the town gradually decayed. Following the fundamental and economic changes in 1989, which changed the character of all of Eastern and partially Central Europe, the revival of this part of the city as the historical centre of Poprad became the priority interest of the city representatives. It turned out that the implementation of the original project would be a very complicated process. It was demanding not only because of the efforts to perform an architectonic reconstruction of the protected historical centre, but also because of the attempts to revive the cultural and social life in this part of the city, which had ended up as a peripheral, largely neglected and decayed urban district at the end of the 20th century.

The city sought to support the architectural revitalisation of monuments through financial support provided to the owners and tenants of the protected buildings in the historical centre of Spišská Sobota, mainly intended for the renovation of their front-facing facades. This process, however, was very lengthy and complicated. In spite of these problems, Spišská Sobota can be considered the architectural pride of Poprad today. Its reconstructed historical centre, with many precious cultural sites, namely the mostly luxurious guest-houses and a quiet and peaceful atmosphere, has become a sought-after tourist attraction, especially for foreign visitors.

On the other hand, the original plan to restore the original status of Spišská Sobota as a social centre failed. This fact resonates in some examples of the socio-cultural development of present-day Spišská Sobota: the first attempts to revitalise traditions in this part of the city in the 1990s included the organisation of traditional November markets.² In spite of the relatively successful organisation and the efforts of the organiser, who aimed for a thorough reconstruction and presentation of contemporary elements, this ambition did not succeed, as it was not met with a response by the domestic population.

Spišská Sobota was also renowned for its famous “*Anabál*” balls.³ Unlike the markets, the revival of this tradition by the local citizens’ organisation Klub Sobotčanov⁴ was a big success. “*Anabáls*”, characterised by wearing costumes, were full of elegance, nobleness, pomp, and professional prestige typical for the aristocratic town of Spišská Sobota. Not only the citizens of Spišská Sobota, but also those from the other parts of the city regarded them as one of the few, if not the only, preserved live signs of “*high culture*” in Spišská Sobota, with a prevailing German influence. With the emergence of the market mechanism and the formation of the new economic and social group of entrepreneurs in the 1990s, its members considered this social event an opportunity to join the

² Spišská Sobota received the market privilege charter in 1380.

³ One of the elements of the ritual calendar cycle of the peasant year: Festive summer dance parties on St. Anne’s Day (26 July) on the occasion of the completion of agricultural works.

⁴ Klub Sobotčanov was founded by the inhabitants of the local community in the 1990s.

“*élite*” of the city. Unfortunately, the situation is different today and some participants think that this tradition has acquired the very commercial form of a cheap party.

“We were always looking forward to this event because of its exceptional atmosphere. Last year, my wife and I were the only ones wearing costumes at the Anabál. It wasn’t worth it, it was an ordinary party that lost its magic, and we left during the evening; before, we used to stay there until the morning” (respondent 3, 34 years, original inhabitant of another district).

Today, cultural life in this urban district is organised mainly by Klub Sobotčanov. The club aims to preserve popular activities like the annual central social meetings of pensioners’ clubs from all of Poprad’s urban districts, the celebration of Mothers’ Day, etc. These meetings undoubtedly build and develop the community’s social contacts, but do so in the absence of any local identification elements.

Spišská Sobota can be seen as a contemporary example of the preservation of local identity, but with an emphasis on a certain intimate form of protection against the “destructive” effects of external influences, which seems to be the manifestation of introversion. “We have remained Sobota citizens” (respondent 5, 62 years, original inhabitant). This is proven by the architectural design of the houses, which actually creates a strict border between the public and the private world.

“Sobota citizens like nice things, but without added value. They enjoy doing private business, and hide themselves in their gardens or enclosed atriums” (respondent 3, 34 years, original inhabitant of another urban district).

A specific role is also played by strong German influences, burgher and aristocratic roots, or past economic priorities, which predetermines to a certain degree the survival of the feeling of belonging to a “higher” culture. The enormous dynamics of the current globalisation development seems to have disrupted the sacred nature of their identity. The *local* has preserved its dominant cultural identification value, yet it remains in a “conserved” and, to a certain degree, lifeless position.



