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Using oral history method in research on the identity of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland: the case study of Lviv, 1919–1939

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Abstract
Article is an attempt to analyze the image of Lviv's space in the years of 1919–1939 using the oral history method. Research and analyzes were based on narratives represented by three nationalities: Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish, who lived in Lviv between 1919 and 1939. Each nationality remembered space and life differently. Poles emphasized their longing for a lost paradise, while Ukrainians and Jews recalled Polish cultural domination and discrimination in Lviv.

Keywords
oral history, borderland, Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, Lviv, spatial identity

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Introduction

The oral history method focuses on recording and analysing personal accounts of witnesses to history – most often, records and transcripts of interview-like conversations. Simplifying matters to a degree, such a talk can: focus on establishing facts on the basis of information given by the interlocutor (verbal messages) – a form typical for a historical approach, or, alternatively, focus on the interlocutor's manner of communication or expression (non-verbal messages) – a form typical for a sociological approach.[1]

Taking abovementioned perspectives into account, one may also distinguish between interviews geared towards collecting information on historical events and interviews that employ methods developed by sociology.[2] Apart from sociology and history, other disciplines and interdisciplinary studies also interpret orally transmitted information. Discussing oral history, one should also indicate that the scholarly community remains divided over the opinion whether one can use oral interviews as historical sources;[3] accordingly, the historians usually use the information from oral interviews to supplement the data from written sources, which are seen as primary.[4]

From the sociological perspective, one should also accentuate the specificity of the oral history approach, standing out among other methods due to acknowledged subjectivity of individual transmission – an 'interpretive-communicative event' that draws from (often fallible) personal memory.[5] The oral history, in result, is a socially (and, oftentimes, politically) engaged research method.[6] The oral history approach has been rapidly developing in Central-Eastern Europe in the past three decades, after the abolishment of censorship enabled citizens to speak about controversial events. The shift became particularly noticeable in Ukraine, where,

1 See K. Kaźmierska, K. Waniek, *Autobiograficzny wywiad narracyjny. Metoda – technika – analiza*, Łódź 2020. See also M. Kurkowska-Budzan, *Historia zwykłych ludzi. Współczesna angielska historiografia dziejów społecznych*, Kraków 2003.

2 I. Terela, *Wybrane problemy etyczne w historii mówionej. Refleksje historyka*, 'Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej,' vol. 25, no. 2, 2019, p. 105.

3 I. Lewandowska, *Historycy wobec metody oral history. Przegląd polskiej literatury naukowej*, in M. Świgoń (ed.), *Historia. Archiwistyka. Praca naukowa. Prace dedykowane Profesorowi Bohdanowi Ryszewskiemu*, Olsztyn 2009, pp. 127–138.

4 See M. Kurkowska-Budzan, *Informator, świadek historii, narrator – kilka wątków epistemologicznych i etycznych oral history*, 'Wrocławski Rocznik Historii Mówionej,' vol. 1, 2011, pp. 9–34.

5 E.M. McMahan, *Wywiad historii mówionej jako wydarzenie interpretacyjno-komunikacyjne*, 'Wrocławski Rocznik Historii Mówionej,' vol. 8, special issue, 2018, p. 128.

6 I. Terela, *op. cit*.

paraphrasing the words of Gelinada Grinchenko, the methodology reverted from the Soviet collectivism to the Western individualism.[7]

As for the borderland concept, employed by scholars of many disciplines,[8] the following article primarily adopts the perspective of Andrzej Sadowski, who defined the borderland as a physical space inhabited by two (or more) communities that remain separated by a mental border lingering in their collective consciousness.[9] Sadowski's sociological-geographical approach depends on the spatial and sociocultural aspects of borderlands. In the national context, the borderland is characterised as a decentralised territory whose liminality gives rise to a number of social phenomena that are rare or unheard-of in more central regions,[10] arising from the accumulation of imagined and socially sanctioned borders between cultures, nations and ethnic / religious / language groups.[11] Acts of communities and individuals belonging to one of these groups largely concern multiple spatial identities whose perceived salience (defined against other groups) defines the distinctness of inter-group boundaries.[12] Deepening the local identity of a border region usually involves identifying the elements that differentiate and individualise its resident groups, whereas the same identity is weakened by processes of assimilation and integration, due to which the border no longer functions as a *sui generis* separator, even vanishing in the collective consciousness.[13] Although the authors of this analysis examine a specific case of the borderland that, due to the then-extant political borders, may have appeared very sharply delineated in the public consciousness, they acknowledge its inherent fuzziness and gradation, brought about by multifaceted transborder exchanges.[14]

7 G. Grinczenko, *Historia mówiona na Ukrainie: ludzie, tematy, fakty*, transl. W. Kudela-Świątek, 'Wrocławski Rocznik Historii Mówionej,' vol. 3, 2013, pp. 73–92.

8 *Inter alia*, in contexts of ethnic, religious and social diversity (see G. Babiński, *Pogranicze polsko-ukraińskie: etniczność, zróżnicowanie religijne, tożsamość*, Kraków 1997), multiculturalism (see D. Wojakowski, *Wielokulturowość w interpretacjach i działaniach lokalnych. Przypadki z pogranicza polsko-ukraińskiego*, 'Pogranicze. Studia Społeczne,' vol. 27, 2016, pp. 149–161), regional statistics (see A. Miszczuk, *Pogranicze polsko-ukraińskie jako przedmiot zainteresowania statystyki regionalnej*, 'Wiadomości Statystyczne. The Polish Statistician,' vol. 6, 2005, pp. 63–71) or views regarding international cooperation (see A. Miszczuk (ed.), *Wyzwania rozwojowe pogranicza polsko-ukraińskiego*, Lublin 2017).

9 A. Sadowski, *Pogranicze – pograniczność – tożsamość pograniczna*, 'Pogranicze. Studia Społeczne,' vol. 14, 2008, p. 18.

10 See J. Chałasiński, *Antagonizm polsko-niemiecki w osadzie fabrycznej 'Kopalnia' na Górnym Śląsku*, Warszawa 1935, p. 78.

11 J. Kurczewska, *Granica niejedno ma imię. Trzy podejścia teoretyczne*, in J. Kurczewska, H. Bojar (eds.), *Granice na pograniczach*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 365–396.

12 A. Sadowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 20–21.

13 See M. Barwiński, *Pogranicze w ujęciu geograficzno-socjologicznym – zarys problematyki*, 'Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Geographica Socio-Oeconomica,' no. 2, 2002, p. 17.

14 See G. Babiński, *Pogranicze etniczne, pogranicze kulturowe, peryferie. Szkic problematyki*, 'Pogranicze. Studia Społeczne,' vol. 4, 1994, p. 6.

To further conceptualise the notion of spatial identity, this concept is essential to establishing an individual identity in regard to one's own origin – a *conditio sine qua non* for identifying one's social, cultural and historical affiliation.[15] The sense of being attached to one's place of origin lies at the foundation of building social ties, in turn contributing to establishing certain collective interpretations and narratives of lived reality within a single community. In other words, it is a lens through which one can perceive the common and sanctioned value system.[16]

Researching events subject to conflicting interpretations, especially those that are emotionally charged for inhabitants of a given area, one needs to note that every historical record is a narrative, written according to an adopted perspective. Although, from an ethical standpoint, every historian should ensure to align their narration as closely as possible with the established course of historical events, this task often poses methodological challenges.[17] One of such challenges is selection of sources that is appropriate to mitigate subjective viewpoints. Any historian employing oral history method can conduct interviews themselves or use databases of already recorded interviews. The following analysis mainly draws from interview databases, mostly due to the rapidly falling number of living witnesses to history of prewar Lviv (as for 2023).

The uniqueness of Lviv as a cultural borderland city

Moving on to the city at the centre of this analysis, the interwar Lviv was one of Poland's largest cities by inhabitant number, the third largest after Warsaw and Łódź, with the Second Polish Republic including the entire territory of western and eastern Galicia (where Lviv lies).[18] Two general censuses were carried out in the city in 1921 and 1931.[19] In view of the information contained therein, the nationality of the

15 M. Melchior, *Społeczna tożsamość jednostki*, Warszawa 1990, p. 27.

16 J. Nowak, *O semantycznej redukcji przestrzeni etnicznej*, in A. Bukowski, M. Lubaś, J. Nowak (eds.), *Zarządzanie przestrzenią. Globalizacja – etniczność – władza*, Kraków 2006, p. 57. See Y.F. Tuan, *Przestrzeń i miejsce*, Warszawa 1987. See also A. Wallis, *Socjologia przestrzeni*, Warszawa 1990.

