Abstract

The divided cities of Český Těšín and Cieszyn are a place where different nations, ethnicities and religions mingled for centuries. Naturally, different historical narratives also collide here. This thesis focuses on qualitative research of the change in the perception of places of memory, in which the collective memory of individual groups of residents of Český Těšín and Cieszyn crystallizes. The thesis engages with the main hypothesis that the perception of these places changes over time, and one of the crucial impulses to this change was the involvement of the Czech Republic and Poland in the European integration process. The semi-structured interviews with representatives of cultural, social and political life in both cities serve as primary sources. Based on the interviews, the Olza/Olše border river, the Slezanka and the Czechoslovak Border Demarcation monuments commemorating the division of the two cities in 1920, the Jewish necropolises and the German graves in the communal cemeteries, and the Cieszyn tram came to the fore. The influence of the European integration process on the transformation of the perception of the places of memory is most evident in the case of the river Olza/Olše and the Cieszyn tram. Both places of memory became the showcase of building cross-border cooperation between cities within the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion. As part of the cross-border projects of Český Těšín and Cieszyn, a significant transformation of public space has taken place, especially in the vicinity of the Olza/Olše itself, which is possible thanks to EU funds. In the case of places of memory, in which the memory of problematic moments of history is projected and whose potential for cross-border cooperation is therefore naturally less evident, the influence of the involvement of both countries in EU structures is also less obvious. Nevertheless, in some aspects, Jewish and German cemeteries and monuments referring to the division of cities show some influence of the membership of both countries in the EU.