ECHOES

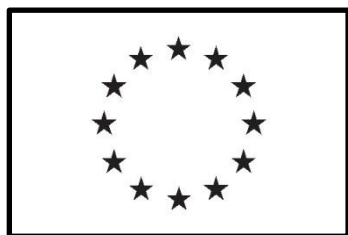## EUROPEAN COLONIAL HERITAGE MODALITIES IN ENTANGLED CITIES

Museum of Warsaw Report #1

Things of Warsaw and Things of the Past:
Evolution and Priorities of the Museum
of Warsaw

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Introduction

This report was developed within the Horizon2020 project *ECHOES: European Colonial Heritage Modalities in Entangled Cities* as part of its work package 3 on '*City Museums and Multiple Colonial Pasts*.' This work package conducts in-depth, qualitative, comparative analyses of three city museums, each representing distinct positions within colonial history. The Museum of Warsaw forms one of these three case studies. The aim of this first sub-report on the Museum of Warsaw is to explore the evolution and the current state of the museum against the background of the history of the city through research on the museum's position, priorities, policies, problems, and opportunities. These are shaped by both external settings (such as the relationship to city authorities and activists, national and local politics, the particular features of the city, intellectual entanglements and inspirations from the museum sector or academia, *etc.*) and the museum's internal development (the values and narratives the museum creates and promotes). Among other topics discussed, this sub-report is a first attempt to make a case study of the Museum of Warsaw from a post-colonial perspective in order to understand how the colonial/imperial past is represented in a city museum located in the region of Central and Eastern Europe

The parallel prepared sub-reports on the Amsterdam Museum (Ariese 2019) and the Shanghai History Museum/Shanghai Revolution Museum (Pozzi 2019) present cases of city museums from two different geopolitical zones: Western Europe and East Asia. The research on these three museums is being continued and will result in another two sub-reports on each museum which together will form a nine-part final report from the conducted research. As the research is still ongoing, all the results presented in this sub-report should be treated as preliminary and might be subject to change after gathering any new findings.

History of the City: Warsaw and Layers of Internal European Colonization

The particular challenge of the research conducted by the Warsaw team of the ECHOES Project are the controversies on using the colonial and post-colonial approach in the Central and Eastern European case. Generally speaking, terms such as 'colonialism' or 'post-colonialism' are neither commonly used in Polish public discourse (*e.g.* in media or at schools) to describe the history of the state and/or the region, nor are they clearly accepted in academia by scholars who conduct research in those fields. Some researchers highlight the advantages of adapting the colonial perspective to Central and Eastern Europe, others point out several problems that may occur, and a silent majority just ignores post-colonial studies. Nevertheless, since the 2000s the application of post-colonial perspectives to Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has been becoming more and more popular in academic and public discourse in Poland in order to discuss the experience of former subordination-based relationships and the current post-imperial situation in the region. Following this approach, the notion of 'internal European colonization' was introduced (for an overview: Głowacka-Grajper 2019) and many attempts were made by scholars to compare the

present status of Poland and/ other states of the region to the situation of both former colonies and/or former colonizers (for an overview: Wawrzyniak & Głowacka-Grajper 2019).

In such research, which sometimes falls within post-imperial studies or more often post-dependency studies to avoid polemics concerned with the appropriateness of the use of the word 'colonialism,' many former dominant powers are identified as 'colonizers.' According to the ECHOES vocabulary for the keyword 'internal colonization,' researchers using this perspective:

> […] *point to analogies between the policy pursued by colonial empires and that pursued by subordinate European and non-European nations. In their opinions, the CEE societies underwent similar processes to those of Europe's maritime* [overseas] *colonies. In the case of CEE, the analogy argument can be traced down to at least three colonizing forces: the West (specifically German-speaking countries and, in general terms, European/global modernity), the East (Russia and Soviet Union) and the countries in this region with imperial ambitions (Poland and Hungary).*

> Głowacka-Grajper 2019: 65

Adam F. Kola, the author of a recent book on complex, but often repressed relations connecting Poland and CEE with the global South during the Cold War, argues that there were two waves of the adoption of post-colonial theories in 21st century in Poland (Kola 2018: 419-421). In the first one, in the early 2000s, such theories were imported from the West to be applied to Poland or CEE, thus perceived as victims of 'colonization' by their powerful neighbours. Such research was conducted often from the conservative, right-wing point of view. In the 2010s, the second wave brought the challenge to include research approaches that would more respond to global trends in post-colonial studies: more connected with non-European areas, more left-oriented, and generally more nuanced.

The CEE region itself, as well as its states and societies, remain the main fields of interest for Polish scholars adapting post-colonial theories, but many of them use them nowadays for critical purposes. They identify Poland as not only a victim, but also a beneficiary of colonial-like relations, arguing that Poland used to be a regional power (mainly in 1500s-1700s; to some extent also earlier, as well as in 1918-1939), dominating over its Eastern borderlands and their inhabitants (Lithuanians, Belarussians, Ruthenians). In this context, the historical relations between Poles and Jews, as well as between noble elites and peasants are also identified as examples of Polish internal colonization (for the most recent overview: Grzechnik 2019).

What is more, it also became clear that Poland's "double status as a colonizer and colonized" (Skórczewski 2008: 35; my translation) is not limited only to the relations between states, nations, and social classes inside the CEE region, but includes wider entanglements with European colonial heritage. Hence, while discussing CEE's colonial pasts, one should take into account some more or less unnoticed or unacknowledged examples of the historical involvement of the region's political and cultural elites, scientists, artists, and companies in the discourses and practices of 'classical, Western' European overseas colonialism, accompanied by various forms of Orientalism. This issue was recently discussed by Marta Grzechnik, who argued that:

> *As Europeans and global westerners, participants in European culture, Poles have shared in European discourses of hierarchies of peoples and systemic racism, a shared cultural outlook which Mai Palmberg (2009: 47) calls 'the colonial mind'. Its elements are part of European*

literature and popular culture, and also of research: its describing and ordering of the world, ascribing it with hierarchies and centre–periphery relations (Pratt 1995: 15–37; Said 1978: 31ff).

Grzechnik 2019: 9-10; original references

Besides the notion of the 'colonial mind,' Grzechnik also recalled the concept of 'complicity,' used by Spivak (1999; 2008) and defined by Vuorela (2009), to contend that:

A nation does not need to be a colonial power to be complicit in the colonial system – it does not even need to be independent. There are no easy and neat divisions into categories of white colonialists and non-white victims of colonialism or into colonial empires, their victims, and innocent bystanders; the eagerness to prove to be worthy of the core's acceptance is what makes one complicit.

Grzechnik 2019: 13

Taking this state of art into account, in the ECHOES project we are still working on the appropriate use of terms such as 'colonial,' 'postcolonial,' and 'decolonial' to CEE heritage practices. However, we do agree that from a historical perspective the general conceptual framework of 'multiple colonialisms' – which denotes the influence of different colonist groups and the sedimentation of layers of what they have left behind (Oldfield 2019: 101) – allows us to speak of at least analogies between, and certainly entanglements of, CEE and overseas colonies in the modern history of empires.[1] In addition, some recent ways of dealing with 'negative heritage' (Meskell 2002) connected to former imperial powers or occupying forces in CEE may be (and often are) identified as analogous to practices of (dis)engagement with colonialism which take place in Europe's former overseas colonies. What distinguishes our research, is our focus on the city level (instead of a national or regional one) and a search for traces of colonial pasts in heritage sites and practices (instead of more discursive subjects of study). Let's point out some moments of 'multiple colonialisms' in Warsaw's past from this perspective.

The formal act of the medieval foundation of the town of Warsaw has never been found, but historians claim that Warsaw as a settlement with borough rights was founded on the left bank of the Vistula river in the Duchy of Masovia in *c.* 1300. In the early 1400s Duke Janusz I of Warsaw (Janusz I the Old) pronounced it the capital of his state. After the incorporation of the Duchy of Masovia into the Kingdom of Poland (1526–1529), Warsaw again became a rather insignificant town, but in the following 50 years the role of the city grew rapidly, in parallel to the transformation of Poland into a regional power and at the same time a semi-peripheral country whose wealth depended on agricultural goods export to Western Europe. When a real union between Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was established (1569), Warsaw was designated as the place where the general parliamentary assembly convened. After introducing the system of elections of the Kings of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by members of parliament, Warsaw also became the venue of such elections (1573). Finally, King Sigismund III relocated the seat of the Polish-Lithuanian royal court from Kraków to Warsaw (1596-1611). Thus,

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[1] While applying post-colonial theories to CEE, Poland, or Warsaw, we are not suggesting that these entities used to be subjected to or subjects of colonialism in terms of international law, because from a legal point of view probably none of forms of dependency which took place in these areas was actually a colonizer-colony relationship.

the city became an unofficial capital of the Commonwealth, located between the capital of Poland (Kraków) and the capital of Lithuania (Vilnius), and linked conveniently with the rest of the state. In this early modern period the most important part of the city, located alongside the so-called Royal Route, consisted mostly of royal residences (*e.g.* the Royal Castle, the Saxon Palace, the Ujazdowski Castle, the Royal Łazienki Palace, and the Wilanów Palace), as well as palaces built by nobles and gentry elites who wanted to stay in close political and economic association to the parliament and the royal court. They could afford it because they had become rich thanks to the exploitation of peasants (through the serfdom-latifundium system) and the international grain trade (Poland sold grain via the commercial port in Gdańsk on the Baltic seaside *e.g.* to the Netherlands).

