
Decommunization – Fascism without Fascists

**Konrad Matyjaszek, Xawery Stańczyk, Marcin Starnawski,
Katrin Stoll, and Anna Zawadzka discuss the Fascization
of Space**

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Abstract: Are there fascizing ways to look at public space and aesthetics? If so, how do they manifest themselves? What characterizes the fascization of space? How and where can you recognize it? How do architecture and symbols in public space contribute to fascization of daily life? One of them is a policy of cleansing and rhetoric about recovering after an imaginary foreign domination or invasion. The aim of this conversation is to elucidate the concept of the fascization of public space. The discussants do this by drawing on examples from the history of Poland and Germany as well as the present-day situation in both countries. They also consider how we can clarify the category of fascization in order to distinguish this process from other phenomena such as nationalism.

Keywords: fascism; fascization; organization of space; anticommunism; Poland; Germany

Katrin Stoll: For some time now we have been dealing with an overt destruction of democracy, culture and science. The process of fascization, accelerated and supported by capitalism and the “transnational political neoliberal project” (Wacquant, 2014, p. 1691), also applies to various spheres of life – including the private sphere (women’s bodies) or the governmental, urban, neighborhood, housing and rural spheres.

The struggle for spheres and territory is central to right-wing thinking. The Nazi interpretation of the *Lebensraum* concept meant *Todesraum* (death space) for European Jews and Soviet prisoners of war. Right-wing actors constantly formed and still form a sphere in which everyone perceived as “other” and a “stranger” is openly persecuted, made to feel unsafe and is denied equal rights. Instead of diversity and multilingualism, homogenization and monolingualism is the preferred way. The right strives to build zones free from unwanted people who are described as inhuman and expendable. (In the German used by Neonazis: *national befreite Zonen*).

Are there fascizing ways to look at public space and aesthetics? If so, how do they manifest themselves? What characterizes the fascization of this space? How and where can you recognize it? How do architecture and symbols in public space contribute to

fascization? Do racist society and *antisemitic culture*¹ (Janicka, 2014–2015, pp. 165–168) as manifested by capitalism produce a particular structure of cities and villages? If so, what are their characteristic features? And what are the features that can help distinguish the fascization of space from the production of hegemony? In his book *Produkcja przestrzeni żydowskiej w dawnej i współczesnej Polsce* [The Production of Jewish Space in Premodern and Contemporary Poland] (Matyjaszek, 2019)², Konrad Matyjaszek writes about the establishment of hegemony of the dominant group in Polish public space.

The purpose of our conversation is to elucidate the concept of the fascization of public space. I will begin by establishing an analytical distinction between the concepts of fascization and fascism. At this point it is important to take note of Georg Seeßlen's observation that "fascism as a construct and fascization as a process are two different things that are associated with each other and differ from each other at the same time" (Seeßlen, 2020). As for historic fascism, I quote here the definition that Enzo Traverso gives in his book *Historia jako pole bitwy* [History as a battlefield, L' Histoire comme Champ de Bataille] (Traverso, 2014). Traverso speaks of "fascist culture" (Traverso, 2014, p. 111). Referring to George Mosse, Zeev Sternhell and Emilio Gentile, Traverso writes:

According to these three historians, fascism was simultaneously a revolution, an ideology, a Weltanschauung, and a culture. As a revolution, it wished to build a new society. As an ideology, it reformulated nationalism as a rejection of Marxism that served as an alternative to conservatism as well as to liberalism. As a Weltanschauung, it inscribed its political project within a philosophy that saw history as a realm for building a 'New Man'. And as a culture, fascism tried to transform the collective imagination, change people's way of life and eliminate all differences between the private and public spheres by fusing them into a single national community (delimited along ethnic or racial lines). They each consider fascism a 'revolution of the right', whose social engine was the middle classes and whose ambition was to create a new civilization. (Traverso, 2019, p. 101)

Traverso notes that this definition lacks an anti-communist thread: "Fascism would not exist without anti-communism" (Traverso, 2014, p. 133). He emphasizes that fascism is a "counter-revolutionary" phenomenon, which was possible thanks to the support and integration of traditional elites. To quote Traverso: "No fascist movement came to power without being supported, in a more or less explicit way, by the traditional elites. This was true in the economic as well as the ideological domains [...]. Swiss historian

1 Discussing Andrzej Bryk's concept of antisemitic culture (Bryk, 1990, pp. 171–172) and Maria Janion's concept "antisemitic social code" (Janion, 2009, p. 71), Elżbieta Janicka writes: "antisemitic culture, however, is something more in the sense that antisemitism is not just one of the many currents or codes of this culture, but rather drives the formation of a community identity – first a religious one, then a national one, created according to ethnic-religious criteria – which is also an axionormative community" (Janicka, 2014–2015, p. 166).

2 Referring to the work of Lefebvre, Konrad Matyjaszek writes: "[Hegemony] is exerted by means of culture and knowledge, and also by using the urban and social spaces created for this purpose, spaces that become a 'means of control, and hence of domination, of power'. Ushering in this hegemony allows for a shielding, using a discourse curtain, of the processes that produce the post-Jewish sphere, making it difficult to observe phenomena and processes remaining in the sphere of a linguo-spatial code, that is communicated by the speculative capitalism restored at Plac Grzybowski [translator's note: a square in Warsaw]" (Matyjaszek, 2019, p. 509).



Photo by Alexia Weiss, Vienna, June 1, 2017 (© Alexia Weiss, courtesy of the same)

Philippe Burrin has persuasively argued that the ‘fascist revolution’ historically appears as a ‘revolution without revolutionaries’ (Traverso, 2019, p. 119).

Looking at the current situation, one might ask whether we live in a “democracy without democrats” (Seeßlen, 2020), as Georg Seeßlen put it. He uses the term “fascization” to describe the situation and tendencies in Europe and other places around the world. Seeßlen understands fascization as a “political and cultural process” (Seeßlen, 2020), which is occurring at the center of countries and societies. A process that strives to exclude and eliminate stigmatized groups from society and from public space, as evidenced by such slogans as “Europe without ...”, “cities without ...” (“Die Stadt ohne”, 2018), “boroughs without ...”. As part of this process, people use symbolic, economic and physical violence to tailor reality to the right-wing fantasy of a dominant group’s unity (for example, of a nation or *das Volk*), of space/territory and community. Fascization is, therefore, about “fusing culture, state and biography into a total unity” (Seeßlen, 2020).

What are the tools used to fascize space? One of them is a policy of cleansing and rhetoric about recovering after an imaginary foreign domination or invasion. Loïc Wacquant wrote about the relationship between class, state (the policy of penalization) and ethnicity. He introduced into the debate the term “territorial stigmatization” (Wacquant, 2014, p. 1700). On a macro scale, we are dealing with demarcation. Here is an example:

national states in Europe, or *Festung Europa*, seal their borders thereby excluding those who flee war and those who flee from the consequences of global capitalism and the climate crisis. In 2015, during the so-called “refugee crisis”, the editor-in-chief of the German daily *Die Welt* called Chancellor Merkel a “Chancellor without borders” (Metz & Seeßlen, 2016, p. 134). In public discourse, refugees were discussed as traffic and numbers. There was a “wave of refugees” that had to be stopped or limited. There were “too many” of them. It follows that some of them must disappear, and that segregation, selection and elimination are needed.

The rhetoric of “too many foreigners”, “too many migrants”, “too many ‘others’” (for example, non-heteronormative people, “non-Western residents”) (Agence France-Presse in Copenhagen, 2021) in a given space is an integral part of right-wing thinking. The rhetoric of “too much” goes hand in hand with the rhetoric of “too little for us” as well as with the mechanism of scapegoating. In 2018, the Minister of the Interior, Building and Community (*Heimat*), Horst Seehofer (CSU) – appointed by Chancellor Merkel to this portfolio – called “the issue of migration the mother of all problems” (“Innenminister Seehofer zu Migration”, 2018). A real response to such aggression would be the recognition of migration as a human right and granting migrants the right to citizenship (Di Cesare, 2020). This would require separating the procedure for recognizing citizenship from the decisions of a national state.

There are many more tools which can be used to fascize space and which must be subjected to critical analysis.

Marcin Starnawski: The term “fascization” initially seemed promising to me. It certainly is emotionally engaging. However, when I tried to “dress” it in the methodological framework, I encountered a grave problem. I miss an operational definition of fascization, even if just a loose, incomplete one. Would the fascization of space be a type of some broader concept of fascization? Or maybe only an exemplification of fascization? At the level of social relations and collective consciousness is the fascization of space an autonomous process? Some creations can be analyzed in space – for example, graffiti that has a fascizing character. However, this creation will depend on social and political dynamics.

Another problem is time limits. What historical timeframe are we talking about? Is it the entire period after the Second World War because we recognize that the return of fascism began not long after it was overcome? And if so, can the various phases of this process be distinguished? Can the process intensify or weaken? Determining its various phases would allow us, among other things, to evaluate the effectiveness of defascizing strategies. Let’s use the Polish context as an example. When we think about fascization, the year of 2015 comes to mind. Except that nearly twenty years ago an author who identified herself only as a Middle-schooler (Polish: *Gimnazjalistka*), pre-

pared an exhibition about racist graffiti in Wrocław. As part of the exhibition, she presented seventy of around seven hundred photos taken from May to December 2001. The exhibition was accompanied by an open letter she had penned. That letter received a response from President Kwaśniewski³.

