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POSSIBILITIES TO UNLOCK THE HERITAGE POTENTIAL IN POLISH CITIES. RESULTS OF THE SOCIAL STUDY

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Abstract: The heritage represents a great variety of values. In today's world one of the widely discussed is its value to act as a development asset, capable of creating social and economic benefits to the community. Economic and social potential, however, can only be unlocked only under certain conditions. The author will discuss the subject of social approval and recognition of the heritage values, linking the heritage's potential to influence local development with the social need to participate in, benefit from, and evaluate such development. The reasoning will be based on a nationwide social study commissioned by National Heritage Board of Poland in 2015, which focuses on citizens' opinions, and in which cities can be seen as fast-growing development entities in search of new development assets.

Keywords: Cities, economic assets, heritage, heritage values, local development, social survey.

JEL codes: z1, z3

Introduction

The notion of cultural heritage is evolving due to legal, social, cultural and economic development. Having originally referred exclusively to the notion of the "monument", since the 70's the concept of "cultural heritage" has been rapidly gaining ground among variety of disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, geography and economy. Nowadays heritage is considered a constantly transformed asset composed of different values not only linking the past and the future, but also having a considerable impact on the contemporaneity (Kowalski 2013: 17). In today's world we have become progressively aware of heritage's potential as a development's agent, important on a local level. This change of perception

is interlinked with the prevailing concept of socio-economic development and sustainable development which are in a way replacing the concept of the economic growth (Murzyn-Kupisz 2013: 93). At the heart of the concept of sustainable development is to combine human development and sustaining finite resources for the well being of next generations. The heritage, too, is a finite and non-renewable resource, as it is impossible to restore the values once lost. On the other hand heritage protection corresponds with the concept of sustainable development as it is essential for it to be preserved for the future generations. The heritage is safeguarded because it conveys values which were perceived differently throughout the history. The fundamental categorization of monument's values was proposed by Riegl (Riegl & Dehio 2012) in XIX century and consisted of a division into historical, artistic and age value. Interesting statement was made in order to underline contemporary need to protect a monument as it carries commemorative, use, and newness value. It was also of Riegl's opinion that the valorization (assessment of values) of a monument changes over time, subjected to the needs, beliefs and approaches of the general public.

It seems that the Riegl's concept is still valid nowadays. The idea of the valorization of heritage proposes new values as general public's attention is gradually focused on heritage as a potential factor of social and economic development. Heritage, according to D. Throsby, possesses not only cultural, but also economic value, which should be viewed together as a complimentary whole (Murzyn-Kupisz 2012: 35).

Heritage carries with it economic values when it is useful to the people and satisfies various social needs. In other terms heritage might influence the economic development through creation of specific products and services based on it, offering opportunities for business and employment. These products and services may be created within one of the "heritage branches", which can be understood as an economic activity occurring within heritage, dependent on it or attracted to it (Koziol *et al.* 2013: 48).

Still, the impact of heritage on local development might have broader meaning not limited only to the economic value creation. Recognizing heritage as an economic asset, one might seek to explore heritage as an indicator and facilitator of social development. This force translates into heritage influence on identity creation, sense of belonging and social engagement, creating a foundation from which social capital might be built. Heritage might play a role in peoples' well-being and quality of life by improving neighborhoods and making them better places to live.

Having understood that values create heritage potential it is important to underline that influence of heritage on the economy and society is only a possibility. Heritage's capacity to enhance the local development can be triggered and turned into a real factor only under certain conditions (Chabiera *et al.* 2016: 58). One of these conditions is the readiness of people to draw the benefits from heritage by positive valorization, interest and participation.

The paper will concentrate on the possibility to unlock heritage potential in the cities. Taking into account intensive social changes in Polish cities such as globalization, metropolization, and democratisation processes and development

of civil society (Karwińska 2015: 76), the author finds it interesting to analyze the perception of heritage in cities and uses it as a starting point of discussion on whether cities can be regarded as the pioneers of translation of heritage potential into heritage impact on the development, and, if so, which types of cities tend to do better than others in unleashing the socio-economic potential of heritage. Having noticed this potential, some of the cities have started to include heritage in their strategy policies, using it in different ways, from tourist attractions to place-making resource (Murzyn-Kupisz 2014: 78). But the question arises: what is the role of cities and their citizens in unlocking the heritage potential and what is the demand for heritage among the inhabitants.