The 18th century Enlightenment brought to Warsaw the ideas of modern urban citizenship and public management, as well as many new public cultural, educational, and scientific institutions. The intellectual development of elites and state reforms (including the Constitution of 3 May 1791) did not prevent the country from so-called partitions in 1772, 1793, and 1795, when neighbouring states (Austria, Prussia, and Russia) incorporated parts of Poland into their territories. According to treaties between 'partitioners,' in 1795 Warsaw was granted to the Kingdom of Prussia whereby the city lost its former political importance. This changed in 1807 when Warsaw became the capital of the Duchy of Warsaw, established by Napoleon from the territories annexed in 1793-1795 by Austria and Prussia and dependent on the French Empire. In 1815, under the provisions of the Congress of Vienna, the territories of the Duchy of Warsaw were, again, divided into three parts assigned to Austria, Russia, and Prussia. This time Warsaw became the capital of the Kingdom of Poland (or Congress Poland), connected by personal union with the Russian Empire. During the following 100 years the balance between autonomy and dependency of the Kingdom towards the Empire changed many times, but remained an unequal, subordination-based relationship.

The most liberal period of the Polish-Russian union, when *e.g.* the first public gallery was opened (1814) and the University of Warsaw was established (1816), ended with the outbreak of the anti-Russian November Uprising (1830-1832). Then, after some repressions following the defeat of the uprising (including the limitation of the state autonomy of the Kingdom), a period of modern innovations and social reforms in the mid-19th century, resulting in *e.g.* the establishment of the Museum of Fine Arts in Warsaw (1862), was interrupted by the January Uprising (1863-1864). Just after the uprising, the abolition of serfdom in the Kingdom of Poland was announced (1864), which is, however, assessed ambiguously as an action by Russian state leaders targeted against Polish political and cultural nobles. In the second half of the 19th century, imperial-state domination by the Russian Empire was being replaced more and more by the national-confessional domination of Russians (Rolf 2016: 76), resulting in the so-called Russification of politics (*e.g.* an increasing amount of Russians as leaders of state institutions) and culture (*e.g.* the introduction of Russian as the main language of teaching at schools or the foundation of Orthodox churches in order to transform the cultural landscape of the country, including the monumental St. Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral at the Saxon Square in Warsaw).

Setting aside the political and cultural effects of the Russification campaigns – as well as investments in modern infrastructure which probably would have occurred even if the partitions had not happened – an assessment of the impact of the dependency on the Russian Empire in the case of Warsaw's urban development is ambiguous. On the one hand, decisions by Russian military authorities to build the Citadel (1832) and fortifications around the city (1883) constrained

the spatial development of the city and resulted in a high density of urban tissue and population (27 020 people/km^2 in 1914). On the other hand, the above-mentioned abolition of serfdom and the abolition of restrictions on Jewish settlement (1862), which could be seen from the lenses of the peculiar top-down Russian-led 'decolonization,' were those very acts of social emancipation of oppressed groups of Polish society that accelerated migration to Warsaw and its rapid industrial transformation. As a result, during the 'Russian century' the population of Warsaw rose explosively from 145 000 (1830) to 885 500 (1914) and changed its structure in terms of denominations. Comparing data from 1810 and 1897, the percentage of Catholics fell from 73% to 58%, the percentage of followers of Judaism increased from 18% to 35%, the percentage of Protestants fell from 9% to 3%, and the percentage of Orthodox Christians increased from 0% to 4%.

The industrial sector in Warsaw, as well as in the whole Kingdom of Poland, grew also thanks to the removal of tariff barriers between the Kingdom and the Russian Empire (1851) which helped Warsaw companies to relatively easily access large consumer markets outside Polish territories. In terms of economy we can, therefore, call it 'reversed colonization' (Rolf 2016: 31), especially because Warsaw was often perceived by the inhabitants of the Russian Empire as a window to the West (or 'Paris of the East'), providing goods of good (European) quality which were made with respect to good (European) taste.

After the outbreak of the First World War, Russian authorities, the army, bureaucracy, the Orthodox church, and many public institutions (including the University of Warsaw) were evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland to the East in the face of the approaching German front. During the German occupation (1915-1918), municipal self-government was established in Warsaw and many Polish institutions were developed or reframed – such as the state Museum of Fine Arts which was transformed into the National Museum, yet was still governed by the city authorities. In 1916, general-governor Hans von Beseler decided to extend the borders of the city. Thanks to this enlargement, the area of the city expanded from 21,5 km^2 to 121 km^2.

Figure 1: Former Orthodox Cathedral on the Saxon Square in Warsaw during its demolition in 1920s. Photo by: unknown. Image: "Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny" – archive of images, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe [National Digital Archives], ref. nr. 1-U-7043.

In 1918, Warsaw was pronounced the capital of the independent Republic of Poland. During 20 years of freedom the population of the city remained religiously diverse (in 1931 there were 67% Catholics, 30% followers of Judaism, 2% Protestants, and 1% Orthodox Christians), but Warsaw was no longer cosmopolitan in terms of international trade (Eastern consumer markets were lost and many companies in Warsaw faced crises or went bankrupt). In what may be regarded as a form of compensation for economic problems, the city underwent the symbolical re-Polonization (and Polonization) of its public spaces. Abandoned Orthodox churches were transformed into churches of other Christian denominations or were demolished in more or less spectacular ways, with the most-discussed example being the monumental Orthodox Cathedral on the Saxon Square (see Figure 1). At the same time, due to a lack of any other choice, some new state institutions were established and placed in the capital city in adapted buildings left by Russian authorities: for instance, the so-called Saxon Palace on the Saxon Square which used to be the seat of the headquarters of the Warsaw Military District of the Russian Army was adapted to seat the General Staff of the Polish Army.

During the Second World War, Warsaw fell victim to the Nazi subjugation of Central and Eastern Europe which may be considered another example of internal European colonization with strong entanglements with global colonialism (for a literature review: Wawrzyniak & Głowacka-Grajper 2019: 109–110). The majority of Warsaw's Jewish population (more than 300 000 people) died in the ghetto or were exterminated after its liquidation. Another *c.* 200 000 Warsaw inhabitants, mostly Polish civilians, died during the Warsaw Uprising (August-September 1944). After its suppression, Nazi Germans started the mass demolition of the city on the left side of the Vistula river, including the destruction of main monuments of architecture, such as the Royal Castle and the Saxon Palace. The area of the former Warsaw ghetto had already been totally demolished earlier.

After the Second World War, as a result of the Yalta and Potsdam agreements, Poland was assigned by the Allies to the Soviet sphere of influence (or the so-called Eastern bloc) and experienced radical changes in all aspects of statehood, namely territory, population, and government, becoming a mono-ethnic Polish nation-state located in a partially new, post-German area and ruled by Communist authorities supported by the Soviet Union. Both the Eastern and Western borders of post-war Poland, compared to the pre-war ones, were moved to the West. These border changes provoked mass, usually compulsory, migrations of Germans and Poles, including their evacuations, deportations (expulsions), and other forms of resettlement (*e.g.* 'repatriations'). Post-German properties were subject to more or less institutionalized plunder and looting. Moreover, the Communist rulers decided on radical economic transformations in post-war Poland in terms of the ownership of agricultural land (land estates were either parcelled and given to peasantry or just nationalized) and industrial enterprises (which were nationalized). As in other states of the Eastern Bloc, the Soviet Army had its extra-territorial military bases in Poland – officially to protect the region from the attack of Germans or Western 'imperialists,' in practice to repress any forms of counter-revolution or revisions of the system (as examples of military interventions in Budapest in 1956 and Prague in 1968 illustrated).

Against this background, the situation of Warsaw was particular. The city was liberated by the Soviet Army on 17 January 1945 and soon afterwards those civilians who survived the war started to come back to Warsaw and reconstruct the infrastructure and social life of the city. In the same year, the communist State National Council decided to rebuild the destroyed city as the capital of Poland. Ironically, destruction of *c.* 70% of Warsaw's buildings during the war provided

an opportunity for urbanists and architects to plan a modernist city and to implement this plan (next to reconstructions of some architectural monuments, most extensively in the area of the historic city centre, later inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List). In the reconstructed districts, instead of series of tenement houses with adjacent façades and narrow courtyards hidden behind, they proposed freestanding blocks of flats surrounded by greenery, facilities in separate pavilions, and widened or newly created streets. They could afford to not care about the prices of properties because according to the decree on the ownership and use of land within the limits of the city of Warsaw (1945), the majority of private property was transferred to the state.

Compared to the dependency of the Kingdom of Poland to the Russian Empire in 19th century, during the Communist era both the Polish state and Warsaw had much more autonomy in terms of both politics (especially in internal matters, while foreign affairs were consulted with Soviets) and culture, which was achieved especially after the de-Stalinization in the mid-1950s. As long as the Communist party had an unthreatened monopoly of power (in the decision-making processes and in public discourse), the Soviet Union generally did not react. The regulations in the sphere of cultural production were made by Polish authorities. Although in the period 1949-1956 literature, visual arts, and architecture were dominated by the top-down introduction of the style of soc-realism and were involved in didactic propaganda of the state, after 1956 writers, artists, and architects had more 'freedom of creativity,' although a censorship office operated until 1989 to control news media and cultural production. Direct Soviet interventions in the physical cultural landscape were limited mainly to monuments of gratitude to the Soviet Army and Soviet military cemeteries. Almost the only, but spectacular, exception in Warsaw was the Palace of Culture and Science (see Figure 2), the tallest skyscraper in the city built in 1952-1955 on the ruins of the former city-centre and given to Poles as a gift from "nations of the Soviet Union." It could not be refused, and while it was accepted it symbolically obliged Poles to gratitude and reciprocity.