Anna Zawadzka: What wonderful times those were when the Polish President felt compelled to respond to a middle-schooler concerned about the ubiquity of racism and antisemitism. Today this would be unthinkable.

M.S.: When I think back even further, to the first half of the 1990s, fascizing tendencies were already then present in Wrocław. Skinhead popularity and frequent cases of violence by neonazis and nationalists – those are the memories of my generation.

Is the fascization of space a result of the growing fascization of social relations (for example, violence or discrimination), or is it perhaps the other way around? Did antisemitic graffiti, which existed throughout the 1990s, intensify Polish antisemitism, which had its culmination after 2015 (especially at the beginning of 2018 in connection with the amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance)? Or was the influence of the far right on the mainstream and the final entrance of this extreme right-wing into the mainstream an independent process? The relationship is not obvious.

Revolution, ideology, vision of the world, culture – all these factors can also be attributed to radical left-wing movements. Fascism, as a movement of the far right, however, is also an anti-communist movement. I agree with Traverso (Traverso, 2014), but also with other researchers like Borejsza (Borejsza, 1979), Eatwell (Eatwell, 2003) or Griffin (Griffin, 2005), that this factor was always very important for fascism, although, of course, not just for it. Returning to fascization, are we talking here about a binary phenomenon? And if not, how can one recognize its various phases?

Finally, I ask myself who the subject of the fascization process is. An answer to this question would allow us to construct a socio-political or, more importantly, a pedagogical model, define opposition practices, and to determine the defascizing entity. Nowadays fascists avoid calling themselves fascists. Sociologist Justyna Kajta conducted biographical research on members of the nationalist movement. Discourse on fascists is, in the opinion of the nationalists she interviewed, an imposed identity. The identity desired by organizations and felt by their members, a declared identity, is: active young people, future elites, intellectuals, fighting for freedom, aware of threats, people whose

3 On the subject of the exhibition, see Gimnazjalistka, 2002; Wełyczko, 2002. The exhibition was opened at the end of January 2002 in a Wrocław shelter for mothers with children called "Betlejem". The Middle-schooler's open letter appeared on March 13, 2002 in the "Trybuna", and three days later that same daily published the response of President Aleksander Kwaśniewski to it; see List otwarty Prezydenta RP, 2002). A year later, the Jewish Culture Center (Centrum Kultury Żydowskiej) organized an exhibition of the Middle-schooler's photographs in Kraków (Czuchnowski, 2003).

loadstar consists of correct values, such as God, honor, homeland, family and so forth (Kajta, 2020, p. 293). What's more, in Poland, you can no longer distinguish anti-fascist aesthetic from that of the far-right, because both now bring to their manifestations banners with crossed out symbols of a sickle and hammer, Che Guevara and a swastika.

Konrad Matyjaszek: In countries like Poland, the fascist collective subject is elitist. The easily observable fascism is displayed by the far-right which perpetrates violence on the streets, and these groups are usually thought of as coming from subordinated classes. But the actual production of exclusion takes place somewhere else. Such production requires a strong social position, a right to speak, and an ownership of symbolic and material space. European fascism is a historically continuous phenomenon, which is why I do not want to equate it with the groups that today openly derive from the fascist tradition. I am interested in what comes before and after. The problem with the way fascism is performed in the public sphere is that fascism is actually not obscene or vulgar. Fascist graffiti visible on Polish streets can be obscene, because its creators sometimes use such language, but within mainstream Polish culture fascism can be 'cultured' and as such it does not evoke outrage anymore. We have gotten used to thinking about fascism as a fringe phenomenon. Meanwhile, it feels at home, because it is indeed at home. To illustrate the way Polish fascism operates as a central part of Poland's public space, I will present a historical study of the 19th century fascization of Wawel, the historical castle of Polish kings in Kraków, one of the most fundamental and legitimate spaces of Polish culture. This study will be a trip into the center of this culture.

The history of Wawel castle's fascization begins with a particular person – a fascist and at the same time a member of Poland's cultural and academic elite. Wincenty Lutosławski was a fascist in a strict sense. A well-known philosopher in his time, a researcher of Plato's philosophy, he was born in 1863 in a manor house in Drozdów, an estate located between Łomża, Jedwabne and Wizna.

Lutosławski studied in Riga, Helsinki and London. He invented a method of dating Plato's writings and it was this research that brought him fame (Lutosławski, 1897). For him, however, more important than researching antiquity was raising the Polish Nation and the restoration of Polish independence. He dealt with metaphysics, with "science about the soul, the wandering of souls, and the concept of anamnesis" (Padoł, 1982, p. 57). He was a member of the National League (Polish: *Liga Narodowa*, a nationalist organization in partitioned Poland), a close friend of its leader Roman Dmowski, as well as a mystic. In 1893, he took part in the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago. There he came in touch with Indian spiritual leaders who had a considerable influence on him. From then on, he promoted in Poland the "Aryan" art of yoga (Lutosławski, 1907, 1908, 1909). His texts would later influence the theatre method developed by Jerzy Grotowski (Kolankiewicz, 1995, p. 130; Osiński, 1993, p. 25). Lutosławski was appointed



Manor house of Lutosławski family in Drozdów near Łomża, end of the 19th century
(Photo from: <http://ziemianie.pamiec.pl/en/rody/lutoslawscy.html>; public domain)



Lutosławski family, 1888. From left standing: Wincenty Lutosławski and his brothers: Stanisław, Marian, Jan. From left sitting: Sofia Casanova with her daughter Maria, Kazimierz (Wincent's brother), Franciszek Dionizy (Wincent's father, the owner of Drozdów), Józef (Wincent's brother), Paulina from Szczygielski family (Franciszek Dionizy's 2nd wife)
(Photo from: <http://ziemianie.pamiec.pl/en/rody/lutoslawscy.html>; public domain)

as a professor at the University of Vilnius, and, from 1899, at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, where he founded “Eleusis”, a youth association that revolved around mysticism, ethics, patriotism and Catholicism, and which is today recognized by some Polish authors as the precursor of the Polish scouting movement (Głowacka-Sobiech, 2003, pp. 23–24). Eleusis was supposed to mean: Free Liberators of the People. Lutostawski wrote:

In the Attic temple in Eleusis three thousand years ago, the immortality of the soul and superiority of the spirit over the body were taught. Eleusinian Mysteries initiated the chosen, with the exclusion of the heathens, and taught them to earn through chastity a better life than the temporal one. They had a national character: aliens were not allowed, only Attic citizens. In remembrance of this oldest European center of religious and national rebirth, the new association adopted the old Greek name. (Lutostawski, 1903, pp. 290–291)

Eleusis was an ascetic and Catholic association, focused on the improvement of the body and spirit of the future independent Polish nation.

Lutostawski was the husband of Sofia Casanova, a Spanish royalist, poet, and later journalist, war correspondent and an ardent supporter of Franco. When they both moved to Kraków, Casanova held salon gatherings informally called “Spain”, where Roman Dmowski was a frequent guest. The daughter of Lutostawski and Casanova, Maria Niklewicz, recalled: “Because dining at the guesthouse did not serve Mr. Roman well, my mother suggested that he eat with us, which became a custom” (Szostak, 2011).

This private space, that salon and the Lutostawski’s home, located initially in a townhouse at Plac na Groblach 10 in Kraków, and then in a villa in the city’s Dębniki area at Szwedzka Street 10 apt. 2, I would call a space of fascization in the strict sense: this was a place where such activity was conducted. On the website of the local government in Łomża, where the Lutostawskis’ manor is located, the following description was published:

Lutostawski gathered the elite of Polish nationalists: Dmowski, [Jan Ludwik] Popławski, [Zygmunt] Balicki and outstanding artists: [Stanisław] Wyspiański, [Józef] Mehoffer, [Stanisław] Fałat, [Jan] Stanisławski, [Włodzimierz] Tetmajer, [Władysław] Reymont and [Lucjan] Rydel. Girls [daughters], named by the father’s friends as “victims of the *endecja*” [*Narodowa Demokracja*, Poland’s nationalist political movement], listened to these ongoing discussions about Poland. Sitting quietly and listening to them was also Wyspiański, whose play *Wyzwolenie* was inspired by Dmowski’s *Thoughts of a Modern Pole* (*Myśli Nowoczesnego Polaka*) [Dmowski’s political treatise – K.M.] read by him at the meetings. (Korwek, 2007)

Theater critic Konstanty Puzyna wrote about Wyspiański: “He was truly a «follower of one great belief»: the belief of national liberation [Polish: *wyzwolenie narodowe*]. His emphasis on heroism, the cult of life, the cult of will, and the struggle against «historical fate», were simply derivatives of this one thought” (Puzyna, 1957–1958, p. 7).



