

2. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN POLISH UNESCO SITES

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INTRODUCTION

Development of tourism depends on various factors, including the natural, social, economic, and infrastructural ones, as well as the ones related to international, national, regional, and local politics. In addition, the competitiveness and cooperation between the tourism market stakeholders are just as important to the matter. This growth, however, brings about both positive and negative consequences. The most important gains of the expansion of leisure industry are economic boost in touristic destinations with the funds obtained from provision of services, development of transport, sport, and recreational infrastructure, as well as improvement of cultural, entertainment and gastronomy and catering services enhancing the quality of life of local communities. Needless to say, that all of these positive changes wouldn't be possible without the flow of tourists (Du Cros & McKercher 2015, Matteucci et al., 2022). Moreover, an important part of income from tourism is allocated to revitalisation, modernization, and maintenance of cultural and historical sites of unique natural values.

On the other hand, Pollock (2012) had described the dominant business-as-usual tourism model as the Road to Decline; a model based on production, extraction of resources, and economic growth. Development of tourism can add up to the intensification of various environmental problems, such as natural, social, and economic ones. For instance, „the international tourism arrivals annual growth rates of around 4–5% in the pre COVID-19 era and the ongoing demand for long-haul travel raised clear questions about the sustainability of tourism in terms of emissions and negative contributions to global environmental change (Gössling & Scott, 2018; Scott et al., 2016; Seyfi et al. 2022). At the same time, according to the analysis conducted by Lenzen et al. (2018), who focused on the tourism industry's total carbon footprint from 2009 to 2013, tourism accounts for around 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions, making the tourism sector a bigger polluter than the construction industry. Thus, from the perspective of the climate crisis, tourism is clearly not a 'smokeless industry' as it urgently needs to reduce its impacts on the environment (Bows et al., 2009)“(Seyfi et al. 2022, p. 2).

In order to preserve the environment and enhance sustainable tourism at the same time, various system initiatives and changes need to be adopted. Implementing those solutions applies mostly to the UNESCO world heritage sites, characterised by unique touristic qualities, and depends on various market stakeholders, like objects managers, institutions, organisations, and national administrative units in charge of given destinations. As part of the project a series of workshops were organised to allow an in-depth discussion on the key questions of sustainable tourism development of Polish UNESCO sites and objects. Both workshops' participants and stakeholders have come to unanimous conclusions pointing at the biggest challenges as well as necessary measures to be taken to make the sites available to tourists and yet preserve and protect them properly. The nature of UNESCO heritage sites

presented during workshops was defined as varied case studies. Conclusions worked out by stakeholders, due to the consensus of views, were summarized as joint conclusions.

The opinions and suggestions on implementing sustainable tourism development measures at UNESCO sites in Poland, were shared by representatives of institutions, DMO, and companies involved in organisation of tourism during a series of workshops held in April and May of 2022 (chart 1).

Chart 1. Stakeholders involved in organisation of tourism at UNESCO sites in Poland, participating in the workshops (April, May 2022)

Date of entry to UNESCO list	Object listed in UNESCO world cultural heritage	Representatives of institutions, DMO, and companies participating in the workshops
1978	Cracow Old Town	Municipality of Cracow, Tourism Devision
1979	Białowieża Forest	Białowieża National Park
1979	Auschwitz-Birkenau. Nazi German concentration and extermination camp (1940-1945)	Auschwitz-Birkenau National Museum
1997	Historical centre of Toruń – Medieval Town comprised of three elements: Old Town, New Town , and Teutonic Castle	Local Tourist Organisation in Toruń, COPERNICANA Tourist Office, Toruń Tourist Information, Toruń Ethnographic Museum
2013	Wooden Orthodox Churches of the Carpathian in Poland and Ukraine	Subcarpathian Regional Tourist Organisation
2021	Beech Forests in Bieszczady National Pak as part of the international serial heritage: Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe	Subcarpathian Regional Tourist Organisation
-	-	Greater Poland Tourist Organisation

Source: own work

The wide range of presented objects listed in UNESCO world cultural heritage includes both historical municipal districts and forests.