Figure 2: The Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw. Photo by: Neil Cummings, May 2009. Image: https://www.flickr.com/photos/chanceprojects/3538653723/in/photostream/

The Warsaw Museum Landscape

The history of museums in Warsaw began on 5 August 1805, when the public gallery of paintings, ancient and oriental art, and artistic craft was opened to the public thanks to the efforts of its collector Stanisław Kostka-Potocki in his Wilanów Palace, which had been rebuilt for this purpose from 1802 (*cf.* Fijałkowski 2005). This was the moment when the first public museum was opened in the area of today's Warsaw which is why the Wilanów museum is often called Warsaw's oldest museum (although the museum's narrative and programmes underline the links to the 17th century palace's founder King Jan the Third much more than to the museum's founder). Unlike in the majority of European capital cities, there are no older museums, as the attempts to establish a first public museum during the Enlightenment era failed, when Poland lost its independence and all royal collections were taken away or dispersed by partitioners of the state.

Currently, the Wilanów museum is the most visited museum in Poland, with the attendance record of 3 279 889 visitors in 2017 (these numbers, however, also include visits to the park). According to the official statistical information (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2018: 89) among the top 10 "museums of the highest attendance" in Poland in 2017, another three museums were also located in Warsaw: the National Museum in Warsaw (#9 with 666 032 visitors; the results include all branches of the museum), the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews (#8 with 731 420 visitors), and the Royal Łazienki Museum (#2 with 3 000 000 visitors; estimated results, including visits to the park)[2]. Moreover, the Wilanów case is also one of the very few examples of Warsaw museums which may rely on its internal continuity in terms of location and collection. On the contrary, most of Warsaw museums faced a radical rupture in their histories during the Second World War (destructions, confiscations, robberies *etc.*). Therefore, most of the *c.* 90 museums operating nowadays in Warsaw were founded or re-founded after the war, sometimes on the basis of former private collections which had been 'nationalized' by the Communist authorities.

According to Dorota Folga-Januszewska (2012), two waves could be identified of intensifications in the founding of museums in the city after the war in the period of the Polish People's Republic: in 1945-1957 (22 museums) and in 1978-1985 (17 museums). After the mid-1980s up to even the end of the 20th century – in this sense the transformation of 1989 did not change anything – many museum professionals were convinced that the era of opening new institutions had come to the end. For instance, Franciszek Cemka claimed in an article about the state of the Polish museum sector at the end of 20th century, that the beginning of the 1990s was the end of "the quantitative development of state museum in our country" (Cemka 1999: 431; my translation), as well as its "traditional mission in terms of gathering collections [...], mainly consisting in saving and securing the national heritage that survived historical cataclysms" (*Ibid.*: 433; my translation). Ironically, such statements – referring to some extent to the experience of "passive, inconsistent and therefore chaotic cultural policy" in Poland in the 1990s (and even later) (Głowacki *et al.* 2009: 20; my translation) – were published just before a big change approaching the Polish museum sector.

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[2] The majority of the other well-visited Polish museums are located in and nearby the historical Polish capital city of Kraków: the State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau in Oświęcim (#3 with 2 100 000 visitors), the museum in the former salt mine in Wieliczka (#4 with 1 710 692 visitors), the Wawel Royal Castle in Kraków (#5 with 1 595 665 visitors), the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków (#6 with 1 329 951 visitors), and the National Museum in Kraków (#7 with 1 268 080 visitors). It is worth noting that the Auschwitz-Birkenau German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp, the Historic Centre of Kraków, and the Wieliczka Salt Mine were also the very first Polish properties inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (1978-1979).

The third wave of musealization in Warsaw came after the year 2000, resulting in 25 new museums in the city by 2012, and was a part of a wider phenomenon, often called the 'museum boom' (*cf.* Machcewicz 2017: 50). Namely, since the early 2010s Poland has faced radical growth in its museum sector, which has been reflected in the number of newly opened or deeply transformed museums, increase in the number of museum visitors, and rise in the social significance of museums as media of memory and institutional actors of cultural conflicts.

The 'museum boom,' still taking place until today, is characterized by cumulation, rather than elimination. This means that, with some minor exceptions, no Warsaw museums were closed since 1989 and museums established in all three 'waves of musealization' (and between them as well) co-create the city's museum landscape nowadays and share the same circumstances of transformation of the cultural (and particularly museum) sector in Poland, which happened at the turn of the 21st century. All of the museums established in Poland (and particularly in Warsaw) between 1945 and 1989 used to be state institutions. However, since the local government reform in 1999, most of them have been transferred to the regional self-government authorities of the Masovian voivodeship (such as the Museum of Independence, the Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature, the National Archaeological Museum, and the National Ethnographic Museum). In addition, some museums in Warsaw are private foundations (*e.g.* the Neon Museum or the Museum of Life under Communism) and some other ones have remained state institutions (*e.g.* the National Museum, the Fryderyk Chopin Museum, the Royal Castle, the Royal Łazienki Museum, and – again – the Museum of King John the Third's Palace in Wilanów), or have been newly established as state ones (Polish History Museum, currently under construction). There are also some museums in Warsaw – among them first and foremost the Museum of Warsaw – which have gained the official status of a cultural institution of the Capital City of Warsaw. This means that the museum is legally and financially dependent upon the Warsaw municipality, with the city council as a governing body and the Mayor of Warsaw as the head of the executive of a local self-government, who – according to the statutes of the museum – exercises the direct supervision over the museum, as well as appoints and dismisses its director (*MW Statute* 2014). There are only very few other museums in Warsaw which are ruled in a similar way, including the Warsaw Rising Museum, the Museum of Cartoon Art and Caricature, the History Meeting House, and the Maria Skłodowska-Curie Museum (co-managed with the Polish Chemical Society). Next to these are also three museums established in the 2000s and co-managed by the city of Warsaw together with the authorities of the state: the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, the Copernicus Science Centre, and the Museum of Contemporary Art (currently under construction).

The old and new museums differ from each other by the types of buildings occupied, provided exhibitions, and gathered collections. Slightly simplifying the big picture, most of the museums established before 1989 are located in historical monuments, have unclear or no collection management policies, and provide a very traditional way of linear storytelling with the usage of museum objects, while museums created later (especially after 2004) are known for their new, usually iconic, buildings, create their collections deliberately depending on their own needs, and follow the pattern of historical narrative museums, which thus incorporate more texts, various data sources, entertaining new technologies, and immersive theatrical scenography into the exhibition. This narrative model of exhibiting, in which "exhibits, photos and installations are parts of the already planned story[-telling design]" (Machcewicz 2017: 45; my translation), originally developed by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington (opened in 1993) and introduced in the CEE region by the House of Terror in Budapest (opened in 2002), was used for

the first time in Poland by the Warsaw Rising Museum (opened in 2004) and since then has been reproduced in Warsaw and elsewhere.

As Paweł Machcewicz, a historian who was tasked to create the Museum of the Second World War Museum in Gdańsk in 2008 by then prime minister Donald Tusk and was dismissed in 2017 by a minister of culture from the new conservative cabinet, relates in his book:

In Poland, the museum boom, and at the same time the great role of historical museums in the public sphere and in politics, began with the opening of the Warsaw Rising Museum in 2004. It was one of the first museums in Poland profusely using the patterns of modern museology. It offered visitors not only information about the past and the opportunity to see important and interesting exhibits, but also a colorful story, full of drama and emotions. It used new technologies, such as films, multimedia screens, interactive stands, and introduction of sound to the exhibition space. Above all, however, it was the fulfilment of the expectations of a huge number of Poles, so that the insurgent uprising would finally be commemorated in the form of a museum.

Machcewicz 2017: 50; my translation

In terms of high-tech forms of museum displays, the Warsaw Rising Museum was a trendsetter for such Polish museums as the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Polish History Museum (under construction) in Warsaw, as well as the European Solidarity Centre and the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk. In terms of the identity-building content it provides and promotes, it was the first such successful manifestation of the 'historical policy' proposed by Polish conservative intellectuals in the 1990s and the early 2000s in order to strengthen the Polish national community and to respond to the respective policies of Germany and Russia (Łuczewski 2016: 236).

As, according to Sławomir Kapralski, "museums form part of a lively debate about what the past is and also – maybe even above all – the expression of important problems and divisions of the present" (Kapralski 2014: 171; my translation), the creation of new historical museums, supported by European funds after Poland joined the EU, has become a subject of many, politically-motivated debates or even conflicts within the Polish public discourse. Both parties of the dispute – to simplify, conservatives and liberals – have agreed on one thing: by creating new narratives and constructing new exhibitions, museums in Poland (especially historical narrative ones) are powerful tools for the reshaping of the social imaginary of the past. That is why issues of independence from their political organizers is a topic of heated debates in Poland today, as well as some more wider questions on national identity, memory, and cultural heritage.

Although public opinion concentrates the less than 20 'most important' Polish museums, the whole sector consists of almost 1000 institutions, whose activities are often discursively ignored, but are appreciated by the visitors. The desire to overcome the dominant position of the big, new historical narrative museums may be recognized in many bottom-up museum initiatives, as well as in the curatorial practices of the Museum of Warsaw, which are discussed in more details in following sections.