Wincenty Lutosławski with members of Eleusis, Kraków, 1906 (Photo from: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, <http://pauart.pl/app/artwork?id=558a9a940cf2c6aee07b5449>; public domain)



Sofia Casanova with daughters and their husbands, circa 1925. From left: Romuald Wolikowski, Izabela Wolikowska, Maria Niklewicz, Mieczysław Niklewicz, Sofia Casanova, Halina Meissner, Czesław Meissner (Photo from: Biblioteca Nacional de España, <http://hemerotecadigital.bne.es/issue.vm?id=0003265097&page=16>; public domain)



Sofia Casanova with grandchildren, 1938

(Photo from: César Lorenzo Gil, „O brazo ergueito de Sofia Casanova”, *Fotos. Semanario gráfico nacionalsindicalista*, 1938, <https://biosbardia.wordpress.com/2014/12/03/o-brazo-ergueito-de-sofia-casanova/>; public domain)



Livingroom in Wincent Lutosławski's apartment in Cracow. Szwedzka 10, apt. 2, the beginning of 20th century
(Photo from: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, http://pauart.pl/app/artwork?id=AN_KIII_155_9130; public domain)

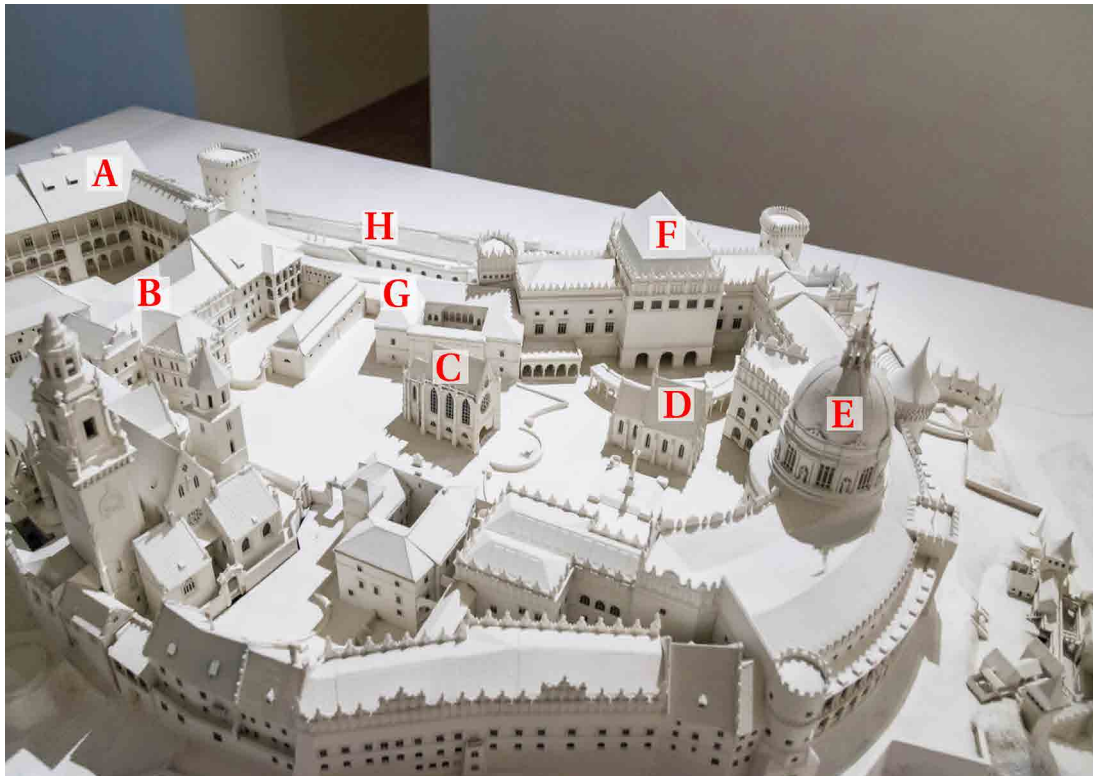
Wyspiański's superficiality when it came to ideas and beliefs⁴ meant that he absorbed everything he heard and discussed in the professor's lounge. And he took that content further, introducing it into the mainstream of Polish culture. The discussion evenings in which he participated took place in 1902–1904. In that same period, Wyspiański writes *Wyzwolenie*, simultaneously working, together with a colleague from work, the architect Władysław Ekielski, on the reconstruction design for Wawel Castle, which was to be vacated by the Austro-Hungarian army and returned to the Polish nation. Already then Wyspiański was ill, and he died in 1907. The conceptual architectural work they prepared together – the project of Wawel as a Polish Acropolis – Ekielski published only after Wyspiański's death. In my view, this project should be discussed, together with the theater play *Wyzwolenie*, as a product of two “free liberators of the nation” who followed Lutosławski's precepts.

Wyspiański and Ekielski designed the new Wawel as a place of national liberation of Poles and of rebirth of the Polish national spirit, as a national temple, and as a governmental center at the same time. Because they circled around the idea of restoration of the Polish monarchy, the Renaissance royal residences at Wawel (marked with letter “A” in the illustration) were to serve their original role instead of becoming a museum⁵. The Catholic bishop's palace (“B”) was supposed to be located near the castle, as an integral part of the governmental complex. Wyspiański and Ekielski also proposed to reconstruct two freestanding churches, which had been demolished by the time of their work (“C” and “D”).

The monumental building covered with a large dome, planned to be erected in the place of the existing Austrian barracks was to be the Polish Senate (“E”). The building with a sloped roof – the Parliament (F). Next to the Senate, the king's apartments were designed, in addition to the residential palace. As Ekielski writes, adjacent to the government buildings there is the “Arts and Sciences Academy, which the late Wyspiański named the Capitol or Valhalla” (G). It is an institution of research on national history, intended “for the annual ceremonial meetings of the commissions studying the past” (Ekielski & Wyspiański, 1908, p. 9). Nearby, directly below the Wawel Hill, the Sokół Stadium (H) was planned, “where young people will compete for titles, because our nation has to be strong in mind and in body” (Ekielski & Wyspiański, 1908, p. 10). The

4 Puzyra continues by saying that, apart from the idea of “national liberation”, for Wyspiański “the rest of his intellectual baggage consisted of remnants of thought constructs by [Juliusz] Słowacki, [Zygmunt] Krasiński, authors of Greek tragedies, Homer and Wagner – accidental and often contradictory constructs. The years-long prophesying of our Polish Wernyhors over Wyspiański caused a funny phenomenon: it is very difficult for us to believe today that the king is naked” (Puzyra, 1957–1958, p. 7).

5 A brochure describing the Wawel-Acropolis project was written by Ekielski after the death of Wyspiański. Ekielski was a practitioner of architecture, not a writer, and because of that he used pragmatic, architectural arguments in the Wawel's ideological program. The naivety of his description is at times striking, but it undoubtedly reveals the influence of earlier talks between both designers. Ekielski writes about the royal residence at Wawel: “We believe that the Royal Castle should remain that ancient castle, and should serve no other purpose. [...] We believe that it is wrong to change the nature and purpose of an ancient building and we think this belief extends to the important national monument that is the Castle. Its structure, its vast rooms, make it useless for the purposes of, for example, a National Museum” (Ekielski & Wyspiański, 1908, p. 5).



Project of reconstruction design for Wawel Castle of Stanisław Wyspiański and Władysław Ekielski, Muzeum Wyspiańskiego, Kraków. Description in the article – Konrad Matyjaszek

stadium was also adjacent to the Bernardine Church below Wawel, founded in the late Middle Ages by John of Capistrano, the papal Inquisitor, organizer of pogroms and expulsions of Jews, a Saint of the Catholic Church.

For Wyspiański, a reference point for this conceptual design was German Walhalla, a building located in Bavaria, near Regensburg on the Danube, styled as an Ancient Greek Doric temple. The Walhalla was built between 1830 and 1842 by Ludwig I of Bavaria as the Temple of Glory of the German Nation. It is a temple of the dead, filled with marble busts of the creators of German culture: composers, writers, poets, politicians, while the Greek decor is a reference to the alleged blood relation between Germanic Aryans and ancient Greeks – the temple's frieze depicts the "departure of the Germanic people from the Caucasus" from the Himalayas and the Kashmir mountains, with a temporary stop in the Peloponnese (Błoński, 1994, pp. 72–73). The criteria for selecting the heroes of the German pantheon were racial, ethnic and linguistic – its creators included only people recognized as racially and ethnically German, and those who at the same time worked in the sphere of the German language. Walhalla is a kind of German fascist center, one created before the political ideology of German Nazism was established. It is known that Wyspiański visited it. And despite its distinctly fascist character, Walhalla for many decades after the collapse of Nazism remained in the collective consciousness of German society as entirely isolated from fascism and Nazism.

Only after 2000, perhaps to attenuate the proto-Nazi character of this place, a few busts were added, including that of Heinrich Heine, who was previously excluded because of his Jewish origin⁶, as well as of people who fought Nazism, such as Sophie Scholl.