Picture 2: The historical centre of Spišská Sobota. Photo: Z. Krišková, 2010

VEĽKÁ

Veľká is the largest urban district of the Spiš pentapolis in terms of its boundaries, population size and square;⁵ it is an old Slovak locality where German colonisers settled in the 12th or at the beginning of the 13th century (Chalupecký 1998:55). Thanks to the highest soil fertility within the Poprad pentapolis, it was one of the most developed peasant towns with rich estates. Craft production developed in the same way, mainly in connection with agricultural production. Rich landowner families paid great attention to the enhancement of their town and were engaged in strong rivalry with their neighbours because of their innovative and progressive approach. The families with the largest influence were the Krompecher, operating mainly in the field of finance, self-government and economy, and the Scherffel, who also assigned great importance to the development of education and science.

As for the economy in Veľká, we should mention the paper mill, which was founded by Nekel in 1632 and operated until the first third of

⁵ The oldest mention dates back to 1268.

the 19th century. After its liquidation, Eduard Krompecher founded a plant for the production of oat flakes and semolina.

Veľká was in constant competition with Poprad. The efforts to establish a museum at the end of the 19th century are one such example. Eventually, two museums were founded during approximately the same period (in the 1880s) – the Tatra Museum in Veľká and the Carpathian Museum in Poprad. After World War II, the two museums merged and moved their seat to Poprad. Last year, the Museum of A. V. Scherffel was opened in Veľká.

With regard to the current socio-cultural development, the inhabitants of Veľká consider themselves a largely cosmopolitan society. Not only Poprad inhabitants, but also people from other regions have great interest in buying building properties in Veľká. The inhabitants of Veľká explain this fact through the simple and fitting statement that “simply said, Veľká has always been a good place for living” (respondent 2, 65 years, original inhabitant).

Since 1989, the local organisation Klub Veličanov has been active in this part of the city, building on the historical and cultural bases of its society. Within the elementary school area, they built a nature trail based on the knowledge of the important botanist and pharmacist A. V. Sherffel. The museum mentioned above is dedicated to him as well. The club focuses on the construction of playgrounds for children and the reconstruction of the square; as for cultural activities, the club focuses on the organisation of regular dances and May feasts. The activities of the inhabitants of Veľká are very diverse; however, from the perspective of internal, subjective links, they reflect cosmopolitan development. In the words of the inhabitants of this urban district:

“We organise many activities, people come to take part in them, but they don’t have a personal relationship to Veľká, which is something that we regret” (respondent 1, 69 years, original inhabitant).

From the point of view of the local identity, close ties to Veľká prevail, with certain nostalgia, only among natives with multi-generational roots:

“When I’m in Bratislava, I tell them that I’m from Poprad. But in Poprad, I claim to be from Veľká. This is where my roots are and where I’m at home.” (respondent 2, 65 years, original inhabitant).

The opinion of a respondent from another urban district:

“People from Veľká are, as they are called, great.⁶ They are proud, ambitious, they put much emphasis on enhancing their environment, but we should also admit that they are diligent and conscientious.” (respondent 3, 34 years, original inhabitant of another district).

Veľká is a local community with a mostly agrarian character. The efforts of its citizens have directed towards improving themselves and improving their level of education. Just like in the past, their current activities focus on soil cultivation, economic growth and education. Unlike in Spišská Sobota, the domestic population does not oppose anything new; it is open to new ideas and new inhabitants. They do not perceive social events (balls, May feasts) as the presentation of their own prestige, but as an opportunity for social communication. Their self-identification with the community is oriented towards its rich historical and cultural past and wisdom. Their characteristic features include ambitions and aspirations for self-improvement. They view the growing numbers of newcomers positively. This shifts the limits of identity beyond the local community, perceiving its belonging to the greater Poprad community quite naturally.

MATEJOVCE

As far back as the last third of the 13th century, Matejovce began developing as a Spiš-German town (Chalupecký 1998:55). Just like in Veľká, people mainly worked in agriculture, but on plots of smaller sizes. Additionally, the domestic inhabitants concentrated on craft manufacturing in connection with agricultural production, but also on the development of technology, which originally focused on the improvement of cultivation tools.

In 1845, Carl August Scholtz opened a workshop for the manufacturing of horse combs in Matejovce. The workshop later produced other simple products from sheet metal as well, gradually improving its manufacturing processes and transforming itself into a modern plant (Žifčák 1998:123).

⁶ Veľká means big, great in Slovak (note by translator).