However, before we go further, it is important to look at the ways of representing and promoting Warsaw's heritage and museum sector for the public, particularly in materials designed for tourists. Warsaw is the place where one of the Polish sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List is located, *i.e.* the Historic Centre of Warsaw, inscribed in 1980 for an unusual

reason, namely as "an outstanding example of a near-total reconstruction of a span of history covering the 13th to the 20th century" (UNESCO n.d.). This UNESCO inscription is an evident example of heritage management in Warsaw since 1945, with mnemonic prominence placed on the Second World War as a turning point in the history of the city, resulting in a division of the city's past in pre-war, war, and post-war times. The ways of conceptualizing and dealing with the cultural heritage in Warsaw affect the Warsaw imaginary, which is:

> [...] *about the miracle of the return to life itself. Warsaw's myth is the legend of violent foreign occupation, resistance, and total destruction during the Second World War. It symbolises the survival of the idea of Poland as a nation and as a state, and is the embodiment of Poland's will to live, which made it possible to build a new capital out of the rubble of the old one. The main narrative of the capital of Poland and the most important founding myth does not lie in the glory of distant pasts, but in the Second World War – and in triumph over destruction.*

> Bogumił *et al.* 2015: 62

Therefore, for decades attention has been focused mainly on the city's war-time destruction and its post-war revival (including the reconstruction of historical monuments). At the same time any material remnants coming from earlier periods of the past have usually been perceived by both locals and tourists as unusual treasures which literally "survived the war." Since 1989, another item has been added to Warsaw's 'must see' list: heritage of communism, mainly in forms of socialist-realist (soc-realist) and socialist-modern (soc-modern) architecture.

Such a mixed and complex attitude to heritage is reflected, for instance, in the official booklet published by the Warsaw Tourist Office (WTO), where one can read "the history of Warsaw is a mixture of a turbulent past, the will to survive, as well as the courage and positive energy of its people" (2017: cover). Another WTO publication (*Discover Warsaw*, 2018) suggests following themed trails, which all more or less relate to the dissonant heritages of Polish dependency:

- "Royal Warsaw" - covering mostly reconstructed monuments.
- "Warsaw fights!" - museums and memorials of fighting for independence in 19th and 20th century.
- "Warsaw Judaica" - remnants of the former Jewish community in Warsaw and Holocaust memorials.
- "Fryderyk Chopin's Warsaw" - focused on the life and work of the famous composer who only lived in Russian Warsaw in 1810-1830 and then went to Paris.
- "The Vistula 'district'" - the entertainment area on the left bank and the Natura 2000 nature protection area on the right bank.
- "Warsaw Praga" - "It wasn't destroyed during World War II and as a result it is considered the most authentic part of the city."
- "In the footsteps of socialist-realist Warsaw."

What is especially peculiar, booklets published by the WTO generally do not encourage visitors to go to the Museum of Warsaw, which is neither included in any of themed trails listed above, nor described separately as an important thing to see, although both the WTO and the Museum are municipal institutions.

History of the Museum of Warsaw and its Development

The history of the Museum of Warsaw, as it is provided by the museum narrative (within the exhibition and in the published sources), is strongly connected to the history of its principal seat, located on the Northern side of the Old Town Market Square in Warsaw. This part of the square was named the Dekert Side on the 125th anniversary of the May 3rd constitution in 1916, after Jan Dekert who was a burgher rights campaigner during the Enlightenment age in Warsaw (and also a strong anti-Semite, which is commonly repressed).

The very first attempts of storing and presenting historical objects (including the history of Warsaw) at this venue came from the 1910s. Since 1911, the Society for Protection of the Monuments of the Past[3] (*Towarzystwo Opieki and Zabytkami Przeszłości*), established in 1906, had owned the Baryczka House (*Kamienica Baryczkowska*, #32) which was used mainly to store the growing archive of the documentation of historic sites, gathered and produced by the Society. The collection included books, city maps, and graphic prints related to Warsaw, purchased from Wiktor Gomulicki, a writer, researcher, and collector who dreamt of a Museum of Warsaw Antiquities (Sołtan 2006: 79). Indeed, in 1914 the NGO-driven Museum of Polish Antiquities was opened to the public at the Society's venue (Folga-Januszewska 2011: 898; 2012: 36).

The Society also had an important influence on the transformation of the Warsaw Old Town Market Square in the interwar period. In 1913 the Society succeed with its campaign to remove the actual market from the square and in 1928, on the 10th anniversary of Polish independence, it implemented the idea of decorating the façades of the buildings on the square with polychromes. However, the polychrome campaign financially ruined the Society, which therefore started to sell or lease its properties. Some rooms of the Baryczka House were rented to the Institute of Arts Propaganda (*Instytut Propagandy Sztuki*) and later to the State Art Collections (*Państwowe Zbiory Sztuki*) for the exhibition of Polish art (Popiołek 2016: 51).

However, important exhibitions devoted to Warsaw's past took place elsewhere. For instance, in 1911 the Society organized a temporary exhibition about the Old Warsaw at the city hall on the Theatre Square. Besides, during the whole interwar period the main institution for gathering, storing, and presenting objects connected to Warsaw (*varsaviana*), was the National Museum of Warsaw, which was established in 1915 as an institution under the direction of the municipal self-government of Warsaw (and at the same time as a continuation of the traditions and collections of the Museum of Fine Arts founded in 1862). This museum's seat was located at 15 Podwale Street, where in 1922 a room devoted to the history of Warsaw, as part of the permanent exhibition, was opened to the public. This exhibition consisted of, among others, collections from the Society for Protection of the Monuments of the Past. When the seat of the National Museum of Warsaw was partially moved to its new building at 3 Jerozolimskie Avenue in the mid-1930s, a similar permanent exhibition was opened there. When this new seat of the museum was finally completed in 1938, one of its first temporary exhibitions at the new venue was *Warsaw Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* – one of the most influential museum exhibitions about Warsaw ever.

The idea to create a separate, permanent, public museum dedicated to the local history of Warsaw and to locate it at the Old Town Market Square was conceptualized by Stanisław Lorentz,

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[3] Alternatively translated to English as the 'Society for the Protection of Historical Monuments' (Popiołek 2016) or 'Society for the Protection of Historic Monuments' (Museum of Warsaw, exhibition panel). This translation is from the Museum of Warsaw website, *History of Old Town Houses* page.

then deputy director (from 1936 director) of the National Museum. In 1935, Lorentz convinced Stefan Starzyński, the president of Warsaw, to buy the Baryczka House, which was then encumbered with a debt, in order to house the Museum of Old Warsaw and make its historical interiors visible and accessible for visitors.

The museum, then named the Museum of Old Warsaw and the Collection of Memorabilia After Prominent Polish Writers and Artists, was officially established in 1936 as the 7th division of the National Museum. Between 1937-1938, three 17th century tenement houses at the Old Town Market Square were purchased by city authorities for the museum premises: except the already mentioned Baryczka House there were the Kleinpold House (*Kamienica Kleinpoldowska, #34*) and the House 'Under the Negro' (*Kamienica Pod Murzynkiem, #36*). However, the museum shaped by these pre-war plans was never opened to the public. The transformation of three tenement houses into a museum, undertaken by Jan Zachwatowicz, was disrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War, although some reconstruction and conservation work was continued during the Nazi German occupation even up to 1943 (Popiołek 2016: 72-93).

Thanks to a concrete reinforcement of the ceilings (1938-1939) designed by Stanisław Hempel, houses #34 and #36 were some of the best-preserved buildings in the Old Town after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, its suppression, and the following demolition and burning of whole districts of the city by the Nazis. However, most of historical objects from the museum's collection were lost.

In the first post-war years, one can find many concepts and names concerning the city museum. Finally, Adam Słomczyński, deputy director of the City Archives, became the first officially appointed post-war director of the museum in June 1947 and the reconstruction of the pre-war museum seat began in September of the same year. In 1948, Warsaw authorities decided to legally re-found the museum under the name 'Museum of the Capital City of Warsaw' as an institution "on rights of a city hall department," subordinate to the city board, but independent from the National Museum in Warsaw, which had been nationalized in 1945. The museum was granted 11 former tenement houses to be rebuilt: 8 on the Old Town Market Square (the entire Northern side of the Square) and 3 at Nowomiejska Street. Another 2 ruined buildings of the same quarter were assigned to the City Archives.

The main designer of the reconstruction and adaptation of the complex of these tenement houses was Stanisław Żaryn who "created a total design for the Museum, embracing everything from a general concept of rebuilding the frontage on the Dekert Side of the square and the arrangement of [a] Lapidarium (where preserved fragments of sculptures and architectural details were stored), down to the tiniest details such as door handles, curtain hanging schemes and furniture" (Museum of Warsaw, exhibition panel), not forgetting benches, chairs, gratings, signposts *etc*. The totality of this project was even greater due to the fact that at the moment of planning most of these 13 buildings were nothing but heaps of debris.

In the first drafts of the museum plan, two divisions were designed: an historical one and one devoted to "the reconstruction of the capital." However, in 1950 the state authorities decided to nationalize the Museum of the Capital City of Warsaw and to change its priorities to be strictly historical, reflected in the museum's name changing to the Historical Museum of the Capital City of Warsaw (*State Museums Act* 1950). Later in the same year, the museum was merged with the Central Historical Museum (established in 1948 or 1949 as the Museum of Labor and Social Development, a state institution operating mainly as a research institute without any collections or exhibitions). In December 1951, Janusz Durko, previously involved in the Central Historical

Museum, started his contract with the Ministry of Culture and Arts as the new director of the Historical Museum of the Capital City of Warsaw. As it turned out, he held this position for more than 50 years, up to his retirement in 2003, when he was 88 years old. In the meantime, the museum was de-nationalized and again became a cultural institution of the Capital City of Warsaw after 1989.