To address the question posed above the article presents, among other things, attitudes of the urban areas' inhabitants towards their historical surroundings, subsequently contrasted with the remainder of the Polish society. The attitudes were measured within nationwide qualitative survey on the representative sample of adults, commissioned by the National Heritage Board of Poland in June 2015. The survey addresses not only heritage values and their impact on urban society as seen by the citizens; it also measures their level of participation, engagement and sense of responsibility, providing an answer to the question what is the city dwellers' approach to living with heritage, society's willingness to pay or sacrifice when it comes to heritage protection.

1. The social survey – methodology

A nationwide survey was carried out in June 2015 as a part of the project coordinated by National Heritage Board of Poland "HoME – Heritage of My Environment. Cultural heritage values in local communities" funded within EEA and Norway grants. The survey was conducted in CAPI method (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing). The quantitative survey was carried out on the representative sample of 1067 respondents. The respondents were grouped according to the gender, age, educational background, geographic region and place of living. The latter is the most interesting in terms of the article. The representative sample was divided into rural areas inhabitants, which compose 38.1% of the sample, and three types of the cities (divided by population size) that together account for the remaining 61.9% of the sample, mirroring the Polish population division. In Poland, the most numerous are the citizens living in small cities of up to 50,000 inhabitants. There are 826 such cities in Poland and they are inhabited by 9,176,540 people (Stańczak *et al.* 2015: 117). To give an example, cities such as Bolesławiec, Zakopane, Sopot, Malbork, Cieszyn, Kazimierz Dolny, Łowicz, Oświęcim fall into this category. Their inhabitants make up 23.6% of the survey's sample. 21.2% of the sample was composed of the citizens living in the big cities, above 200, 000 people. 7,656,398 inhabitants are populating 16 such cities and Warszawa, Kraków, Łódź, Katowice, Poznań, Radom, Wrocław, Gdańsk, Lublin are the examples of them. The least common are middle-sized cities, inhabited by between 50,000 to 200,000 people. 71 cities of this category, such as Elbląg,

Tychy, Bielsko-Biała, Gliwice, Olsztyn, Rzeszów, Biała Podlaska, Zielona Góra, are home to 6,383,414 citizens. The middle-size cities are represented in the survey by a sample of 17.2%.

2. Citizens and heritage – together or separate?

The results will be divided into three sections, each of them responding to one of the questions below:

- **Importance & values:** How is cultural heritage important to the citizens and what values actually make it valuable? In this part the author will try to identify the values appreciated by citizens in order to diagnose whether the importance attributed to heritage might unlock the heritage potential
- **Interest & participation:** Are the citizens interested in heritage, do they participate in its protection?
- **Awareness, sense of responsibility & willingness to pay:** What is citizens' level of sensibility and awareness when it comes to heritage, what is their sense of responsibility and willingness to pay for heritage protection?

Importance & values

The three opening questions were asked in order to measure the level of importance that attributed to heritage in three different dimensions: personal, community and national. The cultural heritage is highly valued by the Poles who declare that **it is important to them personally** (86% very or rather important). This support is even stronger in the biggest (91.9% very or rather important) and smallest cities (91.4% very or rather important), but weaker among middle-size cities' inhabitants (78.9% very or rather important). On the **community level** (the question: is heritage important to the local community in which you live), the support of Poles in generally lowered by approximately 10 percentage points. Yet, it remains more or less comparable for smallest cities (87.6%). The results of the big cities oscillate around average for Poland (79.3%), but the importance of the heritage in the community of the middle size city inhabitants is least visible – for 73.5% of the respondents answered that heritage is very or rather important. The third question in order was supposed to clarify whether heritage, according to the Poles, is a shared value, one that might build the foundations of a nation – **is it important to the Polish society?** Generally, Poles agree with that statement (85.3% of positive answers), a number close to the results for big cities' inhabitants (86.2%). The answer is slightly more positive among small cities' residents (90.6%) and noticeably less positive among middle-size city dwellers (79.2%). Respondents who say that heritage is 'rather important' outnumber those who say it is 'important'.