Wyspiański's new Wawel was to be the Polish Walhalla, a counterpart of the Bavarian one. This thought is not mine, it was proposed by Jan Błoński, who analyzed this relationship in his 1994 article (Błoński, 1994). Wawel Cathedral, in particular, held such importance for Wyspiański, since it was a burial place of Polish kings and heroes, full of a national 'spirit' that was dormant during the decades of Poland's partitions. The key to reading Wyspiański conceptualizations is *Wyzwolenie* – a theater play that carries a series of openly racist or misogynic motifs as well as calls for ethnic purity. Its plot opens late in the evening on an empty stage of Kraków's Municipal Theater, today's Juliusz Słowacki Theater, where Konrad, a protagonist resembling a character from Adam Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve* (*Dziady*), emerges. He encounters a series of Masks, which are depicted as voices of various cultural orientations, with whom Konrad debates, for example, just like this:

Konrad: Our country is welcoming. And that's how every thief will fit in. A thief to those people who would be born of the nation's pure blood. [...] We should respect the blood of the nation. And not let it be wasted. Not let the blood of the nation go to waste. [...] Not allow our women to be prostituted. [...] We should not give our women, to those foreigners, the strangers who sit among us.

Mask 12: But women are independent.

Konrad: No, they are not and they will not be. Because all that they should wish and pursue is to not be independent from that thought [...] They alone are nothing. I cannot stand hearing that the Polish woman transforms the home of her foreign husband and turns it into a Polish home. If she does that, she is committing an ignominious act. It is an act that sooner or later will result in offspring. [...] we should prevent wasting and giving away our blood and our girls to the foreigners, and to our own. We should not, and this can only be prevented by [...] a Polish government. Because no other government will protect our interests and the interests of our blood. Because other governments are cheaters to us and our affairs, and to our sacred things! (Wyspiański, 1970, pp. 108–111)

Earlier on, the protagonist talks about the necessity of "national censorship", "which would work like censorship in the countries of all nations", and counteract the "theft of a nation", the activities of "cheaters who ruin the nation" and "thieves who rob the nation" (Wyspiański, 1970, p. 106). Undoubtedly, these are the result of the discussions which Wyspiański, "sitting always quietly", listened to, together with Lutosławski's three daughters.

6 Heine himself was very critical of the idea of building Walhalla (Błoński, 1994, p. 71).



The opening of the coffin of the King Sigismundus II Augustus, 1930. Standing by the coffin (from left): Tadeusz Es-treicher, professor of the Jagiellonian University, Witold Ostrowski, vice-president of Kraków, Adam Sapieha, bishop of Kraków, Michał Godlewski, bishop of Łuck and Żytomierz, Stanisław Rospond, Auxiliary Bishop of Kraków, three unknown persons, Tadeusz Kruszyński (priest), professor of the Jagiellonian University, Kazimierz Władysław Kumaniecki, professor of the Jagiellonian University, unknown person, Feliks Kapera, director of the National Museum in Kraków (photo from: Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe <https://audiovis.nac.gov.pl/obraz/87554:1/>; public domain)

The culmination of *Wyzwolenie* takes place in the Wawel dungeons, where Konrad leads a group of members of the Polish nation:

They will go wherever I take them and they will be together with me, following my fighting Word, which they will use constantly [...] And it will be THE CHURCH MILITANT [...] We will enter the doorway, we will walk the steps and we will stand at the columns. And over our heads a high vaulted ceiling, painted blue and full of silver stars.

Mask 6: A church of the living.

Konrad: A church of the dead. And whoever will enter it and stand between us as he would between his own, will be freed from the abhorrence of life, cleansed of bad urges that infect the spirit, and will be a brother to me and my brotherhood. And on the day of that great holiday, which will be a holiday of the nation, I will open the valves of the underground stores and we will go down the stairs, leading into the dungeons, towards the vast basements, where the ashes of the nation's great people lie, locked in cases made of stone and gold.

Mask 6: The graves of kings. (Wyspiański, 1970, pp. 78–80)

Skeletons of kings, a cult of corpses, exhumations. In the 1930s, Kraków's politicians and archaeologists opened almost all the coffins of kings in Wawel's vaults, and eager-

ly photographed themselves with the skeletons.⁷ The fascist cult of death was practiced.

Critics of Polish culture neutralized the racist and misogynistic layer of Wyspiański's play. They understated the influence of nationalist thought. The only person who critically explored this mechanism was Grotowski. In 1963, he directed Wyspiański's "Acropolis", another Wawel-centered play, but replaced Wawel's space with the space of the Auschwitz death camp.⁸ Grotowski revealed something that was supposed to remain hidden and appear as neutral. That is the racist, misogynistic and xenophobic content of fascism, which remains not only normative and non-controversial, but is very useful and needed for the Polish state. This content remains active today also because for elite commentators on Polish culture, theater critics, architectural scholars, a fascist work of culture stays unproblematic as long as it remains a work of Polish culture. Just as the German Walhalla today is simply a curious 19th century monument with interesting statues inside. Fascism is an integral part of Poland and Europe as long as it is spiritually sophisticated, elegant, elitist, and does not use swearwords.

The example of Lutosławski and Wyspiański shows well how fascist ideology finds its way into the cultural mainstream. It happens in the center of Kraków, in the living room of a world-renowned Polish philosopher. Fascization is therefore only the lifting of the stage curtain. All that which for a long time has been a murderous and eliminative element of European culture lies behind that curtain. The gesture of the fascist who lifts the curtain is obscene, but what is behind it was not placed there a moment ago, and not by those who today would call themselves fascists. What lies behind can be highlighted, dressed in a uniform and shown by use of particular gestures. But all that was already present in our homes, long before fascists in uniforms and armbands came to their doorsteps.

K.S.: Death is at the center of fascist culture. The death of foreigners, but also one's own death for the nation or the state. Why did nobody challenge the worship of death in *Wyzwolenie*?

K.M.: In the play, this cult is explicitly laid out. Despite that, critics Konstanty Puzyna and Michał Głowiński defended Wyspiański in their reviews, contending that there was no nationalist element in *Wyzwolenie*, just a distant inspiration. Countering the appropriation of Wyspiański by nationalists, Michał Głowiński wrote about a critic who pointed to fascist tropes:

7 During the 1930s, the coffins of the kings were opened on numerous occasions. The largest such action was performed during maintenance and archaeological works in the crypt of Saint Leonard at Wawel Cathedral, conducted between 1937 and 1938 under the direction of Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz (Płuska, 2009).

8 I am referring to the play of *Akropolis* directed by Jerzy Grotowski and Józef Szajna, staged in Teatr - Laboratorium 13 Rzędów in Opole in 1962.

he does not see that this issue [defense of the nation's blood] is not raised again later in the play, hence this feature of *Wyzwolenie*, which he must have noticed, does not elicit any reflection in him: many various opinions on various topics are voiced there, and not all of those can be considered as seriously communicating the views of the poet. (Głowiński, 1990, p. 54)

Puzyna wrote:

Let us remember, however, that these slogans [of Strength and Power] meant something different in the situation of the [Austrian] Galicia in 1900: they were simply a demand for a political agenda, for an end of the political vacuity. Even [Ignacy] Daszyński [socialist political leader – K.M.] demanded that. Everybody took Wyspiański's generalities as their own. Konrad's "racist" ideas from the scene with the masks [...] cannot be directly attributed to the author's ideology. (Puzyna, 1957–1958, pp. 10–11)

So we have fascism without fascists.

A.Z.: I was particularly interested in this story's esoteric thread and the obsession with purity associated with it. Purity of the spirit corresponds to the purity of blood and "race". In this regard, the East Asian esotericism embraced by Europe is not much different from Christianity. We also have here a concept of dirt which you need to get rid of, preferably by projecting it on others, and then killing or driving out those "others".

K.M.: The Eleusis Association had four rules of purity: a ban on alcohol, cigarettes, gambling, and sex practiced for pleasure. Lutosławski wrote: "The circles of Eleusis are the centers of a new religious order, teaching their participants about sacrifice through abstinence, radically changing relations between sexes by means of purity, which results in the uplifting of race" (Lutosławski 1903, p. 289).

Xawery Stańczyk: I agree with Konrad that it is difficult to talk about fascization in Poland, because fascism is and has been with us. It is a fixed element and not something emergent. Sometimes it hides, sometimes it reveals itself, but it does not disappear. At the local level, there was no defascization after which a process of fascization could occur again. This was perfectly illustrated by Janek Koza's drawing titled "Fascism will not pass, because it is not going anywhere" (Polish: *Faszyzm nie przejdzie, bo nigdzie się nie wybiera*): a slogan known from anti-fascist demonstrations turns out to be, strangely, a fascist declaration of being at home.

Regarding the subcultural thread, which Marcin mentioned, I am interested in thinking about to what extent fascism penetrates autonomous spaces that are trying to be anti-fascist. I think it is easier to observe fascization as a process, for example, in the rejection of Che Guevara's portraits and the popularization of the anti-communist sign depicting three arrows, which Marcin also mentioned. In that way, Poland gained, among other things, patriotic antifascism, as I wrote in the context of Patriotic Poetry Slam



Illustration: Janek Koza (Photo from: *Polityka*, January 24, 2020, @ Janek Koza)

(Polish: *Slam patriotyczny*), combined with the “Antifa” fundraiser – hiding under this name was the Student Anti-fascist Committee (Polish: *Studencki Komitet Antyfaszystowski*), which, along with Stół Powszechny and Autonomiczna Przestrzeń Edukacyjna, was one of the organizers of the event (Stańczyk, 2019). The event description presented patriotism as a positive value, or at least as something that could be positively re-defined – the subject of the slam was how to be an open and non-exclusive community. The patriotism declared by the organizers was associated with common hope and common struggles, care for nature and passion for local community, in contrast to nationalist and fascizing patriotism, which would be purely aggressive and exclusive. Love for country as an open, inclusive and ecological community would, in this vision, become a basis – one that would be as ideological as it would be financial – for anti-fascist attitudes. And yet, the fantasy about the possibility of such an impeccably moral community leading a united fight against evil forces, itself belongs to the field of fascist imagination.