According to Durko's memoires, in the years 1951-1954, even before the end of the reconstruction of its enlarged seat, the museum had organized 21 temporary exhibitions, with another 33 between 1955-1959 (Durko 1998). The reconstructed Old Town Market Square, including the 8 musealized tenement houses forming the Dekert Side, was opened to the public on 22 July 1953 (on the anniversary of the declaration of the Communist Manifesto in 1944). The rest of the museum complex – 3 houses at Nowomiejska Street – was completed in 1954 and the first permanent exhibition was inaugurated on 17 January 1955 (on the anniversary of the liberation of Warsaw in 1945). The exhibition was based on a unified plan of presenting the city's past in a chronological order, located in 64 rooms of the 11 interconnected tenement houses and visually designed in modern forms by Stanisław Zamecznik as a counterpoint to the interior style and furnishings designed by Żaryn. In 1965, the refurbished version of the permanent exhibition, *Seven Centuries of Warsaw*, was opened to the public, which was displayed at the museum – with some improvements and additions – up to the early 2010s. Both exhibitions consisted of not only original objects, but also of models, dioramas, elements of scenography, and overview boards. Besides the permanent exhibition, the museum organized about 500 temporary exhibitions (Sołtan 2006: 89).

Just after the war, preparing any exhibitions was extremely difficult due to the loss of the collections. In 1950 there were only 169 items in the museum inventory. The first director of the museum, Adam Słomczyński, was even ready to accept replicas of artworks and simulacra of authentic historical objects as 'substitute exhibits.' Director Janusz Durko coped with the problem by using collections from other Polish museums. Then, the museum was given a lot of the museum objects related to Warsaw's local history which survived the war in the storages of the National Museum in Warsaw. In subsequent years, the museum's collections were expanded much more thanks to purchases, donations, inheritances, and archaeological excavations during the cleaning up of debris. The museum inventory increased also thanks to donations of entire private collections, such as by Eugeniusz Phull, Ludwik Gocel, Krzysztof Klinger, or the Schiele family. Currently, it is estimated at *c.* 300 000 objects in the museum's inventory (*cf.* Mycielska 2015: 9; Mycielska & Odnous 2017: 12; Trybuś 2017: 8).

The policy of collecting such a huge number of objects under the management of Janusz Durko seems unclear. On the one hand, the museum collected many objects which had a very weak or even no connection to the history of Warsaw, but were important in terms of national Polish history, which was reflected in the many temporary exhibitions (as it would be the Historical Museum *in* the Capital City of Warsaw, not *of*). On the other hand, the mechanism of negative selection is also notably visible: the most valuable artworks were kept in the National Museum, the historical furnishings of royal residences were presented *in situ* as they were reconstructed after the war and transformed into museums of interiors, the objects connected to the history of the Jewish community (*Judaica*) were given to the Jewish Historical Institute, *etc.* What is more, many Warsaw institutions and social organizations founded their own museums (named sometimes 'rooms of memory' or 'rooms of tradition') and did not share any collections with the Historical Museum of the Capital City of Warsaw.

Another dimension of the somewhat randomness of the museum's activities was its involvement in creating new branches. The first division of the museum was the Theatre Museum in Warsaw, founded in 1957, which was given in 1966 to the then rebuilt Grand Theatre. In the 1970s the next three branches were established: the Museum of Asia and the Pacific (in 1973 and recognized as independent in 1975), the Museum of Wola devoted to the local history of the Warsaw district of Wola (in 1974 and recently renamed the Wola Museum of Warsaw; currently awaiting re-opening after refurbishment) and the Museum of (Warsaw) Printing (in 1975?), which has recently moved but remains open to the public. In the 1980s another three branches were established: the national memorial site in Palmiry (in 1980 and recently refurbished) in the Kampinos Forest near Warsaw, where during the Second World War German troops killed 1700 Poles and Jews in a series of 21 mass executions; the Museum of Warsaw Uprising (in 1983; its collections and archives supported the development of the separate and already mentioned Warsaw Rising Museum, founded in 2003) and the Antonina Leśniewska Museum of Pharmacy (in 1989, recently refurbished with the new permanent exhibition *Res Pharmaceuticae*).

The next director of the museum was Joanna Bojarska-Syrek, 2004-2012. This was mainly a time of continuation of the strategies developed by Janusz Durko, but she was also involved in some new initiatives such as the new exhibition on the period of the Second World War in Warsaw (*cf.* Bogumił *et al.* 2015: 62-98) and the renovation of the historical cellars of the tenement houses belonging to the museum for exhibition purposes (2010-2012). Because of these works, the permanent exhibition of the museum was closed to the public in 2010, when the renovation of the historical basements begun. However, 2 new branches of the museum were founded: the Museum of Field Ordinance (in 2005 and opened to the public in 2010) and the Museum of Warsaw Praga (in 2007 and opened to the public in 2015). The latter is the first public museum founded in Warsaw on the right side of the Vistula river and – as well as the Wola Museum of Warsaw – is located in a district which used to be held in disrepute as an unsafe neighbourhood, but which is nowadays undergoing rapid changes.

Current State of the Museum

In 2012, a process of radical change of the museum began. The museum is still a cultural institution of the Capital City of Warsaw and its principal seat remains located at the reconstructed and interconnected historical tenement houses on the Dekert Side of the Old Town Market Square, but in terms of mission and priorities a total transformation has been implemented. The internal strategic documents which describe and formalize these processes – such as the strategy plan until the year 2022, collection management policy, research programme until the year 2022, and communication strategy for the years 2016-2018 (Mycielska & Odnous 2017: 12-17) – were introduced only in 2016, but the museum had followed ideas introduced by its new management since the very beginning of the presidency of the museum's chief director Ewa Nekanda-Trepka (2012–) and her deputy Dr. Jarosław Trybuś (2013-2019), who was also, and still is, the chief curator of the new core exhibition of the museum (2013–).

Nekanda-Trepka is an architect who for many years was the Warsaw conservator of historical monuments (2001-2012), the first one after the foundation of the Conservator Office within the administration structure of Warsaw municipality in 2001. Trybuś is an art historian who prior to taking his post at the Museum of Warsaw had been working with (and since 2008 working for) the Stefan Starzyński Institute (branch of the Warsaw Rising Museum devoted to Warsaw history

and culture) as a lecturer and a researcher. He is famous for two books which opened new research fields for Warsaw studies: a guidebook on Warsaw residential block of flats areas (Trybuś 2011) and a monograph (following on his PhD dissertation) about unrealised urban and architectural designs for Warsaw in the interwar period (Trybuś 2012).

The new museum management team was responsible for a total renovation of the principal seat and for preparation of the new core exhibition in its interior, as well as for the internal changes of the museum institution, which resulted in the set of above-mentioned strategic documents as well as a new, simplified, and flattened, organizational structure (Mycielska 2015: 12-13). These changes began in 2014, when the museum decided to ask the city council – and the council agreed – to change the museum's statutes and its name.

To start with the latter, the museum's name was shortened from 'Historical Museum of the Capital City of Warsaw' to simply 'Museum of Warsaw.' The aims of this change were explained in the museum's Annual Report for 2014:

The resignation from the "Historical" part of the name of the Museum will open wider perspectives for the institution, which has ambitions to deal not only with history, but also with reflection on the present and future of the city. The reduction of the "Capital City" has a similar function, opening the Museum to the study of the city's history outside the period of Warsaw as a capital city. The proposal to shorten the name was supported by the analysis of its history. Historical Museum of the Capital City of Warsaw is not its original name. [...] The abbreviated name of the Museum of Warsaw is analogous to the names of such institutions as the Museo di Roma, the Museum of London, the Wien Museum. Concise, more comfortable to use and easier to identify, it will contribute to a better image of the Museum.

Mycielska 2015: 14; my translation

Similar ideas of opening the museum for new, wider perspectives, which also somehow reflect the 'roots' of the institution, were behind the new statutes, in which the scope of the collection, articulated in previous documents as "objects in the fields of history and art," was extended to "evidences of tangible and intangible heritage of Warsaw" (Mycielska 2015: 11; my translation). Moreover, some new museum goals were added to the statutes, such as "co-creation of the identity of the city," "defining the dimensions of public debate on the capital city's past, present and future," and "interpretation of phenomenon of Warsaw" (*Ibid*.: 10; my translation).

These statements were further developed in the mentioned museum's strategy. The document describes the museum's mission, the vision of the museum in 2022, and the expected relations with other entities on local, regional, national, and international levels. Regarding the mission, the strategy provides it in the form of an answer to the question "How do we work?"

We respect the past and we think about the future, therefore with passion and for common good we collect, explore and share testimonies of the history of Warsaw. Our initiatives result from the current state of knowledge, which we strengthen with many years' experience of work of several generations of museum professionals aware of their professional ethos. Thanks to this, we create not only the sustainability of the institution, but first of all continuity and accessibility of knowledge about the monuments. Enabling contact with museum objects –

> *testimonies of the past – and offering an engaging programme based on scientific research, we accompany our recipients in getting to know the phenomenon of Warsaw.*
>
> Mycielska & Odnous 2017: 12; my translation

In the strategy, one can also read about important events to be expected in the years 2016-2022, such as the modernization of the principal seat of the museum, ordering and digitization of the collections, the creation of the new main exhibition, and the construction of new storages. Except for the latter, all these plans have already been completed within the framework of the project OdNowa (2014-2017) which included the modernization, preservation, and digitization of the museum's historical assets as well as the development of the new core exhibition. The museum gained financial support for the project of more than 43 500 000 Polish Zloty (PLN; *c.* 10 000 000 EUR), without taxes. This sum consisted of a direct purpose subsidy from the budget of the Warsaw municipality (77%) and funds from EEA and Norwegian grants (23%) (Mycielska 2015: 28). The total sum for the project equalled roughly twice the annual budget of the museum, which was *c.* 21,5 million PLN in 2014 and *c.* 27,5 million PLN in 2016 (*cf.* Mycielska 2015: 285; Mycielska & Odnous 2017: 325).