The survey investigated the specific values that, according to the Poles, constitute the importance of heritage. According to the answers heritage is valuable **because it can make a place of living unique**, exceptional, different from others: 89.7% of Poles agreed on that. The distribution of the answers indicates that small cities' citizens recognise that value (95.8%), just slightly more often than those of the big

cities (93.5%). There is 8.6% percentage points decrease between the latter and the middle size cities' citizens (84.9%).

The respondents are of opinion that a **value of making ones proud of a place of living** has nearly equal gravity. The feeling of being proud can be induced by the heritage – as it was declared by 88.4% of Poles. It seems that city inhabitants clearly see the connection between pride and heritage – the question *Is heritage valuable because it can make you proud of a place of living unique* was positively answered by 95.2% of the small city' inhabitants, which indicated how important is identity for the smaller communities, and by 89.1% of the biggest cities' inhabitants. An average inhabitant of the middle-sized city feels a bit less heritage-related pride (81.8%) than an average inhabitant of Poland.

The next examined social value of heritage was **heritage's potential to raise the quality of local community's life**, which was recognized by 84.9% of Poles. It is in the cities above 200 thousands where there is the biggest chance to meet supporters of that statement (90%). Although that number is similar in cities of up to 50,000 inhabitants (89.2%), it is distinctly lower for middle-sized cities' inhabitants.

In contemporary discussion, not only societal, but also economic values are considered. **Can heritage provide economic potential for the respondent's community?** Almost three quarters of Poles fully or partially agreed with the statement, which was backed up by 81.1% of the big cities' and by 79.3% of the small cities' inhabitants. The value of economic potential is less obvious for middle-sized cities' inhabitants (66.6%).

The survey has also tested attitudes towards historical and scientific values. Therefore respondents were presented with the question whether "Is cultural heritage valuable because it is a **testament to our history which should be passed on to future generations**". The amount of affirmative answers was striking: 91.6% for the general population, 95.7% for inhabitants of small cities, 95.5% for inhabitants of big cities and 82.7% inhabitants of middle-sized cities. Heritage was recognized as an **important source of knowledge** by an impressive majority of the Poles (90.3% for the general population).

Heritage seems to have gained recognition as an intimate value, important personally and experienced privately, but also as a factor relevant on a national level: something that unites members of society regardless of particular place of residence within the country. Comparison of the answers led to a conclusion that personal and national dimensions of heritage are more important to respondents than at the local community level, which is an interesting finding. What is more, it seems that smallest and biggest cities' citizens are more convinced about the importance of heritage than residents of middle size cities.

In addition to that, there are historical values, associated rather with the notion of a "monument" than "heritage" – the historical value of the former being accepted both by the Poles in general and citizens of all categories of cities in particular. Societal values, more frequently linked with heritage by the respondents, are understood as a potential to influence a feeling of uniqueness or pride in a community, and to impact aesthetics, recreational opportunities, quality of life, and, with less impressive figures – economic potential.

This support is at all times higher in the small and big cities. It can be inferred that these communities are more frequently beneficiaries of heritage assets, contrary to the middle-sized cities, where recognition of heritage values is below the average for Poland. Nevertheless, it seems that heritage is perceived by urban inhabitants as an important asset shaping city's identity, quality of life, and even impacting city's economy. It is thus perceived as a value precious enough to be strived to, protected and utilized.

Interest & participation

Citizens appreciate heritage's values, which means that they might aware of its potential to shape cities' identity and economy. In this chapter we will get acquainted with the information on citizens' eagerness to participate in heritage and measure their interest in its protection and use (taking action in using heritage values will transmit to the scope of heritage influence on local development).