Cracow Old Town – the district once surrounded by fortifications features the centrally located Main Square, the largest medieval town square in Europe, and other historic landmarks in its vicinity, such as the Wawel Hill as well as the Kazimierz and Stradom districts. In 2010 a buffer zone was created to protect the area inscribed on the World Heritage List. The Old Town, former capital of Poland, surrounded by tenement houses and lavishly equipped noble residences, palaces and churches was known as merchants’ town. Parts of the defensive fortifications, the medieval Kazimierz district with its numerous synagogues,

situated in the south of the city, Jagiellonian University, as well as the gothic cathedral, the burial place of the kings of Poland are the evidence of Cracow's past.¹

Białowieża Forest – The Białowieża Forest World Heritage site, on the border between Poland and Belarus, is an immense range of primary forests including both conifers and broadleaved trees covering a total area of 141,885 hectares. Offering exceptional opportunities for biodiversity conservation, the Białowieża National Park was listed in UNESCO world heritage in 1979. It is home to the largest population of the property's iconic species, the European bison. The Belarusian part of the Białowieża Forest was listed in 1992 as an extension of the entry, and since then both parts constitute one transboundary property. The area of the Park included in UNESCO world heritage was extended for the second time in 2014 (from the previous 5.069 ha to 59.57,09 ha).²

Auschwitz-Birkenau. Nazi German concentration and extermination camp (1940-1945) – Inscribed on the World Heritage List is the largest and the most representative of the concentration camp complexes created by the Nazi German regime. The fortified walls, barbed wire, platforms, barracks, gallows, gas chambers and cremation ovens show the conditions within which the Nazi genocide took place in the former concentration and extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest in the Third Reich. According to historical investigations, 1.5 million people, mostly Jews, were systematically starved, tortured, and murdered in this camp, the symbol of humanity's cruelty to its fellow human beings in the 20th century³.

Picture 3: Toruń



Source: https://www.torun.pl/en/turystyka/zabytki/old_town_hall

¹<https://www.unesco.pl/kultura/dziedzictwo-kulturowe/swiatowe-dziedzictwo/polskie-objekty/>

² Op. Cit.

³ Op. Cit.

Historical centre of Toruń – Medieval Town comprised of three elements: Old Town, New Town, and Teutonic Castle – Torun owes its origins to the Teutonic Order, which built a castle there in the mid-13th century as a base for the conquest and evangelization of Prussia. It soon developed a commercial role as part of the Hanseatic League. In the Old and New Town, the many imposing public and private buildings from the 14th and 15th centuries (among them the house of Copernicus) are striking evidence of Torun's importance⁴.

Picture 4: Wooden Orthodox Churches of the Carpathian in Poland and Ukraine



Source: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1424/gallery/>, © National Heritage Board of Poland

Wooden Orthodox Churches of the Carpathian in Poland and Ukraine – Situated in the eastern fringe of Central Europe, the transnational property numbers a selection of sixteen *tserkvas* (eight on either side of the border), including: St. Paraskevi Church in Radruż, Greek Catholic Church of Nativity of the Mother of God in Chotyniec, St. Michael Archangel's Church in Smolnik, St. Michael Archangel's Church in Turzańsk (Subcarpathia), St. James Church in Powroźnik, St. Paraskevi Church in Kwiaton, Protection of Our Most Holy Lady Church in Owczary, St. Michael Archangel's Church in Brunary (Lesser Poland) on the Polish side and Descent of the Holy Spirit Church in Potelych, St. Dmytro's Church in Matkiv, Holy Trinity Church in Zhovkva, St. George's Church in Drohobych (Lviv region), Wooden Church of the Holy Spirit in Rohatyn, Church of Our Lord's Ascension in Yasinia, Nyzhniy Verbizh Church

⁴ Op. Cit.

in Nyzhniy Verbizh (Ivano-Frankivsk region), and Church of the Archangel Michael in Uzhok in Ukraine. Built using the horizontal log technique these Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches were erected between the XVI and XIX centuries. They represent various architectural forms, including Hutsul, Halych, Boyko and Lemko types deep rooted in Orthodox ecclesiastical timber-building traditions. Devotional rituals, iconography, building techniques, and symbolic references to cosmogony of different ethnic groups reflect the sacred beliefs and history of the resident communities. The *tserkvas* are built on a tri-partite plan surmounted by open quadrilateral or octagonal domes and cupolas. Integral to *tserkvas* are iconostasis screens, interior polychrome decorations, and other historic furnishings. Important elements of some *tserkvas* include wooden bell towers, churchyards, gatehouses, and graveyards.⁵