The project culminated in the opening of the new core exhibition between May 2017 (when it was partially opened) and June 2018 (the official opening of the entire exhibition) within the refurbished and renovated principal seat of the museum. In the process of the creation of the exhibition "all [*c.*] 300,000 items stored in the collection of the Museum of Warsaw have been carefully reviewed and 7,352 of them were selected to be exhibited. Among them there are both works of art and objects of everyday use. There isn't a single replica, all of the exhibits are original" (Museum of Warsaw n.d.). Moreover, the curatorial team, focused strictly on the museum's own collections, decided to give back all the objects from other museums and totally rejected any forms of 'fake' items such as replicas, models, and dioramas (Mycielska & Odnous 2017: 181).

The full list of inspirations which enabled the development of the concept of the new core exhibition includes both the adoption of the material turn in the humanities and social sciences and object-focused museum practices observed during study visits abroad (*i.e.* at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam; *cf.* Mycielska 2015: 142). In his speeches and texts, Dr. Trybuś often refers to Bjørnar Olsen's *In Defence of Things* (Mycielska 2015: 9 & 139; Odnous *et al*. 2018: 56; *cf.* Olsen 2010). Olsen got to personally know the idea of the new core exhibition as a special guest of the conference *Po stronie rzeczy/On the side of things*, which was organized at the museum in October 2015 by Dr. Magdalena Wróblewska, the museum director's representative for research (2015–), and her students from the Institute of Art History of the University of Warsaw. Wróblewska, while describing *Things in the Museum* (Wróblewska 2017), also uses Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (Latour 2005) and the concept of the 'cultural biography of things' by Igor Kopytoff (1986), as well as references works by Polish historian Ewa Domańska (2005, 2008).

However, the head of the curatorial team underlined first and foremost the crucial role of the museum's own collection as a crucial factor for thinking about the new, object-oriented core exhibition. Once, he assessed it in terms of entanglements with the history of the museum and the city: the collection "with all its advantages and disadvantages, is an essential part of the history of the institution, whereas the history of the institution reflects a wider context, becoming a mirror of the city's history" (Trybuś quoted in Mycielska 2015: 9; my translation). Another time, he suggested the collection is an asset of priceless historical value, which therefore is treated by

museum professionals as "a common treasure of Varsovians" and, at the same time, "the centre of museum life" (Trybuś quoted in Mycielska & Odnous 2017: 9; my translation). This attitude to museum objects was accompanied by the strong conviction that the curatorial work should be done mostly by current and former employees of the museum (Mycielska & Odnous 2017: 180). In practice, the curatorial team had a varying composition and grow gradually from 12 people in 2013 to more than 30 people in 2017, including some invited guests (photographer Nicolas Grospierre, anthropologist dr. Ewa Klekot, architectural critic Grzegorz Piątek), but museum employees were always the majority of the team. In terms of educational backgrounds, in 2014 there were mostly historians (42%) and art historians (33%) in the curatorial team (Mycielska 2015: 141) and these proportions remained more or less constant.

Relying on the own collections and human resources might seem to be an obvious, common, rational museum practice. However, this is no longer true for many museums in Poland which often focus on loans, copies, or simulacra and benefit from outsourced work and knowledge. The (re-)turn to the museum's own roots (to objects from the collection and the expertise of current and former employees) was, therefore, a strong manifestation of disagreement with the existing 'modern' museum practices, introduced to Poland during the above-mentioned 'museum boom.' Dr. Trybuś critically discussed both the mediazation of museum exhibitions, as leading to the loss of the original and primary function of the museum as an institution that deals with material objects (Mycielska 2015: 9), as well as the outsourcing of exhibition design and storyboards, as ignoring the features and assets of the institution (Mycielska & Odnous 2017: 180). In this sense, the assumptions and results of the OdNowa project were also a provocation against the model of historical narrative museums and their attractiveness based on multimedia content and interactive technologies. Dr. Trybuś argued even directly that:

> [...] *narrative museum exhibitions illustrated with original objects are mystifications and, as such, they represent – let us not be misled by the play on words – an objectifying attitude towards things. They also betray a symptom of 'disneylandisation' which enters new museums as something apparently desired by their audiences and sponsors.* [...] *Such a 'disneylandised' linear narrativity that reduces things – the true witnesses and participants of history – to the role of film extras requires less from the storytellers and the audiences alike.*
>
> Trybuś 2017: 7-8; my translation

Therefore, the new core exhibition which occupies a space of c. 3000 square meters and consists of three parts – 'The Things of Warsaw,' 'The Warsaw Data,' and 'The History of Tenement Houses' – carefully avoids any forms of linear narrativity and unilaterality of gaze as much as it can. *The Things of Warsaw* comprises 21 thematic rooms, which showcase various categories of objects, such as – to give only a few examples – architectural details, architectural drawings, bronzes, silverware, clothing, maps of Warsaw, old postcards, old souvenirs, packaging of Warsaw companies' products, patriotic items, pictures of Warsaw, portraits of Varsovians, or representations of the mermaid (the symbol of the city from its coat of arms). At first glance, objects presented in particular thematic rooms have little in common – even the criteria for categorizing the thematic rooms are not homogeneous. What is more, the artistic and material values of particular exhibited objects are highly unequal or even incomparable. However, they have – or they were read as such by the curatorial team – an important common feature which

distinguishes them and gives them strength: their connections to the local history of Warsaw (Mycielska & Odnous 2017: 181; Trybuś 2017: 8).

Therefore, the curatorial decision to omit any form of a linear, sequential museum narrative in the spatial design of the exhibition which would guide visitors step by step, does not mean that the presentation of things in the Museum of Warsaw is limited only to topics evoked in the thematic rooms and made without any general assumptions of their meaning. Objects in the exhibition are not merely souvenirs, portraits, or bronzes: they are not 'just' things – they are 'things of Warsaw.'

The crucial point for understanding the museum's point of view is to focus on the 'Warsaw-ness' (or Warsaw identity) of things. Even accepting all the premises of the new core exhibition of the museum, with its object-focused turn and intentional limitation of the museum's voice, one can ask: which things are truly the things of Warsaw? The easiest answer would be that the term 'things of Warsaw' refers to these *c.* 300 000 objects collected by the Museum of Warsaw or even only these *c.* 7 000 which are exhibited. However, we cannot depend on such a tautology and, fortunately, we do not need to.

In October 2016, the Museum of Warsaw prepared its collection management policy (Mycielska & Odnous 2017: 14–15), where we can find the definition of 'Warsaw-ness' used for the selection of artefacts collected by the Museum. Any object which is to be included in the museum's collection should meet at least one of two criteria: it should be produced in Warsaw (Warsaw as a place of origin, 'Warsaw-ness' as provenance) or/and its 'topic' should be connected to Warsaw, its inhabitants, or events which took place there (thematic 'Warsaw-ness'). It is, of course, still a very broad definition, but at least it helps us to escape from the vicious circle. It also confirms that 'Warsaw-ness' is a feature or quality which could also apply to things which do not (yet) belong to the Museum's collection and are able to be collected – and it depends subjectively on assessments done by people, in this case by museum practitioners who are for now the only 'spokespersons' of the things in the museum collections.

"The Things of Warsaw" are material "witnesses and participants of the city's history and, therefore, a starting point for telling the stories of their owners and creators, as well as for presenting the events and processes that formed Warsaw as we know it today" (Museum of Warsaw n.d.). According to the museum's public statements the most important aim of the exhibition *The Things of Warsaw* was to avoid telling the entire history of the city as a single, linear, chronological narrative and to focus instead on the exhibited things, treating nearly each of 'the things of Warsaw' as an agent of a single story (or microhistory), which is hidden behind the material surface (Muzeum Warszawy 2017). These stories, when put together, reveal a multi-threaded past of the city. The exhibition is advertised by the slogan: "Extraordinary Stories of Ordinary Things."

Among the things of Warsaw, the curatorial team selected 64 key items, distributed in all 21 rooms, which "are deemed especially significant by curators due to the story of their origin, direct connection to the history of the town, unique character, or the figure of their creator or founder" (Museum of Warsaw n.d.). The key items are highlighted by additional descriptions on the panels and/or additional entries in the audio guide. They are strongly recommended for visitors who come to the museum for the first time, as it is hardly possible to focus on select thematic rooms before getting an overview of the whole museum nor to see the entire exhibition during one visit (*e.g.* the full recording of the audio guide lasts about 5 hours, while according to Google visitors spend up to 2,5 hours at the museum).

The structure of the museum's interiors supports the rejection of a single, unified museum narrative and the division of the exhibition into small, separate thematic rooms instead. In the official guide booklet, which is available at the entrance to *The Things of Warsaw*, one can read that "The seat of the Museum of Warsaw resembles a maze – it is composed of interconnected interiors of all the tenement houses on the northern frontage of the Old Town Market Square" (Museum of Warsaw 2018b). It underlines that the museum "does not have a designated sightseeing path" and, therefore, visitors are encouraged to choose their own way of visiting the museum: "it does not matter where you start, or where you finish" (*Ibid.*).

