

Willingness for a tram

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The other day someone tried to convince me that Tennessee Williams' 'A Streetcar Named Desire' play, known from a once famous film directed by Elia Kazan, with Vivien Leigh and Marlon Brando in leading roles, should be translated into Polish as 'Tramwaj na Ochotę' (Tram to Ochota). Well, anything is possible in the times, when titles of classical books are being changed. And so Agatha Christie became the author of a book not known before 'And Then There Were None', and even 'Winnie the Pooh' did not remain in the new translation.

But I am interested in a slightly different issue. Because I am absorbed in the means of public transport and in travelling. And not necessarily in this mischievous sense, suggested by a known Italian writer and semiotician, Umberto Eco (*Jak podróżować z łososiem* / *How to Travel with a Salmon*, Noir Sur Blanc, Warsaw 2017), but in a less surreal and much more prosaic dimension. Because the question I ask myself is as follows: whether – for example – a travel by tram is a nuisance? Or perhaps an attraction? More precisely – can it become an attraction?

A sociologist would probably suggest here a widely planned and at the same time more detailed questionnaire surveys, perhaps narrative interviews, may be a series of focus groups? A sociologist-columnist is inclined to a different side. Towards a fragmentary, that is true, but in certain cases giving fairly good effects, so-called 'participative observation'. Because I have fairly well learned two cities, in which the tram is a tourist attraction. These are San Francisco and Lisbon. Let us stay in the capital of Portugal with its legendary tram of line 28. On steep streets of Lisbon the tram fulfils basically the function of lifts. Not only reaching a hill is an attraction here, but just this slow climbing onto a sightseeing terrace

through winding streets of old Lisbon, in an 'ancient' vehicle.

In a way the tram seems to be a symbol of the city – at least you can reach such a conclusion looking at the city gadgets and souvenirs intended for tourists. Here, apart from numerous, various size miniatures of tram-cars, in the whole city you can see watercolours presenting Lisbon sights – at least in 90% of them just tram appears. Talking about metro, Lisbon has one of the best transport solutions among the cities I know – there are not many lines (blue, red, green), but you can get everywhere



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fast and comfortably. So the trams are not only an element of the urban transport, but an attraction. Someone could say, where is Rome (Lisbon), where Crimea, and where our Polish (Silesian) beetroots. Well, I think, quite close. I mean – to create a tourist attraction related to the urban transport.

Creation... Perhaps it is necessary to be capable of looking at the issue with fresh eyes. This can be the eye of a sociology professor – and that is how I remember my (then student's) full of surprise reaction to a real passion, with which my unforgettable Prof Ryszard Dyoniziak was taking photographs of Katowice tenement houses. I was surprised, because professor was teaching in Krakow, so at that time I thought that nothing could delight him in Katowice. As it has turned out – Katowice Modernism was one of his hobbies. That was in the 1980s. Unique popularity (measured also by the number of enthusiastic comments) achieved on the Facebook by the site 'Silesian streets and tenement hous-

es' shows that in his admiration professor was one of precursors. But it is also worth looking at the world with child's eyes. My friend, a Polish writer living in Germany for nearly a few decades, presented her impressions from her visit to Katowice in one of her columns published in the Munich journal 'My City' (September-October 2013) in such a way: „(...) Sad and grey – I thought trying to get to the other side of a destroyed street. Mum, look, how colourful it is here! – my boy rouse me from abstraction. Colourful? – crossed my mind, looking around. What colourful is in this greyness? – I was thinking looking at workers working in the heat. Mum, there! – Sasha pulled my hand – showing a tram speeding on the track. – Nice? – his voice sounded a real admiration. – Nice – I agreed surprised. Can we stop and have a look? – asked, when we approached a tram stop. We can – I answered and only now I have noticed that trams are not old but colourful. Each different. Yellow, blue, red, white, and even pink, with painted inscriptions, were moving slowly on the rattling rails. They were stopping in front of us and leaving, and my husband was enthusiastically making pictures. This is unique. We can see something like this only in Poland – he was saying with admiration, and I was dumbstruck, looking at him. It is so colourful here – echoed him son (...). But why all trams are blue in Munich? Blue? – I suddenly realised that I have been living in Munich so many years and I have never paid attention to the tram colour. I always look at the number. – Yes. All trams are blue, buses as well – stated my boy in a confident voice. – It is not so colourful as here – added with nostalgia.”

And I remember well aesthetic controversies about coloured advertisements on trams... ■



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