In the context of the development of industry, the Scholtz family paid considerable attention to the social welfare of their employees. In 1880, they built the first workers' boarding house for their employees. Along with the company's growth, the records from that period suggest the first breakaway from the local identity in Matejovce as a result of the influx of inhabitants from other regions. The factory owners invited many specialists from other factories. Industrial construction brought the largest economic, but also social and cultural development for the population of Matejovce. In 1911–12, the first larger workers' house with a canteen and a doctor's office was built. In 1903–1911, the company began constructing a workers' colony by initially building 14 workers' houses, which were gradually expanded. In 1941, they constructed the sewer system and according to the preserved plans, the company intended to provide heating in the workers' colony after 1945. The social welfare of workers after 1908 was ensured thanks to several financial funds (Štúr 2001:62).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the factory management built a park in Matejovce with benches, a skittle-ground and a football pitch, which was very important for the local population, as expressed by the recent memories of the respondents. At that time, Matejovce was proud of its strong football team.

On one hand, the factory became a natural determining factor for the construction of identity. On the other, in connection with the factory's development, Matejovce faced the most significant weakening of its identity with regard to the local community.

Tatramat, the manufacturer of automatic washing-machines, was built on the foundations of the original factory (1970). In 1992, Whirlpool launched its operations there, having witnessed rapid development thanks to the influx of foreign capital. Thus, it became one of the most important sources of jobs in this region (Krišková 2010).

Matejovce gradually became one of the largest industrial centres in the greater region, and this fact subsequently influenced its socio-cultural development with respect to the development of its identity. The town faced increased labour migration of people from nearby areas, but also from more distant parts of the country, which resulted in the need to build a residential area (Matejovce is the only urban district annexed by the original Poprad that has a residential area with blocks of flats).

Nowadays, local companies provide their employees with a considerably larger number of cultural or sports activities. They organise more corporate events for their members and their families, but they primarily focus on providing financial benefits. The dominating ties exist exclusively at the employee–company level. Essential ties to local identity are almost non-existent.

“It is about the realisation (identification) and enjoyment of belonging to the social environment in which individuals live and which they are a part of, which, to a certain degree, contributes to the process of self-awareness and the search for one’s place in the manifold and intricately structured environment” (Výrost and Bačová 1996).

One of the examples is the football pitch to which the citizens of Matejovce have had a specific relation since the times of the Scholtz family. The pitch is still preserved, although its purpose has considerably changed. The town built cabins on it and relocated the majority of the Roma population from all the other parts of Poprad to this location. The local population took this very hard. This is one more reason why present-day young specialists, who are employed in the growing industrial complex of Matejovce, are reluctant to settle there on a permanent basis, preferring to commute from closer or more distant centres. This fact has largely contributed to the process of shaping identity or building the community with regard to its original place in the present-day context. “It’s as if they broke us apart in the interest of industrial development” (respondent 4, 55 years, original inhabitant).

Matejovce has its own club as well (Klub Matejovčanov). Just like in the previous cases, this club also focuses on general social activities without ties to the local community (Mothers’ Day, meetings of pensioners, etc.).

In spite of their arduous work in contributing to the economic and industrial development of this urban district, the influx of outsiders disrupted the local ties, considerably weakened the internal cultural identification elements, and Matejovce was increasingly “amalgamated with the residential district”. Among the current urban districts of the wider Poprad area, the ties of cultural identification within the local community

can be considered to be the weakest in Matejovce.

“People from Matejovce feel disillusioned, bitter, unpredictable. They can no longer be considered real Matejovce people”. (respondent 3, 34 years, original inhabitant of another district).

STRÁŽE PRI POPRADE

Although the origins of this locality are not very clear, the town is assumed to have existed back in the 12th century as a guard settlement protecting the Hungarian borders. The oldest written mention of Stráže dates to 1276 and indicates that, at that time, it was a town which existed on the basis of the privileges of Spiš Germans (Chalupecký 1998).

With a population of around 600 inhabitants, Stráže is the smallest urban district in Poprad. In spite of the fact that it was one of the poorest areas, the inhabitants of Stráže used to be good farmers with rich cultural and social traditions preserved until the present day. There is still an active amateur theatre with a tradition of over 100 years. The fire brigade, with more than 150 years of tradition, had already existed prior to 1863, when the inhabitants of Matejovce, Spišská Sobota, Poprad, Veľká and Stráže established their joint fire brigade.