17 This is one element of the ongoing (for several decades) scholarly debate regarding the modernist approach (based on verifiable claims) versus the postmodernist approach (based on the text and its narrative). See E. Domańska, *Maska przeszłości (O postmodernistycznej filozofii historii)*, 'Teksty Drugie,' vol. 19, no. 1, 1993, pp. 107–113.

18 At that time, Galicia was divided into Western Galicia (with its capital in Kraków) and Eastern Galicia (with its capital in Lviv). After 1945, most of the territory of Eastern Galicia was granted to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

19 Citing a statement by the director of the Central Statistical Office in the Second Polish Republic in 1929–1939, Edward Szturm de Sztrem, the Polish censuses included data falsified through the intervention of the Polish authorities (in particular, data on respondents' native speech were altered most frequently in Eastern Galicia). These manipulations were seen by the authorities as one of the tools to facilitate their grip on the area. See O. Dudiak, *Spisy powszechne w Polsce w latach 1921 i 1931 jako źródło do badań liczebności, struktury etniczno-wyznaniowej i zatrudnienia przedsiębiorców przemysłowych we Lwowie w okresie międzywojennym*, 'Krakowskie Pismo Kresowe,' vol. 13, 2021, pp. 187–202.

city's inhabitants remains a matter of debate to this day (mainly due to equating religious affiliation and language with a particular nationality, neither of which can be considered synonymous). Only the first census queried interviewees about their ethnicity, whereas the second one asked about religion and language. In addition to population statistics, there are also data on the distribution and property holdings of the various denominational groups in the city.[20]

According to various estimates, if one adopts the criterion of religion (that is, assuming that the Poles were predominantly Roman Catholics, the Ukrainians were Greek Catholics and the Jews adhered to Judaism), then, in the studied period, the Poles accounted for about 51 per cent of Lviv's inhabitants, the Ukrainians for about 16 per cent and the Jews for about 32 per cent. In turn, according to the linguistic criterion (that is, assuming that Polish was spoken by the Poles, Ukrainian and Ruthenian by the Ukrainians, and Yiddish and Hebrew by the Jews), Lviv's population in the studied period consisted of the Poles (64 per cent), the Ukrainians (approximately 11 per cent) and the Jews (approximately 25 per cent) (Table 1).[21] The adoption of a linguistic criterion in the census (instead of nationality) is related to the government propaganda of the time. In those days, there were efforts in Lviv to demonstrate the right of Poles to the city, and the statistics of the languages spoken in the city provided data in support of this propaganda: Polish was the official language, spoken not only by Poles but also by representatives of other nationalities, as can be gleaned from the data in the following table. Apart from these three major ethnicities, Lviv was also inhabited by, *inter alia*, the Germans and the Armenians. According to various estimates made by the city, Lviv's population grew slowly, steadily and proportionally by nationality throughout two decades of interwar peace.

Table 1. *Data on religion and mother tongue of Lviv residents according to the 1931 census*

Mother tongue / Religion	Polish	Ukrainian and Ruthenian	Yiddish and Hebrew	German	Other	In total
Roman Catholics	155 986	546	-	593	365	157 490 (50,4%)
Greek Catholics	15 592	34 077	-	9	69	49 747 (15,9%)

20 These statistics are presented later in the text. The information contained therein refers to the district division of Lviv in 1922, with the data providing a reference point for verifying the information on the material status of individuals that were mentioned in some accounts. For more on specific issues regarding the demography of Lviv (e.g., changes in age or confessional structure) over the decades before the Second World War, see K. Wnęk, L.A. Zyblikiewicz, E. Callahan, *Ludność nowoczesnego Lwowa w latach 1857–1938*, Kraków 2006.

21 E. Szturm de Sztrem (ed.), *Drugi Powszechny Spis Ludności z 9 XII 1931 r.*, Warszawa 1937, p. 11.

Orthodox Christianity	303	382	-	-	392	1 077 (0,3%)
Protestantism	1896	29	-	1663	42	3630 (1,2%)
Judaism	24 007	26	75 288	136	138	99 595 (31,9%)
Other	428	77	28	47	112	692 (0,2%)
In total	198 212 (63,5%)	35 137 (11,3%)	75 316 (24,1%)	2 448 (0,8%)	1118	312 231 (100%)

Source: *Drugi Powszechny Spis Ludności z 9 XII 1931 r. Mieszkania i gospodarstwa domowe. Ludność. Stosunki Zawodowe. Miasto Lwów*, E. Szturm de Sztrem (ed.), Warszawa 1937, p.11.

At this point, one should also mention the ethnic diversity of Eastern Galicia. The population census of 1931 estimated the Polish portion of Eastern Galicia's population at 28,56–39,31 per cent, the Ukrainian portion at 52,75–60,21 percent and the Jewish population at 7,13–10,37 per cent. The Ukrainians predominated in rural regions and in Pokuttia, while the Jews constituted the majority in many small towns and a significant minority in the main Galician cities – apart from Lviv, these included Stanislavov, Ternopil, Kolomyja, Boryslav and Drohobych. The Poles predominated above all in the largest cities, the western part of the Lviv voivodeship and the area around Ternopil. There was no clear interethnic border in the studied area, with different ethnicities living among themselves. The cultural borderland in the area was therefore a transitional zone.

In symbolic terms, Lviv remains an important part of the identity of both the Ukrainians and the Poles. Both nations have used the image of the city to build their identity discourses, completely opposite to each other and based largely on stereotypes. What both nations have in common is the image of Lviv as the bastion of national consciousness and memory, a kind of a mythical stronghold of Polish and Ukrainian statehood. In the Polish public discourse, Lviv was perceived as a citadel of Polishness (the mythical ever-faithful city, *Semper Fidelis*), a hotbed of Polish intellectual life – a thoroughly modern city lost due to historical injustice in 1945.[22] For the Ukrainians, on the other hand, Lviv is a 'Piedmont,' a place of their bid for independence, a refuge of Ukrainian nationhood that has survived the 'russkiy mir,' a kind of window to the Western European culture, hard won after years of injustice.[23] A different view of Lviv was held by the Jews, who had no desire to build

22 See J.S. Tarnowski, *Przez bezkresy historii. Od Wołynia, Podola do Lwowa*, Białystok 2015, p. 42.

23 І. Гирич, *Історичні причини наших поразок і перемог*, Львів 2011, pp. 93–98. Michal Urban wrote a little more detail about Lviv as the foundation of modern Ukrainian identity (*idem*, *Z drugiej strony granicy. Lwów: miasto-mit jako podstawa współczesnej tożsamości ukraińskiej*, 'Актуальні проблеми вітчизняної та всесвітньої історії,' vol. 27, 2016, pp. 58–65. See also: *idem*, *Tożsamość ukraińskiego Lwowa: jak rodził się matecznik kulturowego oporu*, 'Polonistyczno-Ukrainoznawcze Studia Naukowe,' vol. 3, 2017, pp. 135–148).

their own state in Lviv and instead directed their gaze towards Palestine; as such, the Jews saw Lviv as a neutral city due to its multinationality.[24]

In selecting the accounts of witnesses to Lviv's interwar past, the authors were guided by three basic criteria: that the interviewees lived in Lviv, that they belonged to one of the three previously mentioned nationalities, and that they referred in their memoirs to the urban space. The first two criteria are relevant for pointing out commonalities within one nation and secondly, as mentioned in the introduction, narrative differences as a part of the relationships and relations between the nations inhabiting the city. The third criterion enables the location of relationships in space and the identification of themes of spatial identity discussed by the interviewees. In selecting the accounts, the authors were guided only by the factual aspect, i.e. the presence of references to Lviv's space in the stories, which the authors consider crucial in view of the present text, since it deals with spatial identity. The accounts of witnesses to history were selected from the following databases: the Oral History Archive of the History Meeting House in Warsaw, the Oral History Archive of the Warsaw Uprising Museum in Warsaw, the Centre for Urban History of East Central Europe in Lviv, the 'Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre' Centre in Lublin, the Archive of the Project *Lwów Przedwojenny* Programme and from private collections, including those owned by the authors of this text. This choice was dictated primarily by the authors' focus on the space and identity of interwar Lviv, which significantly narrowed the number of oral history sources. Thus, the authors attempted to use only the available oral history testimonies (in one case, due to the small number of accounts cited, an excerpt from a diary appears). The following section presents separately the three perspectives – Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish – on the perception of the space of Lviv, on the events that took place there and on its inhabitants within the framework of the spatial identity of the interlocutors of the various nationalities living on the Polish-Ukrainian frontier.