An even greater conflation of anti-fascism with fascism occurs in the case of demonstrations organized every year on November 11 by the Anti-fascist Coalition (Polish: *Koalicja Antyfaszystowska*). Since 2018, the Coalition, together with a number of other entities (including the squat Syrena, Studencki Komitet Antyfaszystowski, Antyfaszystowska Warszawa and Porozumienie Kobiet 8 Marca) organizes on that day the “dancing parade” (Polish: *taneczny pochód*), whose route usually runs only a few blocks or so away from the Independence March – the largest fascist event in Europe, which in recent years has attracted tens of thousands of participants from all over the continent. The blockades and counterdemonstrations organized in earlier years as a response to the March have been replaced with a kind of competition for a more legitimate patriotism. In the Anti-fascist Coalitions’ style, it would have a “positive” and “colorful” char-

acter, which in the following years was expressed among other things with the recurring slogan “For our freedom and yours!” or the expressions known from nationalist discourse: “Homeland”, which in this case will mean “Earth and Life”, and “Independence” which will become the demand of marginalized groups (Koalicja Antyfaszystowska, 2019). Perhaps the purpose of these language games is to attract the liberal middle-class to the idea of anti-fascism – it is important to note that in recent years more people outside of the subcultural and activist circles are showing up at anti-fascist and anti-racist events. However, this concession, which is a *de facto* relinquishment of one’s own language to describe social reality, makes the rickety antifascist “movement” (in quotes, because the collectivity is so small, scattered, anomic and heterogeneous, that it is impossible to talk about it as a movement in sociological terms) a hostage of the dominant culture, which, as Katrin noted, uses an antisemitic code, and is in fact an antisemitic culture.

In these types of situations, what unites fascists and anti-fascists is not only a declaration (variously defined) of patriotism and elements taken from national history (the Kościuszko Insurrection, the Warsaw Uprising or the Home Army), but also strong anti-communism, whose fundamental role in defining fascism we have already discussed. It is anti-communism, along with the partial rehabilitation of nationalist language and national mythology, that is responsible for the anti-fascist “movement” in Poland not being able to offer a real alternative to the ubiquitous fascism. That movement is constantly being undermined by waves of fascization, making further concessions to them, and as a result loses political self-reliance, even though it preserves its distinction at the style level, a distinction that is often class-based, singling out the “badly dressed” National Movement (Polish: *Ruch Narodowy*) and Konfederacja sympathizers who come from provincial cities and towns for the Independence March. “Since the fascism of the inter-war period, the term «fascism» has remained in vogue. What political group has not accused its adversaries of using «fascist methods»? The Left never stops denouncing resurgent fascism, the Right does not refrain from labelling the PCF [French Communist Party – editors’ note] as the «fascistic party»”⁹ – wrote Jean Barrot (Barrot, 1982), according to which liberal public opinion creates an illusion of fascism to condemn selected countries or their governments. Barrot contended that after 1945 fascism as a form of state organization and a political movement was largely gone (despite certain similarities, for example in Greece or Chile), the criticism of “fascism” in individual countries impedes a more general criticism of government. “The leftists seek to authenticate their extremism with their hue and cry about Fascism, while neglecting the critique of the State” (Barrot, 1982). Regardless of the historical accuracy of these comments, in relation to contemporary Poland this sentence would have to be modified in the following way: the leftists seek to authenticate their lifestyle with their hue and cry about

9 Translator’s note: This quote is a modified English translation of the French original.

fascism, while neglecting the critique of the patterns of the dominant culture and symbolic elites.

In the context of the space, the need to focus our attention away from the far right to the cultural and political mainstream can be seen through the prism of the landscape and topography. The spatial expressions of fascism are closely related to spatial policy at the urban level, which is the result of neoliberal and neo-conservative ideology and local elites' interests, as well as anti-communist policies at the national level. Activities related to the decommunization of public space in Poland are carried out by the state apparatus. There is no controversy or surprise here. Since the opening of the Warsaw Uprising Museum in 2004, fascism is very much public: the Museum guarantees the embedding of the Uprising myth at the center of the national imaginarium, which effectively prevents any attempt to discuss or undermine this myth. The situation becomes less obvious when the fascization of space is carried out by educated and liberal citizens. This is due to the aesthetics of space being modeled in accordance with the "modern" taste of the new middle-class, which exerts an ever greater impact on spatial policy. In recent years, whatever this class viewed as embodiments of tackiness and backwardness, for example, bazaars and market stands, public toilets and wooded areas on major squares and city markets, has been removed. Currently, this trend is weakening in large cities, where the ecological lifestyle and shopping at local fairs have become an element of the new urban lifestyle, but in medium-sized cities the squares are still replaced with parking lots. I would attribute this phenomenon to the class distinction we discussed – the intelligentsia and the middle class of the small- and medium-sized cities introduce to their cities the trends they discovered in large metropolises, not necessarily because of a real need, for example, a lack of parking spaces. When the important public spaces of cities are renovated, the opportunity is used to remove poor people, "inadequately" behaving minorities – for example, Roma people who are involved in playing music or fortune-telling – which often occurs along with partial commercialization of such spaces and an increase in control (local stores and restaurants employ security guards who throw out people who don't 'fit' the image of the place, camera surveillance is introduced, etc.). Furthermore, revitalized spaces with new aesthetics often remain difficult to access for people with disabilities or women (for example, mothers with buggies). These changes therefore have more than just a class dimension – matching space to specific taste criteria – but also a gender and ethnic dimension, and lead to the establishment of a homogeneous urban space, in which only the city's conservation recommendations are capable of protecting local specificities from the alliance of small and big business and a policy of national unification.

Particularly interesting in this regard is how the practice of aestheticization and decommunization go hand in hand, as part of which things associated with communism, and in particular the forms of commemorating communist heroes and events, are removed from public space. In the Act of April 1, 2016 on the prohibition of promoting

communism or other totalitarian systems through the names of buildings and public facilities, a year after its passage amendments to the law were enacted, obliging local governments to demolish monuments commemorating “people, organizations, events or dates symbolizing communism or other totalitarian regimes” or propagating such a system in a different way (Act of April 1, 2016, Journal of Laws 2016, item 744). The number of such monuments was estimated at approximately 500, and the coming into force of the amended law brought the demolition of monuments throughout Poland. Nevertheless, the destruction of communist monuments had already started with the beginning of the Third Polish Republic, and intensified in recent years for reasons unrelated to the passage of this Act. An example of this is the removal of communist monuments in Warsaw, a city ruled by conservative liberals from the Civic Platform party. Back in 2011, the Monument of Brotherhood in Arms at Wileński Square was taken down, which at the time was justified by the construction of the second subway line. However, already in February 2015, Warsaw’s City Council decided that the monument would not return, despite its great historical value – it was the first monument erected in Warsaw after the war – and against the will of most residents who were waiting for the monument’s return (Szpala, 2013). Ultimately, it was handed over to the Polish History Museum, which is to include it in its future exhibition on the Polish People’s Republic. It can be assumed that it will be a fiercely anti-communist exhibition.

The Museum’s collection was supposed to also include the monument to General Zygmunt Berling. Although the monument was toppled in August 2019 by “unknown perpetrators” – unknown in quotation marks, because the first to boast about the monument’s destruction was the former MP from the Confederation of Independent Poland Adam Słomka – the authorities of the Praga-Południe district had already decided in May 2019 to dismantle the monument and transfer it to the Museum (you can clearly see here a race between the extreme and moderate right). Because of concerns that the dismantling of the monument may be compelled under the decommunization law, the city decided to get rid of the monument and did not attempt to restore it when it was destroyed by a group of anti-communist activists (KN, 2019).

Similarly, without coercion from the top, in October 2018 the Monument of Gratitude to the Soldiers of the Soviet Army in Skaryszewski Park was demolished. Warsaw’s Greenery Authority was responsible for the demolition, with its then-director Marek Piwowarski explaining: “This demolition is a result of the Decommunization Act but also of the ongoing revitalization of Skaryszewski Park. We received consent from the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) and the Voivodeships Monument Conservation Office” (Urzykowski, 2018). This statement indicates that there was no pressure from above to remove the monument. The Warsaw Greenery Authority was behind the initiative and applied for the appropriate consent to the Institute of National Remembrance and the Conservation Office. The operation was carried out as part of the Park’s renovation – one of the arguments was that the removal would restore the original viewing

axis of the Park's central avenue, where the monument was located. Hence aesthetic considerations allowed the Greenery Authority, whose main task is of course taking care of the city's greenery, to engage in anti-communist historical policy, despite the protests of Russia and of Warsaw's residents, including the city's chapter of the Democratic Left Alliance. "For the inhabitants of Praga-Południe, Skaryszewski Park is a space for leisure and relaxation. In addition to lush nature there are many historical trivia here. We are restoring the splendor of this place so that children and adults can take full advantage of the district's charming green area" – declared Warsaw's Vice-President Michał Olszewski (Klimczak, 2018). Both Director Piwowarski and President Olszewski are people respected by liberal public opinion; when in March 2019 the Town Hall announced Piwowarski's resignation, some urban activists were dismayed and even sent in protest letters (Lulu, 2019). Parts of the demolished Skaryszewski monument were sent to the IPN, which intends to exhibit them at the Cold War Museum in Western Pomerania's Podborsk, where they will be used as propaganda. In this manner liberal groups, concerned about the greenery and aesthetics of public spaces, implement the policy of the anti-communist right. This policy of removing from public space everything that can be associated with communism already opens the door for fascism in this space, which now lacks any opponent there – maybe aside from global capital avoiding controversial associations. This policy is therefore directly responsible for the fascization.

