

# Myths and Monuments in the Collective Consciousness and Social Practice of Wrocław

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***Abstract:** The ambition of this study is to analyze how myths have unfolded in collective memory discourses, social practices, and urban space in Wrocław. The article draws on empirical data indicating the presence of historical myths in the social consciousness, and demonstrating the relation between these myths, on the one hand, and contemporary perceptions and evaluations of the related monuments, on the other, among different categories of inhabitants of Wrocław. The study explores the role of monuments in forging both local and national identities. Social practices relating to monuments are looked at from the perspective of the actualization of myths in the present-day cityscape. The process of constructing new meanings began in the 1990s with varying degrees of intensity in a number of locations in Wrocław as old monuments disappeared from the cityscape, and new ones appeared. These developments reflect not only changes in the values and social consciousness of the urban population but also the complicated nature of the dynamics of the collective identity, involving the simultaneous processes of converting, restoring, bringing into the limelight, rehabilitating, and excluding different elements.*

It is a well-known postulate that urban myths tend to explain social hierarchies and justify the existing state of affairs. In particular, origin myths are especially instrumental in legitimating possession of territories and uniting collectivities. Myths, in turn, need rituals to structure and enact beliefs, and monuments as symbolic nodes of the urban space have an important function in such rituals. In order to put this linkage