Participation was investigated within the question **Have you participated in any activity connected with cultural heritage during the last 12 months?** Less than a quarter (22.3%) of Poles had. The distribution of answers indicates that the bigger the city, the higher is the level of participation of their citizens in heritage. This does not reflect the distribution of answers on the importance and values, but presumably it mirrors the richness and diversity of the cultural offer observed in every type of the city. Still, the small number of citizens who had participated in any heritage-related activity (the question did not specify any distinctive actions) creates an immense gap between how citizens value the heritage and how actively they participate in it (22.6% of positive answers for small cities' residents, 26.3% for middle-sized cities, 33.6% for the big ones). It might also mean that some practices are not considered as participating in heritage by the respondents, as not everyone realized that such participation is not only going to the museums but also cultivating traditions like the Christmas Eve.

Nearly twice as many Poles are **interested in what's happening with cultural heritage in their local area**, yet it is still less than a half of the population (46.9%, of whom 5.5% were "very interested"). The differences between city categories are subtle with big cities slightly ahead – 53.1%, (50% middle size cities and 49.6%). It appears that the interest is not correlated with the participation in the activities or appreciation of the heritage values. On the other hand being interested, alerted and aware of the changes of the historical spaces is essential for heritage protection and use. The big cities have relatively higher number of people not interested at all (8%) and the lowest number of people neither interested or not (23%).

In the subsequent question the focus was placed directly on finding out whether burghers might take action themselves when it comes to tackling heritage challenges. To the question **Do you have any impact on what's happening with cultural heritage in your area?** just 5.1% of Poles have answered that they did. The impact the city dwellers believe they might have on their historical surrounding is critically low – only 2% of the middle-sized cities' citizens and far from being satisfactory in other cities (5.6% for small cities and 6.9% for big cities). The most frequent way to have an impact in the big city is to *support the municipality's actions and take part*

in making decisions and in the small cities – *engage as a volunteer*. On the other hand, the most important reason for not having an influence on the situation of cultural heritage in local community declared by respondents *was never thinking about it* (29.8%¹), *lack of knowledge how to engage* (24.9%) and *not having enough time* (23.2%). 11.2% of Poles in general are definitely not interested in influencing the situation of heritage. Disturbing variations at cities level can be observed in regard to the answer *I never thought about it* as it oscillated around 30%, so the fraction of citizens who are functioning next to heritage problems is not determined by a place of living – it is stable for all of the cities. Some differences are visible within the answer *I don't know how I could get involved* – the bigger the city, the less knowledge it's citizens are on the ways to engage (20.6% for small cities and 29.9% for big cities), which is an interesting finding, as we could ponder that big cities give the largest possibilities to take action, but it seems that localness plays an even more important role here. Anyway, these striking answers disillusion – more knowledge, information, content need to be transmitted to the people by the state along with local authorities whose responsibility is to involve people in the decision-making processes. Even if people claim to be interested, they don't know how to engage and make a difference.

The respondents were asked whether they knew any monument in the local area in which they lived and 62.7% had confirmed that they did. In this case, the knowledge among the cities' inhabitants, in respective city categories, is larger than in the Polish society as a whole: from 67.9% (middle-sized cities) to 73.6% (cities over 200,000 inhabitants). At the same time less than a half of the Poles feel personally connected to one of the monuments in their area, with the most considerable share in small cities (51.1%). Are Polish citizens interested in some other cities' heritage, especially while visiting for holidays or leisure? **How important do they find local cultural heritage – the fact that the place of leisure features many monuments, places interesting due to their history and wealth of traditions?** For 14.1% of Poles it is very important and for 39.3% – rather important. Small cities' inhabitants have stood out slightly as for 15.6% of them it is very important, and for 42.6% – rather important.

Awareness, sense of responsibility & willingness to pay

Having now established the general mood of public opinion which favors heritage values but is not a very active heritage player, it would be interesting to investigate who do Poles in general, and city-dwellers in particular, hold primarily responsible for preserving traditions and protecting monuments in their municipalities. At the top of the list one can find the local government, followed by citizens and private monument owners, with central government at the bottom. Although for citizens and owners it seems that in the eyes of inhabitants of both big and small cities, it is citizens who are more responsible than the owner. These are interesting findings as due to the Polish law the primary responsible party is the owner of the monument, which might suggest lack of knowledge of the actual legal status of monuments, but

¹ Sample is composed with the respondents who declared not to have an impact on heritage – 886 people.

also serves as a good example of how, according to the respondents, the responsibility should be, or is expected to be, shifted towards local authorities.