According to Dr. Trybuś, in his speech during the press conference on the occasion of the opening of the first part of the new core exhibition in May 2017, the main goal was to give the possibility (but to some extent also the obligation) to the visitor to create his or her own history of Warsaw, out of the over 7000 stories told in the exhibition by or through the things of Warsaw (Muzeum Warszawy 2017). The responsibility of the museum would be not to disseminate any single and common narrative on the city's past, but rather to give an example of using particular tools for looking at things and through things, which could later be used by visitors also outside the museum. It is significant that on the cover of the catalogue of the exhibition's key objects (also entitled *The Things of Warsaw*; Trybuś 2017), which accompanies the exhibition and is available in the thematic rooms, the following words by American philosopher Nelson Goodman from his article '*The End of the Museum?*' are inscribed: "what we see in a museum may profoundly affect what we see when we leave" (Goodman 1985: 56).

The attitude to the museum's collection and the idea of the new core exhibition reflects some more general considerations of the curatorial team concerning what they think about the past of the city and the role of the museum.

The above-mentioned guide booklet gives 4 reasons why a 'traditional way' of telling the history of the city was replaced by a focus on things, particularly *The Things of Warsaw*. To quote:

1. *The Things of Warsaw represent the tangible past of the city.*
2. *Direct contact with things is a unique way of learning about history, especially when there are no people remembering the past events anymore.*
3. *Since Warsaw was almost entirely destroyed during World War II, the things that survived became important memorabilia, even if they did not use to have any material value.*
4. *The histories of things reveal a multi-threaded history of the city, which is easier to realize when we ask the following questions: What historic events did they witness? Who did they assist and in what circumstances? What historic processes might they have influenced? Whose plans did they facilitate, or perhaps impede?*

Museum of Warsaw 2018b

As the term 'things of Warsaw' connects the museum collection with the past of the city, it has been recently extrapolated to all other exhibitions prepared by the museum and presented at the seats of its branches, as well as to the general mission of the museum. The booklet named *Museum of Warsaw x10. Find us* gives the following description:

Warsaw is a truly unique city. And so is the Museum of Warsaw. Their stories are strikingly similar – razed to the ground during WW2 and rebuilt from the rubble.

> *The Museum of Warsaw collects the things of Warsaw, researches them and makes them available to the public. The new core exhibition refers to the histories of particular objects in order to tell about historical events and people who had made an impact on the shape and character of contemporary Warsaw.*
>
> *You can get acquainted with the stories of the things of Warsaw not only in the new core exhibition at Old Town Market Square, but also at each of the nine locations of the Museum of Warsaw which create their programmes independently. They offer not merely permanent exhibitions, but also a whole gamut of various events: workshops, meetings, lectures, tours, family activities, concerts and more. This guide will help you locate all the divisions which together generate the unique character of the Museum of Warsaw.*

<div align="right">Museum of Warsaw 2018c</div>

Among the nine divisions of the museum listed in the brochure, six are previously mentioned branches of the museum still in existence and three are other entities: the Korczakianum research laboratory (founded in 1977, located in the premises of the former Children's Home managed by Janusz Korczak), the Heritage Interpretation Centre (established in 2013 as the institution devoted to the history of the Warsaw Old Town upon its UNESCO World Heritage List inscription) and the Barbican (housing the exhibition about the history of the city walls which is open only from 1 May to 15 August).

At the same time, the core exhibition in the principal seat of the museum is supplemented by two exhibitions located in the basement of the museum and totally lacking any historical museum objects. *The Warsaw Data* consists of carefully selected data from the city's past presented in the form of attractive infographics and 3D models and *The History of the Tenement Houses* provides an introduction to the history of the present-day principal seat of the museum with the use of informative texts, interactive displays, and 3D models. The premises of the museum itself are described in the museum narrative as another example of the things of Warsaw. To quote museum director Ewa Nekanda-Trepka: "we think of these tenement houses just as we think about the museum pieces which we would like to show you. We call them 'things' because these are, in fact, the Things of Warsaw, which – just like the buildings – are both witnesses to and participants of historical events" (Muzeum Warszawy 2017).

The refurbishment of the principal seat of the museum and the opening of its new core exhibition were the most expensive, time-consuming and energy-intensive tasks of the museum team in recent years, so they are discussed with the most details in the museum's annual reports for the years 2014-2017 (*cf.* Mycielska 2015; Mycielska 2016; Mycielska & Odnous 2017; Odnous *et al.* 2018). However, exhibitions, educational programmes, and cultural events which were offered in other locations of the museum by its divisions, were almost equally important in terms of duties of the museum staff as well as visitor attendance numbers. When the principal seat of the museum was closed to the public (May 2014 – April 2017), the most visited branches of the museum were the Museum of Warsaw Praga (on average *c.* 45 700 visitors per year), the Heritage Interpretation Centre (on average *c.* 29 000 visitors per year) and the Palmiry memorial site (on average *c.* 25 000 visitors per year). All three were 'inherited,' as existing museum locations or advanced projects for the new locations, from Nekanda-Trepka's and Trybuś' predecessors and all three were designed, at least partially, in a form of a historical narrative museum, but they were opened or re-opened to the public during the presidency of the current management team.

At the moment, less than a year after the opening of the museum's new core exhibition at its refurbished principal seat, we do not know its impact on museum performance nor on the cultural landscape of the city. The visitor statistics for 2018 are not yet available, but the results from 2017, when the first part of the core exhibition was opened to the public, were promising (in May-December 2017, the exhibition was visited by 49 815 people; *cf.* Odnous *et al.* 2018: 367). Nevertheless, the number of visitors is presumably not the most important success factor for the Museum of Warsaw, as the attitude of the museum to its visitors does not support any forms of entertainment ('disneylandisation') or more active forms of participation (visitors are called 'audience' or even 'recipients' in the museum strategic documents).

The museum is halfway on its path to its vision from 2012, inscribed in the strategy for the years 2016-2022. The document provides the following description:

In 2020 we are the most important institution helping to understand the phenomenon of Warsaw. We act ecologically and ethically, at the same time caring for the high aesthetical level of our materials. We understand openness as not only as the accessibility to our collections, but also as an ability to respond to the needs of our receivers.

Mycielska & Odnous 2017: 12; my translation

The reorganization of the museum is still ongoing: the central storages have not been opened yet and the internal structure of the museum staff has been a subject of changes since the beginning of 2019. Dr. Trybuś is no longer deputy director of the museum, having been replaced by Anna Zasadzińska (as acting deputy director), who has been the manager of the Heritage Interpretation Centre since 2013, and the new position of deputy director for communication with the audience has been created. After many years of dealing with the museum 'hardware,' it is high time to focus on the 'software', which may also result in more attention of the general management of the museum towards its divisions.

As it was said in the *Museum of Warsaw x10* booklet, the museum divisions "create their programmes independently" (Museum of Warsaw 2018c), although in the very same sentence there is a noticeably visible attempt to re-write the activity of all of the divisions to the common conceptual framework of the 'things of Warsaw': "You can get acquainted with the stories of the things of Warsaw not only in the new core exhibition at Old Town Market Square, but also at each of the nine locations of the Museum of Warsaw" (*Ibid.*). This may suggest that the period of internal diversification of museum practices at the museums' divisions comes to the end. Then, the strong objection to the linear narrative as a misleading form of representing complex reality might be introduced, paradoxically, as a new form of unilaterality, or a new tool of unification of the museum voice. This would be an example of a bigger and more complex contradiction in the current museum practice, namely the clash between the desire to return to the roots of the museum and the will to concentrate on historical museum objects instead of 'modern' technologies. Both aspirations are complementary as long as they refer to the museum's own collection of historical objects. However, the museum tried to have 'modern' exhibitions many times in its history, not only in its most visited divisions in recent years, but also in the very beginning of the museum's post-war reconstruction.

Preliminary Description of Colonialism/De-colonialism in the Permanent Exhibition of the Museum

The Museum of Warsaw has never directly applied post-colonial theories to its activities, which is highly important due to the fact that for decades the museum has also been one of the most important initiators, participants, and publishers of studies on Warsaw's local history (*varsaviana*). As a result, there is almost no tradition in adapting the post-colonial perspective to practices of describing the city's past, neither in the museum narrative, nor in scholarly communication. Accordingly, the concept of *The Things of Warsaw* was also not motivated by any decolonial intentions on the part of the curatorial team. However, the will to present the multi-threaded past of the city was supported by several museum-led attempts to change the established 'mono-cultural' narrative on Warsaw and its past by focusing on the cultural diversity of the city. Among them, the project 'Skąd się biorą warszawiacy?' [Where do Varsovians come from?], including social research, a cultural festival, a scientific conference and an edited volume (Wagner *et al.* 2016), was the very first such large project about the migrations to Warsaw between the 14th and 21st centuries. It was the only activity of the museum since its change in 2012 which was awarded an annual prize of the Polish museum sector, *i.e.* the Sybilla 2016 in the category of research projects (Sybilla n.d.).

The application of a post-colonial approach to the new core exhibition of the Museum of Warsaw may reveal a variety of ways of engaging and disengaging with pasts which may be identified as colonial/imperial ones at many levels, beginning with particular museum objects, through the curatorial concept of the entire exhibition, to some global entanglements and the universal condition of museums as colonial institutions.