As the inhabitants themselves describe their nature, with a kind, yet rough exaggeration, “even though our neighbourhood relations are sometimes on the brink of terrorism, they jointly form a bullet-proof wall, when Stráže is at stake...” (respondent 3, 34 years, original inhabitant).

The strong ties of ethnic identification in the context of generational transmission are well expressed in the opinion of a member of local society: “You are a true inhabitant of Stráže if you are a member of the fifth generation” (respondent 3, 34 years, original inhabitant).

People from Stráže describe their invention with the same humour:

“We used to play piga in Stráže. It is a game in which one person throws a ball and the other one hits it with a metal stick and runs with it. When our ancestors travelled to America for work, they taught Americans to play it. And they call it ‘baseball’ today. But we don’t play it anymore, because it’s a primitive game” (respondent 3, 34 years, original inhabitant).

Given the peasant way of life, people in Stráže actively play the ‘*štolne*’ game.⁷ As part of the cultural activities in the district, the annual championship in this game has been organised for almost five years, accompanied by the serving of Segedin goulash, which is made with turkey meat. The way of playing this game, similar to jugglery, refines the use of one’s fingers, speed and peripheral vision. This is the reason why it is promoted as a therapy method in hospitals in order to improve mobility after injuries.

“If you just saw those old women playing *štolne*... We want to have it patented to protect ourselves from the Americans – after that experience with *piga*” (respondent 3, 34 years, original inhabitant).

Other than this championship, people in Stráže have organised the Stráže Games for over ten years now, with the participation of all urban districts of the Poprad pentapolis, competing in disciplines such as pitchfork throwing or wheelbarrow runs. The organisers hand over the results of the competition to the mayor of the city as the “official report on the state of health among the population of the city” (respondent 3, 34 years, original inhabitant).

The activities in Stráže are nowadays once again organised by the local club (Klub Stražanov). Its intention, however, is to develop the original, traditional expressions of the local society.

Stráže is the smallest part of Poprad and located at the greatest distance from the city centre; in an economic context, it used to be one of the poorest peasant communities, which is to a certain extent true even today. This fact is one of the reasons why the internal ties of cultural identification, when compared to other districts of Poprad, are the strongest in this local society, as are their external manifestations, which aim to preserve and present their identity.

“They want to balance others, but do not adapt”. (respondent 2, 65 years, original inhabitant of another district).

⁷ Prism-shaped metal screws with a thread on one end, used for horseshoeing.

POPRAD

Originally, old Poprad was neither the largest, nor the most important place within the conurbation⁸ (Chalupecký 1998:55).

As for its economic development, we should mention the paper mill, which was founded by stationer Jakub Zieser from Vratislav at the end of the 17th century. Until the mid-19th century, it was considered the most prosperous manufacturer in the five towns under the Tatra Mountains. The important industrial plant Vagónka can also be considered a factor which shapes the way of life in the City of Poprad. The plant was built on the foundations of the first workshop and expanded its operations in 1922, moving closer to the Košice – Bohumín railway line and becoming a repair shop and manufacturer of railway cars (Sulaček 1998:244).

The economic and cultural ties to the High Tatras played a very important role in the the development of the city. This refers both to historical Poprad and its current urban districts. The railway connection, by means of the Košice – Bohumín railway line (1871), seems to have contributed the most to the growth and development of the city. This happened thanks to David Husz (1813–89), an entrepreneur from Poprad, public notary, founder of a brewery and mayor, who strengthened Poprad's central position by systematic purchase of lands for the building of the railway line. Today, Poprad is connected to the whole of Europe via railway.⁹

The subsequent accomplishments of David Husz in the field of development, services and tourism include, for example, the Huszpark. He correctly anticipated that, after making the city accessible by the planned Košice – Bohumín railway line, it would be necessary to pay increased attention to the demands related to the expected influx of travellers by expanding catering and accommodation services, as well as venues for relaxation. Huszpark was intended to serve all year long as a pleasant relaxation and social area for both to the local population and visitors to the city. For this purpose, David Husz expanded his ownership of the land

⁸ The oldest preserved written mention is the Deed of Donation by King Béla IV of 1256.