The interwar Lviv in accounts of Polish witnesses to history

The analysed accounts of Polish witnesses to history yielded relatively little about Lviv's space.[25] On the other hand, local Poles ardently believed in the myth of

24 A. Imiłowska-Duma, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie we Lwowie w latach 1918–1919 (wybrane zagadnienia)*, 'Polonistyczno-Ukrainoznawcze Studia Naukowe,' vol. 3, 2017, p. 118. Speaking of pre-war Lviv, the authors of the following article deliberately do not use the term multiculturality, which assumes that the city's inhabitants are joined by their wish to create a common living space (see L. Gęsiak, *Czy wielokulturowość ma przyszłość?*, 'Więź,' no. 4, 2011, pp. 55–64); instead, they employ the term multinationality, which semantically merely denotes a city inhabited by people of different nationalities.

25 An example is found in interviews with Antoni Bieniaszewski (Dom Spotkań z Historią [hereinafter cited as DSH], sig. AHM-2373, 15 June and 1 July 2011 [recorded by M. Zaidlewicz]), Zofia Ciesielska (DSH, sig. AHM-V-0052, 2009 [recorded by M. Kwiecińska]) or Irena Kotela (DSH, sig. AHM-358, 16 and 26 October 2007 [recorded by Z. Stopa]).

the interwar Lviv, perceiving it as a 'paradise lost' destroyed at the hands of Nazi Germany and the Soviets. For one of the interviewees, Anna Szałaśna, Lviv was a unique city: "And it was 1935 already. God, Lviv is... Just like in the songs, that's how it really was: there is no other city in the world like Lviv. There isn't."[26]

One of the witnesses, Stanisław Michnowski, drew particular attention to how the Poles and the Ukrainians struggled for Lviv after the First World War, which resulted in mutual resentment and antagonism of a national nature:

> The Germans, wanting to divide us with the Ukrainians, *divide et impera*, did something terribly hostile to Poland: they gave away the Polish... because at that time few Ukrainians lived in Lviv, and, the Poles were there, the Armenians, the Jews and so on... It was Polish. And those Poles, living there, couldn't agree, they had to defend themselves. And there was an unnecessary war and then mutual hatred, which still weighs on us today.[27]

This conflict encumbered Polish-Ukrainian relations throughout the interwar period. With regard to those events, Polish patriotic songs from that period depicting Poles as defenders of the city are still vivid in the memories of some witnesses, as evidenced by an excerpt from Eugenia Borkowska's statement:

> It was the same in the years between the wars. There were beautiful anniversary academies like this. We sang such... I don't know. To this day... About the defenders of Lviv. "Oh mother, eyes with a smile, look at me. This blood that's oozing from my chest. This blood is for our Lviv." Beautiful. I can still sing the whole song today.[28]

The interviewees' statements about their family homes and the immediate surroundings are colourful, almost picturesque, especially in regard to the décor of the flats, neighbouring houses or places of daily rest and recreation. Recollections of fragments of the urban space can be found, for example, in Danuta Kominiak's account: "On the outskirts of Lviv was the so-called Pohulanka.[29] It was a picturesque hill, wooded, with a beautiful meadow, full of flowers."[30] Andrzej Krzeczunowicz spoke in a similar way about the places he knew in Lviv and the inhabitants of some of its regions:

26 DSH, sig. AHM-2843, Interview with Anna Szałaśna, 27 July and 1 August 2012 (recorded by A. Maciąg).

27 DHS, sig. AHM-3492, Interview with Stanisław Michnowski, 30 October, 13, 16, 18 and 28 December 2017 (recorded by Ł.K. Kamiński).

28 DSH, sig. AHM-2681, Interview with Eugenia Borkowska, 3, 10 and 11 March 2012 (recorded by Ł.K. Kamiński).

29 A woodland park or a forest situated 2,5 kilometres to south-east from Lviv's city centre (Łyczakowskie district).

30 DSH, sig. AHM-2650, Interview with Danuta Kominiak, 27 and 29 February 2012 (recorded by A. Górska).

> From time to time we went to Lviv, to my grandmother, who lived on 3 Maja Street, today the Strzelców Siczowych (Sich Riflemen) [street]. Such a nice palace, a bit of a copy of the Florentine Renaissance, from an architectural point of view. It was a very good street, because the Jablonowski family had a palace there, and the Badenis, and so on and so forth, various famous Lviv families.[31]

Another Lviv resident, Adam Macedoński, spoke fondly of the smells and sounds of Lviv while pointing out the well-maintained condition of some public spaces:

> [...] our last flat was in the Upper Łyczaków district, in front of the Głowacki park on Dobrzański Street, opposite the Mączna street [...]. And there was a great park there, too, with hills, overgrown. That smell... Lviv was fragrant first, because it was full of shrubs, flowers. The whole of May it was lilacs, the incredible smell of lilacs, so strong that it wafted into the flats. There were gardens and bushes everywhere, the streets had wide pavements with lawns and there were flower shrubs growing on those lawns, and the custodians took care of it all, Lwów was clean. [...] And this Głowacki Park, there was a statue, a sculpture – I think it's still there today – of Bartosz Głowacki. And lots of hills, where hazel and wicker grew, and me and a bunch of boys used to play Indians and cowboys. [...] And as for the sounds, every now and then someone would play and sing. [...] I remember that every once in a while someone was playing somewhere, either on the banjo or the mandolin, or the accordion, and singing – someone would walk down the street and sing out loud, like in Italy in Naples. Also the sounds – full of sounds, full of smells, colours, people of different races.[32]

This peculiar abstraction does not allow for a more concrete identification and analysis of the urban space, most likely signifying the longing for a city lost in a manner incomprehensible to Polish Lvivians (their loss also emphasised in the accounts). In counterpoint to the above, it is worth noting an excerpt from a statement by the doyen of Polish art conservation, Professor Władysław Zalewski, who talks about the places in Lviv that are most valuable to him (probably responding directly to a question asked by the interviewer):

> In Lviv, the most valuable thing I fear for is the Boim Chapel. This is an exceptional work of art that can compete boldly with Italian works of that time, and I have already spent a lot of time convincing various people not to touch it [restore] crudely. [...] Then I think of the Dominican

31 DSH, sig. AHM-V-0067, Interview with Andrzej Krzeczunowicz, 2009 (recorded by M. Agopsowicz).

32 The Archive of the Project *Lwów Przedwojenny* Programme (hereinafter cited as LP), Interview with Adam Macedoński, 28 March 2014 (recorded by Ż. Słoniowska), http://lwowprzedwojenny.eu/adam-macedonski.html (accessed: 14.11.2022).

> church, being such a unique 18th century centre-plan church [...]. What else... Well, it seems that the cathedral, however, in its hall-like (i.e. the side aisles and the main nave are of equal height), that this cathedral interior is very valuable. And then there's the Armenian cathedral, which has a lot of valuable paintings, authentic medieval paintings, but apart from that there's a brilliant composition by the 20th century painter [Jan Henryk] Rosen [...]. I think the Wallachian Orthodox Church is equally beautiful. In the same way, I would like the Union of Lublin Mound to be protected in some way, at least like Kraków's mounds.[33]

In Polish accounts, statements antagonistic towards Ukrainians or Jews rarely appeared. A rare example of this type of narrative is an excerpt from a statement by a Warsaw insurgent, Robert Drzewiecki:

> Lviv appeared to be a very pleasant city, very cosy for everyone, Jews, Ukrainians, Armenians, [of whom] there were even quite a few. Everyone lived like a family. Except that there were outposts of Bolsheviks (mostly Jews and Ukrainians) who incited the Poles. There was a restaurant on the way to Vynnyky,[34] where a Jew would go out into the town near the employment office with vodka and rouse the rabble, there were riots. [There was] a funeral of a Cossack who was killed during these riots. They tried to divert the funeral to another district, they turned over trams. The town [itself] was very nice.[35]

The quoted statement makes manifest that Polish Lvivians took notice of communist agitation in the city. It also underscores their fierce patriotism, a common legacy of the successful defence (from a Polish perspective) of the city in 1918–1920 (in the Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Bolshevik Wars). This was a common occurrence.