After Warsaw, another example is Trzcianka, a town in the north of Wielkopolska. As part of the revitalization of the Postal Square, previously known as the Red Army Square, in September 2017, the Mausoleum of the Red Army was demolished without thorough research concerning the question as to whether the remains of 56 soldiers were buried under it in 1945. The basis for demolishing the Mausoleum was a decision by the Voievode of Wielkopolska Zbigniew Hoffmann regarding the removal of the site from the register of military cemeteries since electromagnetic and georadar tests did not detect human remains, even though they also did not rule out the possibility – there is no consensus whether following exhumations in 1953, the remains of the soldiers were moved to a cemetery in Wałcz, or left at the Postal Square (Biespałowa, 2017; Swiridow, 2019). Following this decision, the Mausoleum became only a symbolic commemoration, which meant that its fate was left solely in the hands of the local government. Trzcianka's mayor at the time, Krzysztof Czarnecki, decided to demolish the site as part of a revitalization plan to put a social integration center there. The plan itself was already adopted in 2016, and so before the Voievode's decision. After the election, construction work in the area of the demolished mausoleum continued under the new mayor Krzysztof Jaworski, who, unlike his predecessor, had no ties to the Law and Justice party – he also did not agree to carry out an exhumation. In 2020, the construction of the integration center was completed.

Protests against the demolition of the mausoleum and against building on top of graves came from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of the

Russian Federation, who referred to the Polish-Russian Treaty of 1992 regulating, among other things, the issue of cemeteries and memorial sites. Despite the outbreak of a diplomatic scandal, the mayor of Trzcianka was supported by, among others, the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the Institute of National Remembrance. In 2019, the families of soldiers buried in Trzcianka got involved in a legal case brought by the Kursk Association in a Polish court and demanded that the construction work be halted. Due to the refusal of the prosecutor's office to initiate proceedings, the case ended up at the European Court of Human Rights on September 4, 2020.

According to the project's name "Development of the Postal Square, together with the creation of the Center for Social Integration, and development of the Municipal Marketplace area along with adjacent areas", financed under the Wielkopolska Regional Operational Program for the years 2014–2020, as part of the European Regional Development Fund (subsidy amount totaling over 20 million Polish złotys) "the idea behind creating the Center for Social Integration is to stimulate development of the local community by supporting grassroots initiatives and projects, whose aim is activating and integrating various social groups, especially those at risk of being excluded. To this end, the new facility will be made available to the social economy entities and informal groups". In addition, the modernization of the Postal Square and the Municipal Marketplace was supposed to create an "architecturally coherent, functional and open urban space" (*Grants map EU*, n.d.). A significant part of the Center was taken up by the public library and the Cultural Center, and next to the new building a sculpture depicting a baby deer (Pieczyńska-Chamczyk, 2020). Leading to the Center building is a staircase from the old Mausoleum, the only part of it that survived demolition. Two birds were killed with one stone therefore – the commemoration of communism was stopped and the city center was gentrified. And all this occurred in the name of civil society, revitalization and social economy. The baby deer attests to the purity of intentions and non-ideological nature of the entire undertaking, because in Poland communism is considered an ideology, with anti-communism being just a manifestation of common sense.

And finally, the example of Starachowice, a post-industrial city, without a center and a coherent urban space, created as a conglomerate of settlements, workers' and office employees' colonies and the town of Wierzbnik, which before the war was a local shtetl serving the commercial needs of surrounding villages. The settlements were created for employees of the steel plant located on the Kamienna River, near the railway line, as well as for workers from an ore mine and a mechanical plant. Settlements were scattered in various places, unrelated to each other. After the war, on the so-called Skatki, a geological exposure of tall stone blocks, a mining settlement called Majówka was built according to the architectural tenets of socialist realism. Today, it has lost the original layout because new buildings were constructed in between, and the original buildings were covered with styrofoam insulation and painted with pastel colors. Dur-

ing the war at the edge of this area there was a labor camp where Jews were imprisoned. A relatively large number of them had survived because they were needed for work. A social initiative was created to commemorate this place, which led to a plaque being put up, but after some time it disappeared in mysterious circumstances. In 2014, in turn, when the Wierzbnik Market was being revitalized, someone came up with the philosemitic idea of putting up a cat sculpture there. This idea came from the recollections of Starachowice's Jews, who mentioned cats basking on the market square near the wells. Memorializing this, it was thought, would remind people that Wierzbnik was a Jewish town, and at the same time would diversify the space previously revitalized according to the typical formula of the recent years: stone slabs, rickety greenery and parking lots. The idea was all the more sensible given that a plaque devoted to the persecuted and murdered Jews from Wierzbnik and Starachowice was unveiled at the revitalized market. However, another project was chosen instead: big dinosaur paws imprinted in the sidewalk – Świętokrzyskie is a region known for mysterious tracks that turned out to be dinosaur tracks. This shows how tourism and sightseeing discourse trumps even trivial and veiled ideas that refer to the Jewish past. In Poland, it's easier to commemorate dinosaurs.

All these cases illustrate fascization understood as the process of revealing the elements of fascism that already exist in culture, rather than building it from scratch. They also reveal how this process is supported by a political spectrum much broader than the extreme right. That's why I agree with Konrad that the fascization entity, which Marcin asked about, is the elite. We see manifestations of fascism at the level of other classes and social layers because these classes and layers more or less successfully adopt the elements of the dominant culture and cultural canon. We are immersed in it and everyone lives according to it. One example is the Ordo Iuris organization, which is created by representatives of political and legal elites and in its core work focuses on the elite, at the same time intimidating wider social groups. Municipal and spatial policy is carried out in the name of culture: to create order, to make it modern and aesthetic, to make it like the Western world. This is the perspective of local elites who rule in cities such as Trzcianka and shape space, architecture, landscape in accordance with expectations and imaginations of their own circles, of the so-called civil society.

A.Z.: As we speak, Polish cities and towns are densely covered with posters which promote the forcing of women to give birth regardless of their will, the degree of fetal damage or whether pregnancy is the result of rape. These posters are literally everywhere: on small, medium, and large advertising media, on houses, lawns, highways, allotment gardens. Just as shocking as their number is their content: the desire to completely subordinate women to pronatalist policies, treating women as incubators that fulfill the will of men who, in turn, represent the will of the nation. Pronatalism of this type was a permanent element of fascist ideology. The costs of the posters and the rental of advertising space are covered by a private investor Mateusz Kłosek, the owner

of Eko-Okna, one of the richest people in Poland (Cembrowska, 2021). This propaganda was clearly visible particularly due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many advertisers withdrew from public space during the lockdown. The variety of images in public space was therefore very limited. In Poznań, the ubiquitous posters of a talking fetus were interrupted only by tights advertisements, which presented a dead woman, an advertisement for a market-chain based on the pre-war antisemitic slogan “Buy at your own”, an advertisement of the Odra-Niemen Association RodacyBohaterom.pl¹⁰, in which an old, gray-haired man in a military uniform kisses the forehead of a young girl with long blond-hair and hugs her head with his hands, and posters reminding the public about historical Polish uprisings. And also an advertisement of the Institute of Civic Affairs for its survey “What kind of a Pole are you?”. Incidentally, in Poznań I saw a version of this poster aimed at women saying: “«What kind of a Polish woman are you?» Go to: «What Pole are you» [<https://www.jakimjestespolakiem.pl/>]. This illustrates quite well what the female grammar forms in the Polish language are.¹¹ If they are not followed by real change of socially produced entities, they become meaningless.

All these posters were dominated by national colors and symbols – an eagle, the flag, white and red armbands and Polish Army uniforms. Posters with fetuses also had a white-and-red tone with red symbolizing blood. Here the blood shed for the Homeland – a fascist topos – appeared in the form of female guts and blood, which women lose during delivery. A peculiar, although probably unplanned tagline for the blood on the fetuses, was the blood flowing from the slit wrist of the woman in the tights advertisement.

I describe with such detail the advertising landscape of a Polish city, because I think that it reflects both the degree of Polish nationalism, the lack of alternatives to it and the accompanying cultural patterns, for example violence against women, and precisely the normalization of a dead or massacred female body. In March 2021, it was difficult to see anything else on Polish streets. Public space was beset by the only righteous ideology.