Many individual museum objects represent the history of subsequent waves of the internal European colonization of Poland by its neighbouring states in 19th and 20th century, but the museum generally avoids colonial vocabulary to describe experiences of former subordination-based relationships between states and groups of peoples in the region of Central and Eastern Europe. Instead of this, notions of 'dependency,' 'domination,' 'incorporation,' or 'occupation' are used in the museum narrative, which is generally typical for historical descriptions in Polish public discourse, including scholarly publications, school curriculums, and museum narratives. Two out of the 21 thematic rooms are devoted directly to such dissonant heritage in the traditional way of national struggles with foreign domination. In the Room of Patriotic Items "small-scale accessories of patriotic character [which] served to keep the memory of the Polish tradition alive" (Trybuś 2017: 126) are presented, belonging to the period of so-called partitions of Poland (1795-1918). The Room of Relics consists of "objects that bore witness to the most dramatic moments in the life of the city and its residents" (*Ibid.*: 135), which are mainly from the WW2 period (1939-1945) and the Polish People's Republic (1944-1989).

Figure 3: Plate with a view of Saint Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral in Warsaw, Meissen 1915-1916, Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2019.

Some museum objects showcased in other thematic rooms may be regarded as an attempt at re-emergence, or at least reframing, of the heritage of internal colonization from the position of decolonized agency. For instance, the artistic representations of the Orthodox Cathedral from the Saxon Square in Warsaw, which was subject to removal in the 1920s, are present in the Room of Postcards and in the Room of Souvenirs (*e.g.* a decorative plate from the period of German occupation during WW1; see Figure 3). Moreover, some material remnants of the Cathedral resulting from its destruction are also displayed in the Room of Architectural Details.

The issue of the internal colonization of Polish territories in the 19th century by the Russian Empire is complicated by Polish 'reversed colonization' in terms of economy and culture, previously mentioned (Rolf 2016: 31). The topic of Polish 'reversed colonization' is represented in the museum narrative in the audio guide sections of the Room of Silverware and Plated Silverware, when the story of the Warsaw plated silverware company Norblin is told. This company sold its products to such cities of the Russian Empire as Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Kiev, Charkov, Riga, Vilnius, Minsk and Tiflis (Tbilisi).

Regarding the German occupation of Poland and the Holocaust, some unorthodox methods of dealing with dissonant heritage are employed as they are reframed in an unusual way by their attribution to thematic rooms. For instance, some remnants of sculptures "which were found amongst the ruins of the capital city after World War II" (Trybuś 2017: 71) are presented in the Room of Architectural Details. As another example, Jewish kitchen wares from WW2, excavated in 2013 within the area of the former Warsaw Ghetto, are showcased in the Room of Archaeology next to pottery finds from much older times. Such curatorial decisions may be assessed as controversial but necessary to break visitors' habits and expectations. On the one hand, due to the thematic categorizations, the dissonant stories behind the objects may lack visibility to some extent. On the other hand, the curatorial team intended to avoid compartmentalization of the

negative heritage, which may be regarded as a practice supporting its re-emergence.

The topic of internal colonization after the Second World War within the Soviet sphere of influence is treated ambiguously by the museum. On the one hand, an official portrait of Bolesław Bierut, a leader of the Polish People's Republic during the Stalinist era, is highlighted as one of the key items in the Room of Portraits, which might be regarded as a way of re-emergence of communist heritage (see Figure 4). On the other hand, at the viewpoint on the top of the museum complex, the audio guide provides a detailed description of the panorama of the city visible from each side of the viewpoint, but the markedly visible presence in the skyline of the Palace of Science and Culture, gifted to Poland by the Soviet Union in 1950s, is silenced (intentionally or unintentionally repressed), although a model of the same Palace (as the tallest Warsaw skyscraper) is presented within the *Warsaw Data* exhibit in the basement of the museum.

In addition, the strong, explicit references to the destruction of the city during the Second World War in the museum narrative open up another layer of the interpretation of the relationship between 'the things of Warsaw' as a curatorial concept and the colonial past of the city and the country. According to the curatorial argumentation, many people died, many things were destroyed or stolen, so the museum simply had no choice but to rely on the things which survived from the times before the war or which testify to the post-war reconstruction of the city, both in terms of materiality (buildings, public spaces, infrastructure) and social life (demography, institutions). Therefore, if the occupation and destruction of the city, and the extermination and expulsions of the majority of its inhabitants, affect the museum and its collections so strongly, all the showcased *Things of Warsaw* are ontologically connected to the 'colonial' past of the city.

Figure 4: Portrait of Bolesław Bierut by Mirosław Gawlak, c. 1955 (first to the left), in the Room of Portraits, Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2018.

However, the museum's engagement with the colonial pasts of the city, country, and region is selective and covers only a few threads from the history of Polish-Prussian/German and Polish-Russian/Soviet Union relations which are reflected by museum objects from its own collection and the history of the principal seat of the museum. This happens not only because the limits of the collections are the limits of the museum narrative. Some dimensions of the internal colonization are purposefully omitted from the museum narrative, although they could be discussed even on the basis of examples of museum objects actually displayed within the exhibition. For instance, any traces of Polish colonialism towards lands and peoples in Central and Eastern Europe are ignored and excluded from the museum narrative, even though a scale model of Warsaw in the 2nd half of the 18th century, presented in the exhibition as the single remnant from the previous permanent exhibition, could be very instructive here. Namely, it presents the characteristic manner of designing the urban development of Warsaw in the early modern period. The spatial structure of the city and its demography reflected its role as a capital of Poland as a rural country with some imperial ambitions (especially on its Eastern borderlands) and the self-colonizing economy based on serfdom and exploitation of the peasants by the gentry, as well as on international grain trade.

Nevertheless, some examples of the involvement of Warsaw's social actors in the discourses and practices of 'Western' European overseas colonialism, accompanied by various forms of Orientalism, are also depicted in the core exhibition of the Museum of Warsaw. The figurine of an elephant in the Room of Bronzes is accompanied by an audio guide recording in which the curator of the room tells the story of Oriental imaginary in Warsaw, including Stefan Szolc-Rogoziński's research trips to Cameroon in the 1880s and 1890s (his ship was decorated with the ship owner's flag depicting the Warsaw mermaid). In the Room of Portraits, a Picasso-like portrait of August Agbola O'Brown, the only Warsaw Uprising soldier coming from today's Nigeria, painted by Karol Radziszewski in 2015, is presented to deconstruct the mainstream narrative of the uprising and to break the canon of representations of heroes. At the same time, some other global entanglements still seem to be unnoticed or unacknowledged. The name of the one of the tenement houses forming the principal seat of the museum – 'Under the Negro' – is neither problematized nor silenced by the museum, as if this name was transparently obvious. This is probably one of the strongest examples of repression in the museum's activities.

Finally, what often connects museums with decolonial reflections is the question of who should be the owner of museum objects which were gained (bought, found, stolen) in colonies and are still exhibited and 'told' by institutions governed by former colonizers. The peculiar fascination with things, noticeable in the curatorial practices of the Museum of Warsaw, if read carefully, may reveal colonial assumptions to museum work (in Warsaw and in general), such as an exclusion of any voices of former users of 'The Things of Warsaw' (only the museum voice is present in the exhibition) and a conviction that museums are the best and 'final' places for cultural artefacts. Decolonial approaches could be, therefore, applied not only to the representations of the city staged by the museum, but also to the museum practices behind the scenes.

Conclusions

This first report on the Museum of Warsaw presented the preliminary results of one of the three case studies within the ECHOES project focusing on city museums and colonial pasts. The report began by providing a contextual background to the case studies by means of describing the ways of adapting post-colonial theories to the Warsaw case and the evolution of the Warsaw museum sector. It illustrated various ways of dealing with heritage of foreign origins which are connected to former imperial powers or occupying forces and preserved in Poland (particularly in Warsaw), discussing the attempts to identify these practices as examples of (dis)engaging with the legacies of several dimensions of so-called internal European colonization, as well as the rise of the popularity of the model of a historical narrative museum in Poland after 2004. The report then described the history and evolution of the Museum of Warsaw from its foundation in the 1930s, through its post-war reconstruction and enlargement, to its still ongoing reorganization, showing how the focus of the museum changed over time alongside developments in the wider museum sector and within the city. The core of the report is formed by an analysis of the current state of the Museum of Warsaw, which reveals a relationship between changes in the Polish museum sector after 2004 and the activity of the Museum of Warsaw in recent years that may be identified as a strong reaction against the dissemination of the model of the historical narrative museum. Finally, the impact of the material turn and post-colonial theories is preliminarily explored with a reflection on a few selected examples of (dis)engagements with colonialism within the Museum of Warsaw.

As mentioned in the introduction, this report is written parallel to similarly framed and structured reports on the Amsterdam Museum (Ariese 2019) and the Shanghai History Museum/Shanghai Revolution Museum (Pozzi 2019). In the following two years of the project, the researchers of ECHOES' Work Package 3 will focus in more detail on the museums and their use of decolonial heritage practices. The second set of reports will focus in greater detail on the various (dis)engagements with colonialism, based on critical assessments of the museums' collections, exhibitions, programs, and events. It will also rely on interviews with museum staff. This second report series will conduct its analysis by using the ECHOES methodology based on four modalities for managing and practicing colonial heritage: removal, repression, reframing, and re-emergence (Kølvraa 2018). Finally, the third set of reports will engage predominantly with the receptions of the museums' displays and activities through various visitor studies. Naturally, all of these reports will continue to frame the case studies within a broader context of other heritage practices in the respective cities, at other museums, galleries, in ephemeral heritage events, and within the public space. Thus, the aim is to ultimately collect these nine reports into a qualitative, comparative analysis of the ways in which these city museums work through their cities' pasts and thereby to identify diversified modalities and challenges for the representation of (de)colonial heritage in the contemporary world.

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