Although statements of some of the Lvivian witnesses on issues related to the Jews drew attention to the problem of anti-Semitism, they remained ambiguous about actual acts of hatred against Jews or the scale of this phenomenon. This ambiguity may be stem from the fact that, at the time examined in this study, the interviewed witnesses of history were of school age: anti-Semitism in public education in the interwar Lviv appears to have been a relatively rare phenomenon (a postulation that, to some extent, coincides with the testimonies of the Lvivian Jews quoted later in this analysis). One interviewee, Zofia Iwanicka, asked about the stereotypes of the Jewish, Ukrainian and Russian residents held by Polish inhabitants of 'a city at the crossroads of cultures,' confirmed that the Jews in Lviv met with resentment:

33 LP, Interview with Władysław Zalewski, 2 April 2014 (recorded by Ż. Słoniowska), http://lwowprzedwojenny.eu/wladyslaw-zalewski.html (accessed: 14.11.2022).

34 A town situated about 10 kilometres south-east from Lviv's centre.

35 Warsaw Uprising Museum (hereinafter cited as MPW – Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego), Interview with Robert Drzewiecki vel 'Andrzej,' 24 June 2007 (recorded by M. Brama).

> Well, there was anti-Semitism, there was. I remember that in 1939, just before the war, 1938, 1939, there were so-called Christian markets, so that, for example, what was needed at school – notebooks, books – it was right here. I know that in Vynnyky the priest pointed out to me that I should buy everything in these Christian stalls, but I didn't see any ostracism against Jews, no. I respected these [Jewish school] friends. I respected these friends. I saw that they were smart, that they studied very hard.[36]

Among other accounts relating in some way to the identity of the city space, the football coach Stefan Żywotko spoke about the space of Lviv in a much more general manner: "Lviv, a nice big city. There was a lot of ground to walk. What more could I say?"[37]

At this point, it should be underlined that the presented excerpts from the witness accounts are not representative of the entire collection of memoirs of Polish witnesses of history; instead, they only represent certain trends and tendencies. Recollections concerning the so-called ghetto benches, anti-Semitic riots (called in the sources 'persecutions,' not 'pogroms') or acts of anti-Ukrainian hostility by the Poles appear rarely in these testimonies, although these events undoubtedly took place.[38] Some witnesses mentioned the colonization of areas around Lviv, overly dominated – in the opinion of the Poles – by 'the Ukrainian element.'[39] The issue was mentioned by Aleksander Jackowski:

> I knew, for example, that Pilsudski's legionnaires were being sent on purpose to engage with bridgeheads near Lviv in order to introduce the Polish element there. I understood the position of the Ukrainians perfectly well then. I understood because later, when I went to Lviv and saw the situation of Lviv – it's a similar situation to the one we see today in Israel or somewhere – that actually it cannot be solved in a noble and logical way. Because Lviv was, after all, surrounded by the Ukrainian peasantry, right.[40]

Testimonies of the Polish witnesses to history in the analysed corpus relatively rarely mention the problems the Ukrainians encountered when wishing to

36 DSH, sig. AHM-2891, Interview with Zofia Iwanicka, 10, 15, 17 and 22 January 2013 (recorded by A. Mizikowska).

37 The 'Remembrance and Future' Centre (hereinafter cited as OPiP – Ośrodek 'Pamięć i Przyszłość'), sig. AHM-801, Interview with Stefan Żywotko, 28 February 2018 (recorded by S. Bieniuk).

38 In order to confirm this, researchers needed source materials other than those obtained through the oral history method (for example, quotidian documents, historiographical studies).

39 This reference is to land grants to Polish veterans (most often soldiers) of the battles for Lviv between 1918 and 1920. Importantly, interviewees always stressed that they understood the Ukrainians' indignation at the time.

40 DSH, sig. AHM-0112, Interview with Aleksander Jackowski, 14 January 2007 (recorded by E. Wołkanowska).

learn their native language in Polish public schools. Actually, when Polish witnesses referred to the Ukrainians, they expressed their belief that Ukrainian was taught and learned in Polish schools without hindrance. Therefore, we need to stress that their belief was wrong, since the Ukrainians could not freely learn their own language in Polish schools of the interwar Lviv.

To Polish Lvivians, Lviv's non-Polish communities appeared to constitute type of a regional folklore minority, even though non-Polish Lvivians may have made up from a third to almost a half of the city's population. The authors of this study reemphasise that citing a selection of accounts of witnesses to history discussed above does not indicate that all the recorded conversations agreed in all respects. In fact, interviews cited above were selected because they give examples of tendencies or inclinations mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. Equally important, therefore, is to touch upon the emotional depth detectable in testimonies of the Polish Lvivians. In one of the recorded conversations, Adam Bajcar, a Polish geographer, made (among other statements) the following remark:

> The emotional perception of the city by its past and present inhabitants is not insignificant. What emerges from this cursory overview is a remarkable mosaic of diverse factors forming the city's identity. When I say this, I see my home city of Lviv, shaped by significant contributions of various factors.[41]

The interwar Lviv in accounts of Ukrainian witnesses to history

The analysis of accounts by Ukrainian witnesses leads to very different conclusions. At the forefront we find the issue of how the Ukrainians who speak of pre-Second World War Lviv spin a dichotomous narrative that cleaves the city into 'mine/not mine' spaces. There are relatively few recorded accounts of the pre-1939 era, as the recorded interviews focus primarily on the Soviet post-war period (1944–1991).[42] The authors of this analysis managed to identify a mere handful of accounts that mention the urban space of the interwar Lviv.[43] Having analysed narratives of Ukrainian witnesses to history of the interwar Lviv, it appears clear that the witnesses saw it as a turbulent time, one that was not described positively. Among accounts of interwar inhabitants of Lviv, the Ukrainian interviewees mentioned the urban space least frequently. If they do mention the city space, they primarily recall memories of their family homes and their immediate surroundings,

41 Interview with Adam Bajcar, 9 April 2021 (recorded by J. Szczepański), researcher's private archive.

42 The statement about the relatively small number of accounts about the interwar Lviv comes directly from the authors of the database, such as Halina Bodnar: see https://lia.lvivcenter.org/pl/projects/oral-history (accessed: 13.08.2022).

43 The original accounts, prepared and published in Ukrainian, have been translated into Polish directly by the authors of this text.

as well as those of homes of neighbours and acquaintances. A one-of-its-kind type of cultural nodes were the local Orthodox churches and Ukrainian public schools and institutions, while the most important non-spatial unifying element, one that gave the Ukrainians in Lviv a sense of separateness (especially from the Poles), was the Ukrainian language.[44]

Ukrainian accounts often speak of the Ukrainians' relatively poor material status in comparison to the Poles. Ukrainian witnesses had the image of Poles as a group clearly wealthier than themselves (it was not uncommon for them to view the Jews in a similar way): "Here, where Ola lives [the neighbour in the house on the other side], there lived my uncle, an old one like that... He was a very good uncle... He lived until the war... There was a Polish woman living there, one of those very rich people..."[45]

> The owners of all these houses were very rich people... number 6 [Asnyka Street] was Polish... There was a daughter there who was not very kind, but she married a doctor, a therapist, and at first, they gave him a flat downstairs, it was an office and an X-ray room... And in the yard, they had three rooms where they lived. And there were mainly Jews living in the area. [...] ...it was a kind of affluent street [Asnyka Street]... at number 15, there was another tenement house, there was a Polish owner, her daughter was a doctor, her son-in-law was a doctor, and the other daughter married some engineer...[46]

The Ukrainian accounts presented Poles as either good householders (in reference to individuals, most often personally known to the interviewees) or occupiers and anti-Semites (in a general context). The Ukrainian witnesses clearly linked anti-Semitism to Poles. Interestingly, the Ukrainian witnesses never mention the Poles who belonged to the Greek Catholic denomination, who, according to the 1931 census, may have accounted for up to a third of the Greek Catholic

44 See Шліхта І., Польська vs українська ідентичності: освітня політика у другій Речі Посполитій і формування української нації, 'Інтермарум: історія, політика, культура,' vol. 1, 2014, pp. 194–203.