Beech Forests in Bieszczady National Park as part of the international serial heritage: Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe – Serial inscription: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Spain, Northern Macedonia, Germany, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine, Italy. This transnational property includes 94 component parts in 18 countries, including beech forests in the Bieszczady National Park – a strictly delimited forest complex situated on the slopes of Połonina Wetleńska and Smereka, as well as in the valleys of Terebowiec, Górna Solinka, and Wołosatka. The Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe are an outstanding example of relatively undisturbed, complex of temperate forests and exhibit a wide spectrum of comprehensive ecological patterns and processes of pure and mixed stands of European beech across a variety of environmental conditions. These forests contain an invaluable population of old trees and a genetic reservoir of beech and many other species, which are associated with and dependent on these old-growth forest habitats. Since the end of the last Ice Age, European Beech spread from a few isolated refuge areas in the Alps, Carpathians, Dinarides, Mediterranean and Pyrenees over a short period of a few thousand years in a process that is still ongoing. The successful expansion across a whole continent is related to the tree's adaptability and tolerance of different climatic, geographical, and physical conditions.⁶

Participants of the workshops were supposed to answer the following questions:

- What are the biggest challenges facing sustainable tourism development?
- What measures need to be taken by the national administration and local governments to enable the introduction of sustainable development policies within objects?
- How do you reduce negative effects of running a business activity?
- Have you ever considered introducing selling bans and restrictions to prevent over tourism phenomenon?
- How do local communities benefit from your business activity?

The stakeholders addressed all these questions pointing at the biggest challenges and suggesting ways to overcome them.

⁵ Op.Cit.

⁶ Op. Cit.

Challenges to sustainable tourism development relate to:

- lack of stakeholder's commitment in delivering a practical ecologically sustainable tourism,
- insufficient cooperation between stakeholders in terms of promoting tourism related products,
- insufficient financial resources,
- social leisure habits and preferences (having a negative impact on natural environment),
- low awareness among local communities' members and policymakers of trends and principals of sustainable tourism.

In order to implement sustainable tourism development principals in tourism management the following government administrative tasks commissioned to local government units were suggested:

- willingness of the government administration staff to take actions,
- prioritising sustainable tourism development,
- proper understanding of the sensitive nature of sustainable tourism implementation,
- attracting EU funds by local governments,
- preparing special programs and strategies of development of the tourism services sector,
- implementing policies and strategies of sustainable tourism development in communities and provinces.

The following strategies of minimizing the negative impact of tourism business activities on natural environment were suggested:

- marking out tourists' routes,
- facilitating tourists' flow by proper spatial distribution of touristic accommodation,
- promoting environmental education.

In terms of introducing restrictions and limitations on selling tickets, the workshops' participants agreed that the problem of over tourism has completely vanished as a result of the 2-yr long period of the pandemic and the current conflict in Ukraine.

The following ways of involving local communities were enumerated:

- addressing the offer to local inhabitants as potential guests,
- offering discounts to the local people – especially if given objects are managed by local governments,
- encouraging local communities to participate as volunteers in cultural events.

OBJECTIVE OF THE CASE STUDY

The aim is to understand the levels of tourism management and to be able to identify the stakeholders, their roles, and potential contributions to the sustainable tourism. To propose specific actions, activities, and solutions and to discuss the limits.

GUIDANCE QUESTIONS, TASKS

1. Recapitulate the issues and challenges with sustainable development in Polish UNESCO sites.
2. Who are the stakeholders related to tourism and tourism development?
3. At what level can they influence the sustainability in tourism and tourism development? Assign the stakeholders to potential national, regional, local, and individual effect.
4. How particularly can the individual stakeholders contribute to sustainable tourism development?
5. Draw a mind map presenting the stakeholders at the individual levels, what actions they can take and activities they can perform. To each action/activity/solution discuss and add the limitations.
6. Return to the issues and challenges from point 1 and discuss the effects of suggested activities and actions in points 4 and 5 from their perspectives.

TEACHERS NOTES

The actions and activities should be in accordance with motivation and values of the stakeholders.

The students can include national, regional policies, restrictions, reservations systems, local actions, events, community involvement, motivation and education of tourists etc.

The limits of local actions are given by the effectivity of communication, reaction of the other stakeholders lead by their own intentions, implementation of policies can be limited by time capacities and personnel capacities.

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NOTES