X.S.: That just shows what this space is. If you remove the advertising campaigns of international corporations from it, only nationalism, anti-communism and patriarchy remain. This is an unfriendly and normative space. I would add to that the omnipresence of crosses, chapels and churches. A lot has recently been said about noise pollution. Churches have mastered this to perfection. Their bells are heard from kilometers away, their sermons – from several hundred meters. This is incredible symbolic violence.

10 Translator's note: RodacyBohaterom.pl was an internet campaign that encouraged Poles to express gratitude and support for Polish war veterans.

11 “What Pole are you” uses the masculine form of “Pole” (sing. *Polak*, pl. *Polacy*), while the poster was aimed at women (sing. *Polka*, pl. *Polki*).

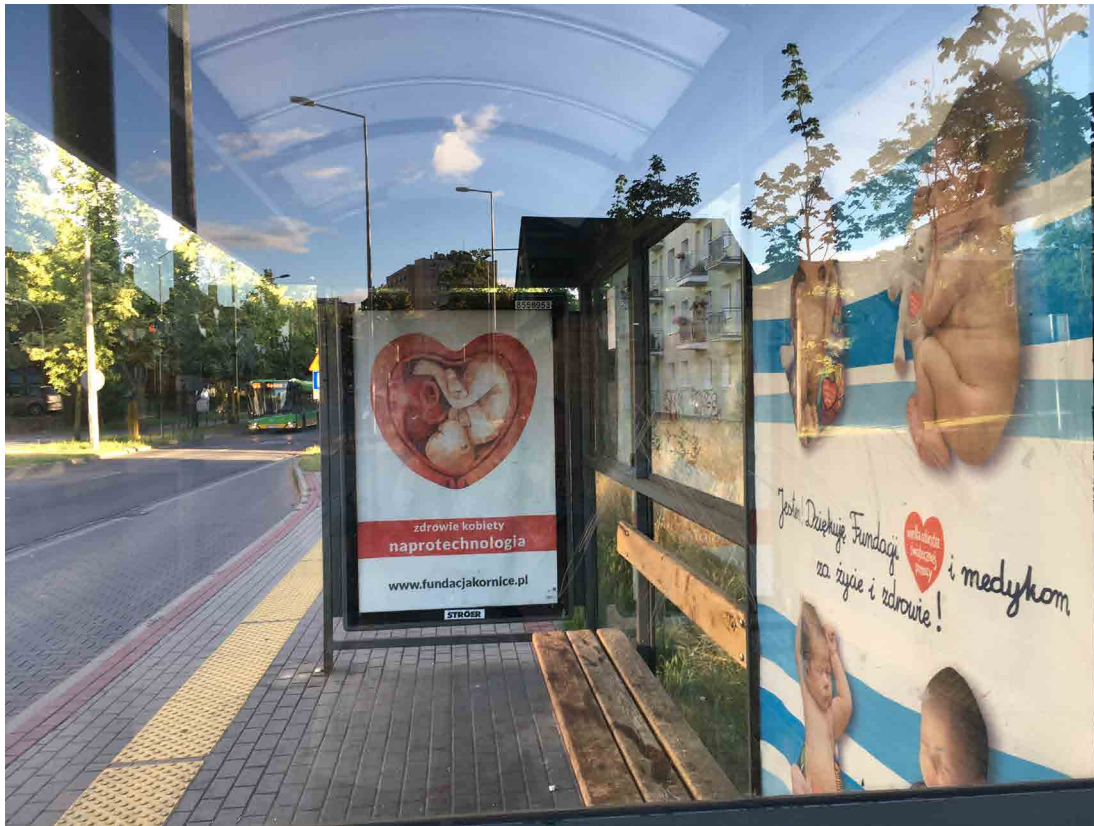


Photo by Anna Zawadzka



Photo by Anna Zawadzka



Photo by Anna Zawadzka

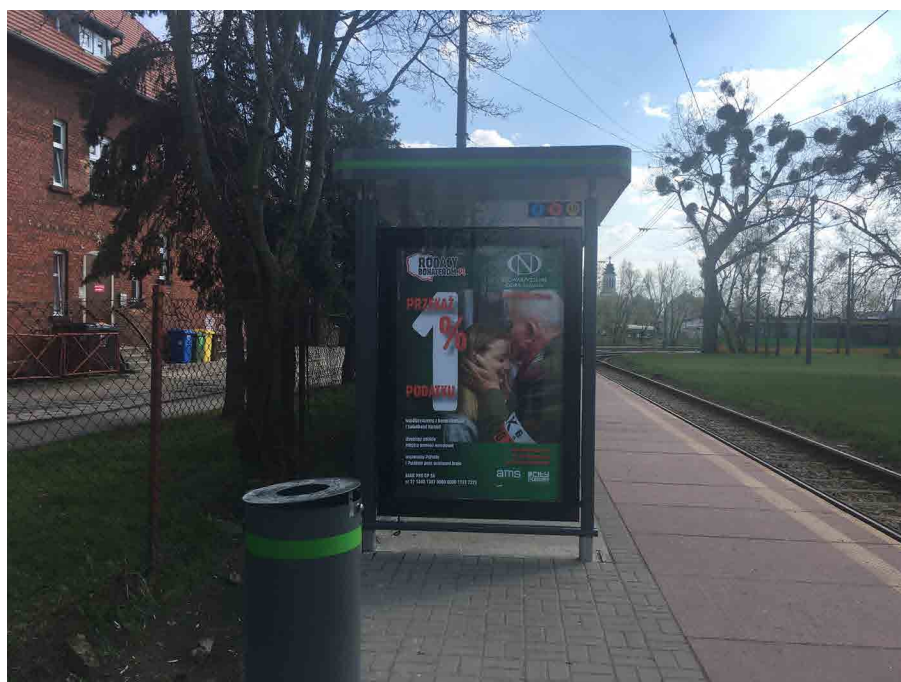


Photo by Anna Zawadzka



Photo by Anna Zawadzka



„Jakim jesteś Polakiem?”. Poster at the bus stop Berezyńska 01, Al. Waszytgona, Warszawa, April 2021
Photo by Katrin Stoll

A.Z.: I would complement Xawery's observations regarding spatial anti-communism with the diagnosis by Jelena Subotić. In the book *Yellow Star, Red Star. Holocaust Remembrance After Communism* (Subotić, 2019), she describes in detail the process of removing remembrance symbols of anti-fascist partisans from the public space of post-communist countries: Croatia, Serbia, Lithuania, Hungary, Ukraine. As in Poland, the names of streets were changed there, the monuments taken down or simply demolished with explosives or even replaced by monuments for fascists: for Chetniks in Serbia, the Ustaše in Croatia, and the National Armed Forces in Poland. Subotić believes that in the above-mentioned countries demented anti-communism causes the delegitimization of anti-fascism, and with it, the process of re-legitimizing fascism occurs. In other words, the delegitimization of anti-fascism was the opening of mainstream politics to the far-right. Thus, Subotić counters the belief long held in Europe that the countries of the former Eastern Bloc supposedly "weren't adult enough for democracy" due to communism, which produced a "subordinate man", a *homo sovieticus*, and that is why today they are struggling with populism. In her opinion, it is the exact opposite: the total rejection and demonization of communism enabled fascism.

Preparing for our conversation, I read the following readings proposed by Katrin: *Marginality, ethnicity and penalty in the neoliberal city: an analytic cartography* (Wacquant, 2014) and *Territorial Stigmatization in the Age of Advanced Marginality* by Loïc Wacquant (Wacquant, 2007). They allowed me to sort through my impressions from living in Berlin for several years. These impressions are not based on the readings, theoretical knowledge, research or analysis, but rather on the slow process of acquiring spatial competence in a new city. Wacquant writes about the racial and class ghettoization of cities: there are the "shameful" neighborhoods, that is, those that are hard to admit to. The city sends immigrants and poor people there. Classic examples include southern Los Angeles or Saint-Denis near Paris. However, I think that this description is no longer sufficient. Berlin's example shows that we are currently at the next stage of urban segregation. Firstly, immigrant and impoverished districts become places for orientalist and class tourism, and secondly, an alibi for Western countries and their societies to claim that they are tolerant and open, because they accept "strangers" and allow them to live "at home". The fascist regulation of space is obscured by the discourse on the redemptive "multiculturalism".

When I came to Berlin as a guest I did not look behind that curtain. When I moved there it became clear to me that Berlin was functioning well thanks to the poorly-paid work of immigrants. They are ghettoized in several districts. The city authorities do not care about these districts. Private investors, such as giant real estate companies with many properties there, do not do so either. Garbage collection, road repairs, sidewalk condition, city greenery, staircase cleaning – all these are in decline there. Why? Because the people living there cannot afford to move to "better", that is, better taken care of parts of Berlin. Firstly, they lack the funds to do so, and secondly, even if they did,

with a foreign-sounding last name, no EU passport or no knowledge of the German language, no one will rent them an apartment there. Thus, both the city and private companies benefit from racism. As a result, these few neighborhoods are overcrowded. Large families live in tiny apartments, buildings are neglected, elevators are broken, lawns are littered. There were so many rats in my several-hundred-meter yard that they completely ruined the pavement. By burrowing tunnels under it the surface became uneven to such an extent that it was impossible to walk on it. What do the Germans say to that? It is so dirty and difficult 'there', because immigrants make a mess. Meanwhile, it is exactly the opposite. By taking advantage of the economic and symbolic disabilities of their inhabitants, both the public and private sectors completely disregard the condition of these neighborhoods and allow for them to be outrageously neglected. The Kotti & Co Association conducted research among the inhabitants of my housing area, asking what disturbs them the most in their immediate vicinity (Clausen et al., 2018). Is it the lack of schools, easy access to drugs, or the noise? That too. But above all it was dirt. In the survey, dirt won by far. Of course, the inhabitants clean the area on their own, to the extent that they have enough resources and strength. They do the work of the state and the capitalists at their own expense.