Knowing this, we might quote answers to the question **In your opinion, is it worth to invest public funds to protect monuments?** There was substantial support of this idea in big cities (87.5%), and very strong support in the smallest cities, even though it is where budgets have a tendency to be tighter (94.7%). This finding suggests that local authorities can count on their citizens' support in spending on heritage care and financing heritage projects. This conclusion must be underlined, as local authorities currently do not prioritize spending on heritage, which results *e.g.* in delaying or cutting investments.

Referring to principles of economy, which teach that value is reflected in market prices, the survey contained questions on a personal willingness to pay in order to establish the value heritage has to the people. We have asked whether the respondent **is willing to offer 1% of his tax² in order to preserve and protect cultural heritage in his/her municipality** and more than 7 out of 10 Poles have responded positively, even though the heritage protection is actually not very popular as a donating purpose³. A significant divergence in the distribution of answers might be observed among city inhabitants: the most willing to deduct a portion of their income in order to help heritage protection are the small cities' inhabitants (84.2%), the least – middle-sized cities' inhabitants (60.8%) and between them – big cities' inhabitants (74.5%). These numbers are halved (33.2%) when the respondents are asked about their willingness to give a **one-time donation** of their own money, not as part of a tax liability paid anyway to the state. This time, only 27.7% of the smallest, 34% of the middle size cities and 39.5% of the big cities' inhabitants would be willing to contribute. The cost of the heritage maintenance is infinitely large and overcomes capabilities of any single municipality and even the state budget. Turning to the citizens would be an option to save many more historical items than just with state and local budgets. However, less than one quarter of the respondents are ready to accept an **additional heritage tax** in order to preserve and protect cultural heritage in respondents' municipality. Only the big cities' inhabitants would be willing to pay the tax more frequently than an average Pole (32.1%). The Poles are not very keen on **paying for entrance tickets** to heritage sites either, as from 30% to 50% of them have declared that this should be free of charge. The answers were highly dependent on a particular site in question, its popularity, renown, and also a habit to pay: from 29.4% of Poles who claimed the necessity of free admission to the Royal Castle in Kraków to 49.9% to the Church of Peace in Świdnica. The most frequent sum of money that Poles are willing to spend on an entry ticket is between 6 to 10 PLN. It seems that the Poles regard access to the culture as their right and

² 1% system – In Poland, like in many other countries, the tax payers have the opportunity given by the law within tax donation scheme to deduct 1% amount of personal income and donate it to the chosen nonprofit organisation which has the status of the Public Benefit Organizations.

³ *Informacja dotycząca kwot 1% należnego podatku dochodowego od osób fizycznych przekazanych organizacjom pożytku publicznego z rozliczenia za 2013 rok*, Ministry of Finances, Warsaw 2014, [<http://www.finanse.mf.gov.pl/documents/766655/2970107/Wykaz+organizacji+po%C5%BCytku+publicznego,+kt%C3%B3re+w+2014+r.+otrzyma%C5%82y+1+proc>, accessed: 01.11.2015]

feel it should be provided by the state. They are, on the other hand, more open to **paying for an additional service** (e.g. taking part in the workshop, museum attraction, educational activity): 53.1% of the Poles would pay extra, with 58.6% in big cities, 48.9% in medium cities, 61.2% in small cities. The majority would pay up to 10 PLN, while citizens of the middle-size cities (11.6%) and the biggest cities are more often willing to pay more considerable sums of between 21 and 40 PLN (11.2% of the biggest cities).

But it's not only a financial contribution that might count. We should be looking more vigorously into the social engagement, as nowadays it is the society that takes over some important duties related to heritage: organizing financial aid, educating, controlling if and alarming when heritage is at risk, and sometimes even supervising the conservation. About the same number of people who are willing to offer one-time donation for heritage are willing to offer **own time and social/volunteer work**. The highest figure of such respondents is 35.8% and it appears among big cities' inhabitants, a slight divergence in the with the little cities (34.6%) and 10 pp. divergence with the middle size cities.