45 Interview with Mykhaylo Antonovych, 20 July 2010 (recorded by H. Bodnar), https://lia.lvivcenter.org/pl/interviews/mykhaylo-antonovych/ (accessed: 24.07.2022). In original Ukrainian: "Тут де Оля живе оця (сусідка у будинку навпроти) там жив дядько, старенький такий..., він був дуже хороший дядько... Він ше до війни жив... Жила полячка, дуже багаті люди..."

46 Interview with Anna Ivanivna, 28 August 2008 (recorded by H. Bodnar), https://lia.lvivcenter.org/pl/interviews/anna-ivanivna/ (accessed: 24.07.2022). In original Ukrainian: "...Власники тих всіх домів були дуже богаті люди. ...6 номер, то був польський... ...там була дочка така нефайна, але вийшла за одного лікаря, терапевта, і вони зразу відпустили йому ту квартиру внизу, то був кабінет і рентген кабінет... А в подвір'ї там три кімнати, то вони собі жили. А тут кругом переважно жили євреї. [...] ...то була така панська вулиця. ... під 15, то була друга кам'яниця, там була така полька власниця, то вона мала дочку лікара, зятя лікара, а друга дочка за якогось інженера вийшла замуж."

community in the city. In turn, the accounts concentrate on everyday problems of the Ukrainian minority in the city. For example, Barbara Tsylitsynivna refers to the rampant Polonisation of the state education and the lack of opportunities for Ukrainian children to be educated in their native language:[47]

> Girls have been brought up to finish school like this in the seventh or eighth grade and that's enough… You wait for your husband, you get married and you stay at home. And you can imagine such a terrible turn… Mum graduated from a Polish school… Eight children for whom you have to find a Ukrainian school there… Mum didn't even know the Ukrainian literary language.[48]

In addition to this, surviving witnesses referred to difficulties in finding employment in administration, which they linked to the actions of Poles, who, in their eyes, aimed at total cultural domination of the city by, among other things, excluding other nations from aspects of social life. One Ukrainian, Stefaniya Olha Mykhalivna, also mentioned this exclusion in the context of problems with the possibility of education in Ukrainian:

> King Daniel's School was a private Ukrainian school. I knew I was going to go to King Daniel's private Ukrainian school. And then, two months before starting school, my father says: "Child, you won't go to this school, you will go to a Polish school named after Issakovich." Because father worked for the Polish state administration, and if they found out that he had sent his child to a Ukrainian school, they would fire him from his job… The Poles were terrible anti-Semites… Back then there were no nets, there were wooden fences. Our house and the whole neighbourhood was also fenced… On the fences was [written]: "The battle of the Jew against the Rusyn"… Ukrainians, there was no word 'Ukrainians,' only 'Rusyns.' When

47 As a result of the stabilisation of the geopolitical situation, by order of the Lviv education superintendent, Stanisław Sobiński (December 1923), the use of the term 'Ukrainian' was no longer permitted, with all references to be replaced with 'Ruthenian' or 'Rusyn' (until 1935). This linguistic procedure, typical for supporters of the Polish National Democrats, aimed at denying the Ukrainians the right to have their own nation and language. Another very controversial law was passed on 31 July 1924, commonly referred to as the Lex Grabski, regulated the national education of minorities in Poland. Its provisions included rules for the establishment of utraquist schools. Although it might seem that the act would address the concerns of Ukrainian speakers, the introduction of utraquist schools resulted in the subsequent liquidation of public schools with Ukrainian as the primary language of instruction.

48 Interview with Barbara Tsylistynivna, 23 April 2010 (recorded by H. Bodnar), https://lia.lvivcenter.org/pl/interviews/barbara-tsylistynivna/ (accessed: 24.07.2022). In original Ukrainian: "Дівчата виховувалися так, що закінчили якусь таку школу 7 чи 8 класів і вистачить… Чекаєш собі чоловіка, виходиш заміж і сидиш вдома. І ви собі уявляєте такі страшні часи… Мама закінчила польську школу… Восьмеро дітей, хто там буде української школи вишукувати… Мама з незнанням навіть тої мови української літературної."

> the Soviet government came, I moved to a Ukrainian class... I didn't know much Ukrainian. I knew the language, but I wrote poorly... And I asked to be sent back to a Polish school...[49]

Long-time researcher and lecturer at the Department of Pathological Anatomy of the Lviv Medical University, Anna Rudnyćka, also added in her account that there were times when Ukrainian classes at the public schools were closed down after students protested during Polish national holidays.[50] She did, however, emphasise the importance of Ukrainian institutions in interwar Lviv for the consolidation and strengthening of the Ukrainian identity.[51] Of note are her words regarding the inspections of Ukrainian homes and organisations by the Polish police in search of Ukrainian nationalists and the problems associated with the presence of Ukrainian academics and students at Lviv universities. Another Ukrainian, Ołeksandr Kicera, highlighted the consociation of different nationalities, especially from a Ukrainian perspective. In doing so, he listed the most important institutions, cooperatives and shops for Ukrainians. According to him, there were no major anti-Ukrainian tensions on the part of Poles, although there were some attacks by Polish extremists on Ukrainian shops. He also refuted the claim that there was anti-Semitism in pre-war Lviv, although he offers contacts between the Jews and the Ukrainians as proof of his position:

> It was so that the Ukrainian community lived separately, and the Polish community lived separately. My parents tended not to have any particular contact with the Polish community. At that time, a separate Ukrainian industry was developing in Lviv, there were Ukrainian shops and cooperatives. Back then, it was even considered inappropriate for me, as the son of a Ukrainian cooperative activist, to shop in a Jewish or Polish shop. For patriotic reasons, we had to go to Ukrainian shops, which were very solid by the way. There was the so-called Narodna Torhiwla [the oldest Ukrainian food cooperative founded in 1883], the Centrosoyuz [Union of Cooperative Unions], the Maslosoyuz [National Dairy Union], which exported butter even to Belgium, a country, after

49 Interview with Stefaniya Olha Mykhaylivna, 13 September 2009 (recorded by H. Bodnar), https://lia.lvivcenter.org/pl/interviews/stefaniya-olha-mykhaylivna/ (accessed: 24.07.2022). In original Ukrainian: "...Школа короля Данила, то була приватна українська школа. Я знала, що піду до приватної української школи короля Данила. А потім два місяці перед тим як йти до школи батька каже: «Не підеш дитинко до тої школи, підеш до польської школи імені Іссаковіча». Тому, що батько був на державній посаді польській, і якщо б вони довідалися, що батько послав дитину до української школи, його би звільнили з роботи... Поляки були страшні антисеміти... Тоді не було сіти, були паркани дерев'яні. Наш дім і ціле обістя теж було запарковане. ...на парканах було: 'Біць жида і русіна'... Українці, не було слова 'українці', а – 'русін'. Як прийшла радянська влада, я перейшла в український клас. ...Українською мовою я мало володіла. Мовою то я володіла, а писати, то я слабо писала... І я просилася, щоб мене назад віддали до польської школи..."

50 LP, Interview with Anna Rudnyćka, 6 December 2011 (recorded by Ż. Słoniowska), http://www.lwowprzedwojenny.eu/anna-rudnycka.html (accessed: 11.11.2022).