The racism of neighborhood segregation that I am talking about does not require any sophisticated tools to be visible. It was only in Berlin that I understood what the Jewish quarter in Warsaw was like. It was only there that I realized how racist the structure of a city can be. It's like in the United States: you get off the plane and you immediately see that all the most exhausting, lowest paid and least respected jobs, usually involving manual labor, are done by non-white people. Berlin has many affluent and upscale neighborhoods. They are spacious, clean, quiet and, most of all, frighteningly empty. Life begins in immigrant neighborhoods. And with it a process that Wacquant did not describe. Students, tourists and leftists are drawn to immigrant districts. Because it is colorful, exotic, tasty and cheap there. Living in these neighborhoods becomes fashionable and allows one to stand out socially. Moreover, it allows for self-identification as an open, tolerant and anti-racist person. At the same time, it provides an excellent alibi for the structural racism that creates these neighborhoods. Neukölln and Kreuzberg serve the self-satisfaction of all of Berlin about itself. Katrin mentioned that *Die Welt* called Angela Merkel the "Chancellor Without Borders". The Germans like to think of themselves as a "mature democracy" (the "episode" of National Socialism does not disturb this vision much), and the fact that Merkel "let in the refugees" – as it is put – gives them great pride. The German *Willkommenskultur* is the equivalent of Polish philosemitism. Not a day went by in Berlin without hearing a racist comment against "Turks and Arabs". At work, I was repeatedly asked "How can you live there?". But the fact that "they" live there is proof that the Germans are not racists. Because they allow "them" to live there.

Please understand me correctly: I am gentrification. You probably are too. For us immigrant districts are attractive places. And if you're white, they're very safe. If there is a high percentage of violence, it occurs between individuals and groups that are discriminated against. Nobody will risk getting in trouble with white people, because the police, authorities and courts will adjudicate against the "strangers". If the police are interested in you, and you're not German, not white and don't have a European Union passport, you risk a confrontation with the authorities. In a system of structural racism, only whites can afford violence against whites.

M.S.: Poles also think highly of themselves. Wrocław is a great example of this. The city's marketing strategy, which has been promoted for several years, is based on the slogan: "Wrocław as a city of meetings". In a way, we falsified this slogan as part of the qualitative research initiated by the Nomada Association on hate-motivated violence, mainly racist violence (Starnawski & Pawlik, 2012). In the "city of meetings" we already had the heyday of the National Rebirth of Poland (NOP) party, the attack by nationalists on Zygmunt Bauman before a lecture at the University of Wrocław in 2013, the NOP's "A streetcar named nationalism" campaign, Międlar's speeches, and the burning of a "Jew" effigy in the Market Square. Wrocław also offers the only nationalist alternative to the Warsaw Independence March: the Patriots' March, which until recently, attracted several thousand people on November 11.

K.M.: Berlin is often presented as the capital of Europe, the essence of what is good in Europe in general. I am thinking about the moment when we notice cracks in this model. What conditions must emerge for such a realization to happen? Anna, your assessment of Berlin as a migrant is impermissible. As a migrant, you have not been given a right to talk this way. It can be seen as an abuse of hospitality. You are rather expected to praise.

K.S.: Eleven years ago, Thilo Sarrazin (Sarrazin, 2010), a Social Democrat, head of the Bundesbank, published a book entitled *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (Germany Abolishes Itself). This "abolishment" is, in his opinion, the result of a too liberal migration policy. The author specifies who does and who doesn't have the right to live in Germany. According to Sarrazin, "Turks and Arabs" in Berlin "do not have any productive function apart from trading in fruit and vegetables" (as cited in Gremliza, 2016, p. 66). "Undoubtedly", as Hermann L. Gremliza, for many years editor of the journal *konkret*, wrote "whoever says this is a racist, even when most of the indigenous, typical Germans (Teutons) [...], when called to the principal's office, have no idea what all the fuss is about" (Gremliza, 2016, pp. 66–70). Sarrazin's book quickly became a bestseller. The author remained a member of the SPD until 2020. This fact reflects the mindset of the German elites.

They also applauded Sarrazin's portrayal of an Islamic threat. In his opinion, the end of Germany comes with Muslims who "incessantly produce new girls in headscarves" (as cited in Gremliza, 2016, p. 66).

M.S.: I would still insist on my naive questions. The issues you have raised can be discussed without the concept of fascization. Gentrification, precarization, revitalization – it is not obvious to me how this relates to fascization. Xawery mentioned neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is no longer sufficient as a critical framework. Corporations, which are responsible for neoliberalism, appear to be somewhat in opposition to the various processes that we would call elements of fascization. IKEA fired a homophobic worker. Zalando, Facebook, Twitter – in the marketing dimension, all these platforms focus on inclusiveness and support equality. Perhaps this is concealing exploitation with a nice, for example, rainbow-colored, cover. I am not so naive as to immediately fall in love with these corporations, but here you can see that the logic of capital accumulation is not necessarily coupled with fascization. In turn, an entrepreneur who invests in anti-abortion billboards, in a way "throws away" money that he could invest in his company.

As for the territorial segregation described by Loïc Wacquant, I think that in the contemporary Polish context this model has considerable limitations. Poland lacks typical immigrant districts. The only ethnic group that experiences clear territorial exclusion in Poland are the Roma. Segregation here, however, is more of a class nature. People with a low social status – including the Roma – live in specific parts of the city. They cannot afford to live elsewhere, hence the spatial concentration. When there is no formal and legal segregation, it is determined by the division of labor, exploitation and purchasing power. Urban activists raise the issue of gentrification, when this is more about labor relations: the exploitation of the labor force that limits purchasing power. This aspect should be included in the analysis of urban inequalities.

A.Z.: In the West, spatial segregation is also class-based. Except that class has a racial component there. These two elements reinforce each other. There are no ethnic or racial ghettos in Poland, because the Polish authorities, with the generous help of Polish society, do not allow any minorities to be here at all.

M.S.: In Poland, there is a large population of economic migrants from Ukraine. They are often subject to stigmatization because of their ethnicity, or a kind of 'racialization' (similar to Poles and other groups of Eastern European origin in Western countries, such as Great Britain), and yet they are not forced into ghettos. In this context, it is worth mentioning the housing blocks from the Polish People's Republic era. They were built with anti-segregation in mind: the flats were allocated to them so that people from

different societal spheres lived in one building – for example, in factory sponsored housing workers' families lived next to the families of managers. Thirty years of capitalism have certainly changed this, but it would be necessary to investigate whether this class diversity has completely disappeared. Aside from the obvious examples of gated communities, Polish cities still have areas that are ambiguous class-wise.

K.M.: There may be no ghettos in Poland today in strict terms, but there are places that have the characteristics of a ghetto. In Warsaw, many tourist hostels are such places, where migrants decide to live due to financial reasons and as defense strategies. The Polish state grants persons from Central Asia, India and Pakistan work permits. At the same time such persons are positioned at the lowest social status possible. They are given work without an employment contract, for example as delivery couriers, they live in hostels because there, surrounded by others, they can feel safer. For members of a persecuted minority it is a way to avoid violence. It is harder for a group of nationalist attackers to enter a hostel and physically attack migrants, which they can do much easier on a stairwell of a housing block or a tenement house. I am giving just one example, there are many ghetto-like places in contemporary Poland. If circumstances were slightly different, the process of ghettoization from pre-war Poland would easily be replicated.

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Dekomunizacja czyli faszyzm bez faszystów.

O faszyzacji przestrzeni rozmawiają Konrad Matyjaszek, Xawery Stańczyk, Marcin Starnawski, Katrin Stoll i Anna Zawadzka

Abstrakt: Czy są faszyzujące sposoby patrzenia na przestrzeń i na estetykę? Jeśli tak, to jak się manifestują? Czym charakteryzuje się faszyzacja przestrzeni? Jak i gdzie można ją rozpoznać? W jaki sposób architektura i symbole w przestrzeni publicznej przyczyniają się do faszyzacji życia codziennego? Jakie są narzędzia faszyzacji przestrzeni? Jedno z nich to polityka czystki oraz retoryka odzyskania przestrzeni po wyobrażonej obcej dominacji lub inwazji. Celem niniejszej rozmowy jest wyjaśnienie i rozświetlenie koncepcji faszyzacji przestrzeni. Dyskutanci i dyskutanci robią to posługując się przykładami z historii i współczesności Polski i Niemiec. Zastanawiają się także nad możliwym doprecyzowaniem kategorii faszyzacji tak, by odróżnić ten proces od innych zjawisk, np. nacjonalizmu.

Wyrażenia kluczowe: faszyzm; faszyzacja; organizacja przestrzeni; antykomunizm; Polska; Niemcy



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