⁹ The main railway corridor between the City of Poprad and "its" mountains has been formed by the Tatra Electric Railway (TEŽ) since the 1910s, built by a Poprad stockholder company in 1906, following many discussions and disputes.

surrounding his well-performing brewery, which then became a place for hotels with home-made food, aimed at “*tourist class*” visitors, a café with a dance floor, a spa building with hydrotherapy, as well as green playgrounds and sports sites intended mainly for Poprad inhabitants. Contemporary guides describe the Huszpark as the most beautiful part of the town (Bohuš 1998:430). After the death of the Husz couple, the glory of this park slowly declined.

The city mainly began to strengthen its central position during the past two decades, which was helped by the transformation process after 1989, enabling a new influx of foreigners by opening the borders to Western Europe. Today, Poprad is a modern city with an airport, a new aqua-park with top-quality services (which is reflected in the prices, as a result of which it became less affordable for the local inhabitants), and an increasing number of shopping and entertainment centres, which also contributes to the development of commercial culture.

In its efforts to revive the traditional culture and ensure the sustainability of its cultural heritage, Poprad took the first step at the beginning of the 1990s by organising a traditional carnival parade with masks representing agrarian prosperity, as well as a folk festival. The local inhabitants received this event with confusion, as an “*element foreign to this city*”. Nevertheless, the people of Poprad began to increasingly identify with the inclusion of elements from traditional folk culture in the life of the city – apart from the carnival, they identify mainly in connection with the Christmas, Pentecostal or traditional craft markets.

Bessière views heritage as a reservoir of meanings necessary for understanding the world, a social construct which develops and constantly changes. According to her hypothesis, the dynamics of the construction of heritage lies in the upgrade, adaptation and reinterpretation of preserved knowledge, skills and values of a certain group, i.e. it connects preservation and innovation, stability and dynamics, reproduction and creativity, thus creating a new social meaning that generates identity (Bessière 1998:27).

In the field of folklorism, we should highlight the fact that the inhabitants of Poprad are left to play the role of the audience in the process of acceptance and adaptation of such elements. The city becomes a stage with actors, and the local community exclusively maintains a passive role.

Their internal relationship to these activities can be observed from the same perspective. Social identity represents a sum of cognition and evaluation (realisation and experience) of the affiliation with different groups. It is, therefore, a subjective reflection of the affiliation with social groups, which is conditioned objectively (Homišínová 1999).

CURRENT POPRAD

The same applies to the inhabitants of the formerly independent towns – urban districts at present – who were pushed to the periphery of socio-cultural events. Today, they view Poprad as their centre and participate in its activities without any nostalgia, mainly when it comes to members of the younger generation; however, they do so without any major ties related to local cultural identification.

“When I say – I’m going to the city (i.e. Poprad) – it’s as if I were going to visit my family. All my requirements are fulfilled there, but I feel at home in Veľká” (respondent 1, 69 years, original inhabitant of another district).

The rising generation of the contemporary “big Poprad” especially perceives the town as one complex unit. People build their residences (as places for rest and relaxation) in the current urban districts (originally individual towns). However, the centre of Poprad still dominates more intensively as the place for social and cultural events. The inhabitants of today’s “big Poprad” gain more significant connections to it. The new generation is creating new relations.

The existence of identity and its full realisation is clearly an anthropocentric phenomenon – it assumes the existence of someone who is able to recognise, understand, feel, accept or reject this identity – simply said, who is able to express his/her attitude towards it. Without human memory, history and ideological content, all subjects would only maintain certain natural or technical parameters – but not identity.

CONCLUSION

Cultural identity is a complex set of attributes which characterise the sameness and difference in cultures, their mutual influences and impacts on the creation of socio-cultural structures. It represents security, a basis for communication and an offer for cooperation. On the other hand, loss of identity has always meant the end of community (usually by gradual dissolution in a foreign cultural environment) (Darulová and Košťálová 2016:133). This also applies in the case of identity in the context of local affiliation. The Poprad conurbation and the perception among its inhabitants of belonging to its individual, historically and culturally profiled districts, is an example that documents the effects of certain internal and external determining factors which influence the formation and strengthening, but also the weakening of the cultural identity of local communities.

The aim of the study was to focus on the socio-cultural features of individual, formerly local communities and their changes under the current conditions, as they became part of a larger urban complex of the City of Poprad.