51 Cf. P. Olechowski, *Stosunki Polsko-ukraińskie we Lwowie w świetle wspomnień (1918–1939)*, Przemyśl 2017.

all, abundant in milk and butter. There was Proswita [Ukrainian Social and Educational Society], there were Ukrainian theatres. We kept in touch, sometimes we played together, but when it came to some cultural events, everything was somehow separate. There were no sharp controversies, as far as I remember, although in 1937-[19]38 there were pacifications and even attacks on Ukrainian organisations. Polish boycotters attacked Ukrainian shops. [...] These talks of anti-Semitism in Lviv were, in my opinion, unfounded.[52]

The interwar Lviv in accounts of Jewish witnesses to history

Jewish accounts of the interwar Lviv also clearly indicated growing anti-Semitism: the Jews increasingly feared to move freely around the city, especially when National Democrat riots broke out in the city. This fear was mentioned, among others, by Alicja Savir:

My brother studied veterinary medicine, and the other was at the economic and trade school, and later – this was during Russian times – he was at the WSHZ [the Higher School of Foreign Trade in Lviv]. And in November there were always riots. That's when Jews were beaten, Jews were attacked. After all, my brother's friend Celermajer was killed in [19]37 or [19]38. We were always shaking with fear in November, whether [the older brother] would return home unharmed, whether he would return wounded, whether they would not kill him. That's what I remember. Also, I never felt any anti-Semitic behaviour towards me. Just November, just November and those beatings. That was the only thing I remember in terms of any anti-Semitic riots.[53]

Anti-Semitism in Lviv spread mainly among students, where it often led to conflicts between Polish and Jewish youths. Ukrainian students rarely took part in actions organised by the Poles, as relations between the Poles and the Ukrainians at the university were also hostile. Some Polish youths with nationalist leanings often committed bloody pogroms against the Jews they hated.[54] Such transgressions were strongly opposed by a handful of professors at Jan Kazimierz University.[55] Most of them, however, remained indifferent to attacks on Jewish youth. Anti-Semitism was also present in schools, although it was less widespread in comparison to universities (perhaps, because of the differences in the extent of this phenomenon between primary and tertiary institutions, it was not

52 LP, Interview with Ołeksandr Kicera, 27 October 2013 (recorded by Ż. Słoniowska), http://www.lwowprzedwojenny.eu/oleksandr-kicera.html (accessed: 11.11.2022).

53 'Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre' Centre, Interview with Alicja Savir, 25 December 2006 (recorded by T. Czajkowski, prepared by K. Duda, M. Ładziak).

54 See A. Biedrzycka, *Kalendarium Lwowa 1918–1939*, Kraków 2012, pp. 769, 882, 884.

55 See E. Bukowska-Marczak, *Relacje między polskimi, żydowskimi i ukraińskimi studentami Uniwersytetu Jana Kazimierza we Lwowie w okresie międzywojennym (1918–1939)*, Warszawa 2019, pp. 102–190.

so noticeable to quoted witnesses to history),[56] which was also pointed out by the one mentioned above:

> There was a play in the public school, because on the 19th of March was Pilsudski's name day, because it was Joseph's Day, St Joseph's Day I think, and there were such plays in the public school. And I was chosen to play the main role. There were already rehearsals and suddenly one day they told me that someone else [would play my part]. And it was a terrible [blow] for me, I was in great despair. What happened that suddenly I wouldn't [play]? Later I found out that at a teachers' meeting one of the teachers said: "But a Jewish girl can't play the main role in such a play." And so, they took someone else, they took one of their colleagues. That was the only thing, that at that time I felt that I was Jewish, that was the only time. I was in great [despair] then, really, I was crying so much. Why? Was I playing badly or was something wrong? I didn't know why they suddenly told me: "Listen, someone else will come in your place." They didn't tell me the reason why I was switched. But other than that, I never felt any [unpleasantness].[57]

Other witnesses to history also mentioned that anti-Semitism was not widespread in Lvivian schools. This is how Danuta Riabinin remembered it: "In any case, certainly in the gymnasiums [a type of preparatory high school – ed.], in the schools, there was no trace of anti-Semitism."[58]

According to interviewees, the growing anti-Semitism in the 1930s mainly manifested as hostility on the part of other peoples, frequently expressed through boycotting small Jewish businesses or incidents of humiliating Jews in the streets of Lviv. Danuta Riabinin, quoted above, mentions these aspects of everyday life in her account, with other witnesses giving similar accounts:

> I remember the first signs of anti-Semitism maybe two years before the war – there were some students who boycotted Jewish shops. There was a stationery shop called Kestenberg's, we liked it very much because there was always blotting paper in the notebook – after all, at that time you wrote with nibs, there were no ballpoints. They were standing like that [in front of that shop]: "Why do you want to buy here?." I said: "Because they add blotting paper to notebooks here!" "Well, yes, but they are Jews, and we have to make sure that our merchants [are supported]." And 'our' merchants were very few. I remember I think there were the Czapscy – a fabric shop, but the bulk of the shops were Jewish, especially with ready-made clothes and shoes. When such first anti-Semitic riots started, I think they were most visible in Lviv – my husband studied there, he told embarrassing, embarrassing stories of how, say, students forced fellow Jews to sit on one side [of the hall] only. And the Jews would

56 See M. Łapot, *Incydenty antysemickie w szkołach lwowskich (1867–1939)*, 'Przegląd Nauk Stosowanych,' no. 6, 2015, s. 107–119.

57 Interview with Alicja Savir, 25 December 2006 (recorded by T. Czajkowski).

58 'Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre' Centre, Interview with Danuta Riabinin, 5 March 2004 (recorded by D. Jakubiak, M. Pytlarz).

> stand throughout the lecture in protest. There were some professors who didn't sit down during the lecture either, but they also stood as a sign of solidarity with them. [My husband] said that there were some militias, I think it was the All-Polish Youth, well they behaved very disorderly, they threw, I don't know, bark or something at Jews like that in the streets.[59]

Judging by the testimonies quoted above, both Jewish and Ukrainian, it is hardly surprising that Lviv, although an important place of identity for local Jews, primarily evoked memories of escalating acts of anti-Semitism in the witnesses. In particular, the space of Lviv's streets and institutions of higher education, associated with repression and discrimination, had a negative impact on the Jewish collective memory. The problem, however, lies in collecting a representative set of accounts of Jewish witnesses to history regarding the pre-war space of Lviv, especially those not showing any assimilationist traits, although the very designation of a Jew as assimilated or non-assimilated generates frequent controversy.[60] The reason for the lack of a comparable number of accounts by Jewish witnesses to history is the small potential interviewee base – out of a population of nearly 140,000 Jews and Poles of Jewish origin, between 300 and nearly 3,000 people survived the Shoah (according to various estimates).[61] For this reason, it is helpful to examine the memories of Jews recorded in diaries or autobiographies. The pre-war space of the city was described in relative detail by Yakoov Katzir in his autobiography, *The story of my life* (Hebrew: סיפור חיי), indicating several interesting elements. Firstly, the Jews of Lviv interacted mainly with other Jews, and most of the non-official business was dealt with either in the city centre or in the Żółkiewskie District (i.e. where the majority of the population was Jewish). In the context of the city space, this matters especially as Katzir's family moved frequently (e.g. from Łyczakowskie to Krakowskie districts) and it was necessary to commute to the above-mentioned districts to handle one's affairs. In addition, Katzir often mentioned Jewish schools and institutions, especially those with a Zionist or socialist profile, which may indicate that Katzir himself and his family did not belong to an assimilated group. He did not encounter anti-Semitism as a child, but began to be persecuted by other nationalities (especially Poles) when he turned 16. He also mentioned that anti-Semitism was visible in every stratum and class of society, both among the wealthy and the poor.[62]

59 'Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre' Centre, Interview with Danuta Riabinin, 5 March 2004 (recorded by D. Jakubiak, M. Pytlarz).

60 A. Landau-Czajka, *Zasymilowana inteligencja żydowska w okresie międzywojennym*, 'Metamorfozy Społeczne,' vol. 2, no. 9, 2007, pp. 127–153.

61 J. Honigsman, *Zagłada Żydów lwowskich (1941–1944)*, Warszawa 2007. See E. Jones, *Żydzi Lwowa w czasie okupacji 1939–1945*, Łódź 1999. See also E. Kessler, *Przeżyć Holocaust we Lwowie*, Warszawa 2007.