Conclusion

According to the study, big cities' inhabitants are highly convinced about the heritage importance, especially on a personal level. For a large number of respondents in this group the heritage has a value, before others, as a testimony of the history. Moreover, according to the citizens, the values residing in heritage create potential: to raise quality of life and to boost local economy. These citizens are the ones who are more eager to participate in heritage-related activities, although just one third of them is actually participating. Every other of big cities' inhabitants is interested in what is happening with cultural heritage in his local area, but not more than 7% of them have any real impact on that situation (mostly through participating in decision-making process). For those who do not participate the reason of not exercising their influence on the city's heritage is linked to their lack of awareness or knowledge as most frequently they were not thinking about it or didn't know how to start. Among all of the citizens, they are the ones who know best their heritage surrounding, however, they feel slightly less connected to it than in smaller communities. They are the most willing to sacrifice their free time, give one-time donations or agree to an additional tax for heritage protection.

On the other hand, the citizens of the smallest communities seem to have much more private and intimate relation with the historical surrounding, in comparison to the other types of cities. They feel a more personal connection, and are aware of the importance of heritage value to community links, identity, pride, uniqueness. It seems that they are more aware of the identity-making value of heritage, which leaves us with a conclusion that in small communities the heritage is an important factor creating social bonds. Such cities might base their development policy on heritage-driven quality of life and social cohesion to attract new inhabitants or to keep the existing ones, and in doing so remain competitive to the big cities. However,

inhabitants of small cities are less likely to sacrifice their personal financial assets or time in order to preserve heritage, leaving it rather to the public bodies.

The third type of the city is the middle-size city, where the citizens' perceived ability to influence on a city's heritage is extremely low, which was reflected in the survey results indicating that their participation level, interest, recognition of values, sense of responsibility and awareness were significantly lower than in other types of cities. This might be linked to their development slowdown resulting from a loss of the voivodeship-capital status which came along with the reform of the administrative division of Poland that introduced 16 voivodeships, or regions, instead of the former 49. Many of such cities haven't fully succeeded in finding new function and idea for themselves.

Consequently, it seems that it is in the citizens of big and small communities where we might discern the potential for a change. In the big cities this a result of their size and power to attract new ideas and creative class, creating social capital, while on the other hand in the smallest cities the connection to the heritage is backed up by a sense of community which is often based on a sense of place and its history.

Polish city-dwellers attach great value to heritage and are aware of the need to protect it, however, their attitudes do not translate into bigger attention, willingness to participate in costs or making real difference. This leads to a conclusion that there is a serious social capacity yet to be unlocked in the heritage potential in cities, which in large part remains dormant due to many citizens' lack of willingness to take up a more active role. Since heritage is an important public matter the social participation in its protection and use should be encouraged in order to fully utilize heritage as a social development agent. The cultural and social values that are more important to the people than economic ones, so it is the social development that should receive the highest priority. Still, as for the economic value, the study leads to a conclusion that there is a chance to prompt a demand for heritage-based products and services, as about a half of the citizens are interested in heritage-related activities at their holiday destination, and also half of them is willing to pay extra for interesting additional activities, *e.g.* related to visiting a museum.

Currently, the heritage is not used by local authorities in cities' development and people don't ask for it – the “heritage leverage” on social and economic development is not utilized, and heritage potential not assessed nor realized. What is more, based on our common Eastern European post-communist experience, the citizens often do not take responsibility for the common good, which is understood as something to be cared for by the state or just somebody else – so citizens do not really feel responsible. Therefore heritage is seen as a private, personal value, but one which doesn't carry with it a personal responsibility to care for it and preserve it. Therefore the main challenge in heritage management revealed by this survey is in its social dimension: how to close an abysmal gap between declarative value and real actions taken by the citizens and encourage them to act on their heritage convictions. On other hand, high support for values creates a serious potential to use it in sustainable socio-economic development and also implement it in the process of “self-reinvention” of the cities which seek for new fuel for change and progress.

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