Given their different development and specific expressions of identity, it was not our intention to set fixed criteria and compare identical elements of life in these communities. We did not attempt to seek out differences and common features between particular elements. Our ambition was to accentuate their most significant features that characterise the social and cultural relationships and ties within the community, which also allows us to draw some conclusions:

- The locality of Spišská Sobota, as formerly the richest centre of today's Poprad, retreated, through its original population, into "*nostalgia for its former glory*" and keeps a certain distance from the other parts of the city; today's flexible generation, however, does not view it the same way.
- The locality of Veľká stays true to its reputation of improvers and builders, both in the context of its own community and its current position in the greater urban district.
- The locality of Matejovce, due to rapid economic changes, has experienced the most significant weakening of the cultural and social identity of the members of its society, especially as a result of the

influx of newcomers.

- The locality of Stráže has preserved the strongest ties of cultural identification within the local community due to its persistent voluntary isolation from the centre. It has earned its place within the current urban complex with its competitiveness. The influx of newcomers to this locality is the lowest of all the urban districts.

However, in connection with current massive cultural and social processes, we can speak about an analogical development of communities in general, within a broader territorial and cultural range. The globalisation process forces all cultural communities to undergo an individual process of self-reflection and new interpretation of their own cultural identity (Foltínová 2011).

It is in this context that cultural heritage issues are given priority as one of the basic elements of identification within communities. The efforts to revive the traditional expressions of cultural elements at the tangible, but also spiritual level, are among the priority of cultural-identification efforts of local, urban, regional or national communities today, while locality remains the basic unit.

“If I had to describe the difference in the nature of people, it would be simple, they are like the patron saints: the patron saint of Poprad is St. Egidius – a monk, discreet, introvert, contemplating, strong-minded. The patron saint of Veľká is John – a young, untamed man who did not ascribe to silence, he was a child compared to Christ. This is how people in Veľká are, they always seek to do or change something. In Spišská Sobota, it is George – a strong knight, fighter, generous, unapproachable and proud” (respondent 2, 65 years, original inhabitant of Veľká).

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Zdena Krišková

IDENTIFIKACIJSKI PROCESI URBANE POPULACIJE U ODNOSU NA KULTURNE ZNAČAJKE GRADSKIH ČETVRTI: PRIMJER GRADA POPRADA U SLOVAČKOJ

Kulturna raznolikost i identitet aktualne su teme vezane uz razvoj ljudskog društva unutar zajednica na različitim razinama – od međunarodne do lokalnih. Ovo se istraživanje fokusira na grad kao osnovnu sociokulturnu jedinicu te na promatranje glavnih aspekata veza kulturne identifikacije pripadnika urbanog društva. Grad Poprad u Slovačkoj specifičan je primjer. Riječ je o konurbaciji pet izvorno neovisnih naselja, od kojih svako ima vlastitu povijest i nalazi se na različitim stupnjevima ekonomskog i kulturnog razvoja,

što čini primarnu osnovu i predstavlja odlučujući faktor za vezu između lokalne zajednice i njezina okruženja. Istraživanje u ovom kontekstu slijedi aspekte formiranja lokalnog identiteta na dijakronijskoj razini. Na sinkronijskoj se razini razmatra fenomen identiteta u novim uvjetima globalizacije.

Ključne riječi: Slovačka, grad Poprad, identitet, lokalna zajednica, kulturna baština, grad

KULTÚRNOIDENTIFIKAČNÉ PROCESY MESTSKÉHO OBYVATEĽSTVA: PRÍKLAD MESTA POPRAD NA SLOVENSKU

Kultúrna rozmanitosť a identita sú aktuálne otázky súvisiace s rozvojom ľudskej spoločnosti v spoločstvách na rôznych úrovniach - od medzinárodných až po miestne. Tento výskum sa zameriava na mesto ako na hlavnú sociálno-kultúrnu jednotku a na pozorovanie hlavných aspektov identifikácie kultúrnej identity členov mestskej spoločnosti. Mesto Poprad na Slovensku je špecifickým príkladom. Ide o aglomeráciu piatich pôvodne nezávislých miest, z ktorých každé má svoju vlastnú históriu a rozdielny stupeň hospodárskeho a kultúrneho rozvoja, ktorý je základným prvkom a predstavuje rozhodujúci faktor pre vzťah medzi miestnou komunitou a jej prostredím. Výskum v tejto súvislosti sleduje aspekty tvorby lokálnej identity. Na synchronnej úrovni fenomén identity štúdia sleduje v nových podmienkach globalizácie.

Kľúčové slová: Slovensko, mesto Poprad, identita, miestna komunita, kultúrne dedičstvo, mesto



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