62 Y. Katzir, *The story of my life*, Tel Aviv-Yafo 2018, pp. 7–25.

Comparing testimonies of the Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish witnesses

The collected accounts of witnesses to history, regardless of nationality, focused primarily on three pillars: memories of the family home, school life and relations between neighbours or acquaintances. What comes to the fore in the accounts are memories of inequalities in access to the city space among the Poles, the Ukrainians and the Jews. This inequality was based on the perception that the Poles were far more privileged than the others in terms of controlling Lviv's space and socio-cultural life. This was, however, referred to rather vaguely, usually in the form of one or two sentences. However, the collected accounts made almost no reference as to the causes of these inequalities. Describing the realities of the interwar Lviv, including the urban space, clearly demonstrates the scale of the perceptive distortion, with Lviv's reality seen very differently by different groups. Almost every witness testimony perpetuates numerous spatial stereotypes, claiming, for example, that before 1939 people were wealthier, and that the urban space was noticeably neater and tidier.[63] The nationality of the witnesses largely determined the emphasis they placed on specific features of pre-war Lviv, not only in terms of its spatial identity. Representatives of non-Polish nationalities remembered this period as not particularly positive, while Poles, in turn, identified Lwów with a 'paradise lost' and often overlooked the presence of other cultures and peoples.[64] In turn, Ukrainian accounts emphasised the atmosphere of the city as 'occupied' by Poles in the aftermath of the events of the First World War and the Polish-Ukrainian battles for the city in 1918–1920. Although Polish--Ukrainian relations in the city had also been dire before 1914, the escalation of the conflict into war created an atmosphere of mutual resentment towards other nationalities. The collapse of the Habsburg administration was linked to the seizure of power by the Polish people, who, having captured the city, ruled it on their own terms, paying no heed to the needs or reservations of other nationalities inhabiting the city. The Poles, defending their importance in the city and taking advantage of the privileged position given to them by the power they wielded, openly seized the opportunity to dominate successive key spheres of public life.[65]

63 Cf. В. Голубко, *Житлові проблеми Львова та шляхи їхнього розв'язання у міжвоєнний період (1919–1939)*, 'Україна: культурна спадщина, національна свідомість, державність,' vol. 27, 2015, pp. 136–152.

64 P. Olechowski, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

65 Examples of the Polish domination concern the issues (mentioned in this text) of language, education, universities, other areas of public life and full freedoms for Lviv's minorities. From the Ukrainian perspective, the Poles failed most egregiously when they broke the promise to grant autonomy to Eastern Galicia (enshrined in the Act of 26 September 1922 on the principles of universal provincial self-government, in particular concerning the provinces of Lviv, Ternopil and Stanislavov). Furthermore, the Poles completely dominated public celebrations and places of remembrance (for example, erection of monuments, street naming, state ceremonies) and created bureaucratic obstructions when granting permits for the construction of Orthodox churches (among other hurdles).

The perception of Lviv by Polish witnesses to history as a 'paradise lost,' in the authors' opinion, may often result from a combination of at least two elements. Firstly, they were young at the time (they were mostly children or in their teens) and, compared to the Second World War, probably lived an almost carefree life. Secondly, their world picture shattered due to the suddenness and brutality of the events of the war and the post-war displacements. Lviv's reality therefore did not necessarily appear idyllic, but, in the face of wartime terror, displacement and the subsequent inability to return to their hometowns, the city's space was mythologised in their recollections. In the statements of the Poles, the thread of national antagonisms or the thread of the presence of other nations in the city appears less frequently, and the story of nostalgia for the city is much more pronounced. This is perhaps due to the recollection of the political and cultural dominance of Poles in Lviv between the wars and in Galicia: as the owners of these lands, they enjoyed a privileged status in this broadly defined 'golden' period for Poles.[66] In turn, the image of an 'occupied' Lviv emerging from the accounts of Ukrainian witnesses, in the authors' view, may be related to their different perception of the history and identity of the city, which was founded by a prince of Halych Ruthenia – the cultural ancestor of Ukraine. According to this trope, Ukrainians may have considered themselves the rightful heirs of a city that had been usurped – first by the Poles, then by the Austrians and, after 1918, again by the Poles. This is also due to the deterioration of Polish-Ukrainian relations from 1918 to 1919 (with the Poles describing themselves as 'defenders' of the city), as a result of which the Ukrainians may not have felt entirely at home in Lviv.

According to witnesses' recollections, informal spatial divisions existed in the space of the interwar Lviv, outlined only in the collective consciousness of its inhabitants (without any clear indication of their boundaries or contours). This aspect of the city's identity surfaces in the accounts of several Jewish women, who pointed to the existence of Lvivian districts with a more Jewish or Polish character.[67] Their testimonies are corroborated by the population and private ownership structure in the different districts of the city (as assessed by religious denomination) (see Table 2).[68] Roman Catholics (who were almost exclusively Poles) predominated in the more developed and wealthier areas of Lviv (especially its Halickie district), the Jews lived predominantly in the north (Żółkiewskie district) and the

66 *Ibidem*, p. 116.

67 In the interwar Lviv, no districts and settlements designated for or inhabited only by the Jews or the Poles existed (the ghetto was established only in September 1941). The areas designated by Jewish witnesses to Lviv's history as 'ours' and 'not ours' existed only in the collective consciousness, respectively denoting places inhabited mostly or almost entirely by members of a given ethnicity and places inhabited by another group.

68 S. Pazyra, *Ludność Lwowa w pierwszej ćwierci xx wieku – odbitka ze Studiów z historii społecznej i gospodarczej poświęconych prof. Franciszkowi Bujakowi*, Lwów 1931, pp. 416–446.

old town, with its medium-quality dense urban fabric, while Greek Catholics (out of whom the Ukrainians constituted at least two-thirds) were scattered throughout the town, with roughly similar numbers in every district. As far as property ownership was concerned, it corresponded significantly to the population ratio, with Ukrainian ownership at a disadvantage.[69] Correspondingly, the accounts of the Ukrainians often mentioned Polish and Jewish owners, but no one mentioned an Ukrainian owner.

Table 2. *Structure of Lviv's population in 1922 by district and religion*

District	I. Halickie	II. Krakowskie	III. Żółkiewskie	IV. Łyczakowskie	V. Central	In total
Surface area	13,488 km² (41.9%)	8,652 km² (26.88%)	3,259 km² (10.11%)	6,453 km² (20.05%)	341 km² (1.06%)	32,193 km² (100%)
Population	58,849 (26.8%)	84,517 (38.5%)	32,079 (14.6%)	31,720 (14.5%)	12,574 (5.6%)	219 739 (100%)
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholics: ~72.5% Greek Catholics: ~13.5% Jews: ~12% Other: ~2 %	Roman Catholics: ~41% Greek Catholics: ~12% Jews: ~45.5% Other: ~ 1.5%	Roman Catholics: ~28.5% Greek Catholics: ~10% Jews: ~61% Other: ~0.5%	Roman Catholics: ~68% Greek Catholics: ~14.5% Jews: ~15.5% Other: ~2%	Roman Catholics: ~31% Greek Catholics: ~12.5% Jews: ~55% Other: ~1.5%	Roman Catholics: ~51.5% Greek Catholics: ~12.5% Jews: ~35.5% Other: ~0.5%
Private ownership by religious group	Roman Catholics: ~75% Greek Catholics: ~7% Jews: ~17% Other: ~1%	Roman Catholics: ~39% Greek Catholics: ~4% Jews: ~56% Other: ~1%	Roman Catholics: ~29% Greek Catholics: ~3% Jews: ~68% Other: <1%	Roman Catholics: ~69% Greek Catholics: ~7% Jews: ~23% Other: ~1%	Roman Catholics: ~31% Greek Catholics: ~12.5% Jews: ~55% Other: ~1.5%	Roman Catholics: ~51% Greek Catholics: ~6% Jews: ~38% Other: ~1.5%

Source: S. Pazyra, *Ludność Lwowa w pierwszej ćwierci XX wieku – odbitka ze Studiów z historii społecznej i gospodarczej poświęconych prof. Franciszkowi Bujakowi*, Lwów 1931, pp. 416–446.

The analysed interviews made manifest two opposite positions expressed by the Jews and the Ukrainians considering their perception of Lviv' educational space, governed by the Poles. While the Jews pointed to the lack of anti-Semitism in schools and its rise in universities, the Ukrainians had bitter memories about education in primary and middle schools, while they did not express their dissatisfaction with not being given a university with Ukrainian as the language of instruction (once promised to them by the Polish authorities). It is worth mentioning

69 *Ibidem*.

that the Ukrainians perceived Polish schools so negatively that they chiefly blamed the Polish educational system for their inability to write and read in Ukrainian.

In addition to the above, the accounts of the Ukrainians, not unlike those of the Jews, mention pre-war anti-Semitism in Lviv, which, according to representatives of both ethnicities, was evident in the behaviour of the Poles. The words of witnesses to history are corroborated by some anti-Semitic events in Lviv started by some of the city's inhabitants. Following the example of the university, from the beginning of the Second Polish Republic, Polish nationalist-leaning youth in Lviv (sharing sentiments of the Polish National Democrats) demanded at rallies and demonstrations the introduction of Jewish quotas (first, *numerus clausus*, and later, *numerus nullus*) at the universities and businesses.[70] Anti-Jewish riots broke out repeatedly in the city space (most notably, in 1929 and 1932); furthermore, before the Second World War, universities were pressured by fascists nationalists to enforce the university student seating segregation (the so-called ghetto benches), as mentioned by Danuta Riabinin and other witnesses.[71]

The spatial identity of the Jewish witnesses appears to have been built around two main motifs: sentimental reminiscing about lost family homes and the repression of the Jewish people. Moreover, the witnesses occasionally mentioned centres of cultural life or lively areas of individual and community enterprise (for example, synagogues, street trading areas). Also relevant is the question of mental maps dividing the city space into neighbourhoods inhabited or not inhabited by the Jews. This division, possibly brought about by the experience of pogroms and attacks by National Socialist groups (especially Polish students) in the interwar period, instilled fears of moving freely around the city among some Jewish residents.

The city space as a theme mentioned by the interviewees mostly relates to general, fragmentary, stereotype-coloured information on the interwar Lviv that points to certain discernible trends. Depending on the individual expectations of a researcher using oral history, the said method may yield much information

70 *Warszawski Dziennik Narodowy*, vol. 40, 1936, p. 1; see A. Biedrzycka, *Kalendarium Lwowa 1918–1939*, Kraków 2012, pp. 176, 188, 194, 200, 207, 239, 253, 397, 495, 874, 927. The principle of *numerus clausus* implied the introduction of a percentage limit of Jews among the members of a given institution, in proportion to their share of the country's population. The *numerus nullus* principle aimed to remove Jews from the public life of an institution altogether.

71 Account of Danuta Riabinin. Although this type of racial segregation went contrary to Article 7(2) of the Polish Constitution of 1935, ghetto benches were introduced at many Polish universities. Their introduction was accompanied by eruptions of (almost cyclical) violent anti-Semitic incidents, with professors at the Polytechnic attempting to shift the blame for these incidents onto Polish youth, whom they allegedly could not control. The anti-Semitic persecution drastically decreased the proportion of Jewish students in Lviv, from 24.6 percent (including 46.6 percent at the Jan Kazimierz University and 13.8 percent at the Lviv Polytechnic) in the academic year 1921/1922 to 12.2 per cent in total (including 10.8 percent at JKU and 10.9 percent at Lviv Polytechnic) in the academic year 1938/1939.

on, for example, tabooing of certain events from the interwar period. For the research on the identity of the interwar city space and the concurrent Polish--Ukrainian borderland scape, oral history and its insights appears secondary to other, more concrete sources, such as statistical data or other urban studies. Still, the oral history method can certainly illuminate and yield insights on selected elements of the sociopolitical discourse at the time.

When interpreting accounts relating exclusively to that period, it can be observed that, for most of the time, the different ethnicities coinhabiting Lviv did not live together but merely 'side by side.'[72] As mentioned at the beginning of this analysis, the phenomenon of natural separation of ethnic groups appears fairly frequently in the border zone cities: the borderland location significantly encourages this type of arrangement but does not determine it.

To summarise the discussion on the theme of spatial identity in the interwar Lviv, the accounts cited in this article show that witnesses indirectly addressed Lviv's spatial identity, with fundamental ethnicity-dependent differences in their views on urban identity. The Jews often spoke of spaces that were unfriendly and intolerant to them (universities), the Ukrainians decried the Polish schools as places of assimilation and de-Ukrainization, while the Poles tenderly reminisced about the lost beauty of this multinational but nevertheless 'Polish city.' Accordingly, it follows that the Poles perceived the urban space of Lviv as replete with objects, spaces and activities conducive for the formation of their own national identity. In turn, the Ukrainians interpreted the same urban space elements as directed against them and against their own national identity in Eastern Galicia (a justifiable view in light of concurrent historical events). Finally, the Jews in Lviv constructed their own identity in yet another way: they did not seek to make Lviv a stronghold of their cultural identity but simply wished to live unbothered as rightful inhabitants of a multinational city. However, because of the growing hatred against the Jews (that also seeped into the Galician borderlands), the Jews could feel neither safe nor free in Lviv.

Conclusions

The possibilities of researching the identity of the pre-1939 space of Lviv and Galicia using the oral history method are now considerably more limited than when investigating the Second World War or the post-1945 period. The two dominant problems encountered in the analyses were, firstly, the tabooisation of this period in the People's Republic of Poland and in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic (a relevant conclusion in itself) and, secondly, the death of many witnesses to history

72 Ю. Вялова, Спроби налагодження польсько-українського діалогу міжвоєнного періоду: сподівання та реалії, 'Міжнародні зв'язки України: наукові пошуки і знахідки,' vol. 29, 2020, pp. 60–81.

in the period from 1939 to 1991, since only after 1991 the oral history research in Ukraine became easier to conduct. Research into the identity of the Polish-Ukrainian borderlands of the interwar period primarily depends on other source materials, that is, on extant documents that detail issues in social and private life and allow one to verify a dubiously representative (in terms of quantity) set of accounts of witnesses to history. Alternatively, the interviews with witnesses may serve to exemplify relationships and relations between ethnic groups living in the interwar Lviv, elucidating complex identities of the peoples of the researched borderland.

In light of all complexities discussed above, the use of the oral history method in researching the identity of Lviv's urban space and the entire Polish-Ukrainian borderland for the interwar period does not lead to groundbreaking conclusions. Instead, it complements already established facts and narratives (written with data gleaned from, among other things, other previously mentioned methods). The earlier the recollections and the fewer living witnesses to history, the less reliable the oral history method is, and the conclusions reached by its means may – depending on the attitude of the interpreter – both demythologise and mythologise the space. This tendency becomes even more marked in accounts that, such as those analysed here, reminisce about periods of relative peace; accounts of the atrocities of the Second World War abound in far more accurate and detailed descriptions, also in the context of discussing space.

From an interdisciplinary perspective, analyses using the oral history method yield data than can support, *inter alia*, geographical interpretations. The oral history material contributes to the development of a contextual background that helps to elucidate causes and effects of socio-cultural processes involving humans' relation to space. The geographical elements, in a manner of speaking, return the favour to the oral history method, since they locate the accounts of witnesses to history in a specific physical context, allowing or helping the researcher to find the spatial setting of the mentioned events.

According to the authors' recommendations, in order to minimise methodological problems, researchers urgently need to expand collections of testimonies of witnesses to history while it is still possible. The great urgency is due to the very advanced age of the witnesses, with the window of opportunity most likely closing within the next 10–12 years (the youngest witnesses to the interwar period will then be at least 100 years old by that date). Although this perspective does not inspire optimism, it is also worth emphasising that ongoing research on oral history brought about the appearance of new, hitherto lost or never before published source materials, collected in increasingly well-organised digitised archival databases that facilitate their dissemination.

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Summary
The aim of the article is to further the understanding of the identity of the Lviv space as the capital of the Polish-Ukrainian cultural borderland (1919–1939). Employing the oral history method, the article analyses how the city was perceived by witnesses to history belonging to the most numerous ethnic groups living in Lviv at that time – the Poles, the Ukrainians and the Jews, using accounts recorded and stored in the databases. In order to alleviate possible methodological problems and to verify accounts of witnesses to history, other research methods were also used to complement the oral history approach. Having become familiar with the abovementioned oral accounts, the authors highlighted differences in perception of Lviv by individual ethnic groups among its inhabitants. The Jews remembered Lviv most concretely, pointing out places hostile to them. The Ukrainians, in turn, often mentioned the inability to learn Ukrainian in public schools. Finally, the Poles focused on the beauty of both the lost city and surroundings of their family homes. Importantly, both the Ukrainians and the Jews chiefly blamed the Poles for causing social tensions and, supposedly, appropriating the urban space for developing their own national identity.