

Losing Genius Loci in Cultural Heritage Sites – Landscape of Defensive Castle Open-Air Museums of the Jurassic Belt, Poland

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Cultural heritage gives places meaning and an atmosphere called genius loci based on tangible and intangible values. Nowadays, we can observe a commercial and consumerist approach to the spirit of place: it is used as a promotional tool and a tourism product, reduced to a cliché satisfying popular consumers tastes. The aim of this study is to identify the values which determine the identity of a place and the dangers they face, trying to answer the question: how can genius loci be protected? We analyse the problem based on the example of selected open-air museums at defensive castles in Poland's Jurassic Belt. These museums have become a field of commercial entertainment and fallen victim to irreversible transformations.

Keywords: genius loci, cultural heritage, tangible and intangible values, open-air museum, tourism

Introduction

Current times are characterised by an extraordinary pace of global technological, economic and urban transformations. The effects of these transformations are felt in almost every aspect of life. High-speed communications, information exchange and the development of digital spaces have shaped new types of social relationships and altered our perception of traditional values related to space.¹ To illustrate this process, Manuel Castells introduced the concept of the “space of flows”, which he juxtaposed with the traditional “space of places” which are formed based on real relations with physical places full of meaning and significance.² The phenomena

¹ GEISLER, Robert, NIEROBA, Elżbieta. Museum transition toward market-oriented identity: Between social issues and public policy. In: *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, vol. 10, 2022, Is. 4, pp. 6–8, doi:10.46284/mkd.2022.10.4.1.

² CASTELLS, Manuel. European Cities, the Informational Society, and the Global Economy. In: (R. T. LeGates, F. Stout eds.). *The City Reader*. London: Routledge, 2003, pp.475–4 85.

of rapid and superficial perception, commercialisation and lack of profound reflection lead to the transformation of places into non-places.³ The absence of references to traditional value systems contributes to the widespread adoption of consumerist attitudes. The rapid and superficial reception of content is a form of consumption – from the consumption of material goods to the consumption of mass entertainment and tourism.⁴ Ease of assimilating messages is achieved through simplifying communication, resulting in the solidification of recipients' attitudes, which become programmatically geared towards perceiving manipulated images.⁵ Tourist spaces are a particular form of mystification, often involving the staging of authenticity.⁶

These phenomena can be widely observed, and particularly affect Poland's cultural landscape, which is rich in historical content and sites. Numerous contemporary studies have confirmed that the intensive development of tourism transforms places into popular commercial destinations, undermining their original values, spirituality and identity.⁷

Therefore, in this text, we attempt to define the threats faced by places which represent cultural heritage, assess the degree of lasting degradation, and explore the possibility of reversing the transformations they undergo. Additionally, we seek answers to questions concerning the preservation of their vanishing identities.

Purpose, scope, and methodology of the research

The scientific problem addressed in this study is how to describe and diagnose the observed issue of the disappearance of the identity and genius loci of places with high historical and landscape value due to factors ranging from general civilizational changes to the development of tourism and commercialisation of spaces. Many historically valuable places, including open-air museums, are becoming locations for commercial entertainment, as a result of which heritage sites undergo irreversible transformations.⁸

This study aimed to identify historical sites, landscapes and contexts that determine the significance and identity of a place and to find ways to preserve genius loci in the face of cultural, technological and social changes.

Our research questions focused on assessing the degree of loss of identity and value to society, including the genius loci, as well as the potential for halting this process:

- How can we assess the degree of loss of identity and value to society, including the genius loci?
- Can the process of identity loss be stopped amidst ongoing changes?

In order to assess the degree of loss of identity of places and the disappearance of their genius loci, a multi-stage research methodology was constructed.

³ AUGÉ, Marc. *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*. Verso. 2011. ISBN 978-1844673117.; RELPH, Edward. *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion Limited, 1984.

⁴ GIDDENS, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

⁵ BITUSIKOVA, Alexandra. Cultural heritage as a means of heritage tourism development. In: *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, vol. 9, 2021, Is.1, p. 82, doi: 10.46284/mkd.2021.9.1.5.

⁶ MACCANNELL, Dean. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. University of California Press, 1999.

⁷ CHRISTOU, Putra A., et al. The "genius loci" of places that experience intense tourism development. In: *Tourism Management Perspectives*, vol. 30, 2019, pp. 19–32.

⁸ RYCHNOVÁ, Lucie, MATURKANIČ, Patrik, SLOBODOVÁ NOVÁKOVÁ, Katarína, PAVLIKOVA, Martina. Open-air Museums – the Future of the Presentation of Spiritual and Architectural Heritage. In: *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, vol. 10, 2022, Is. 1, pp. 7-10, doi: 10.46284/mkd.2022.10.1.1.

Theoretical analysis of the state of knowledge and selection of theoretical perspective

Construction of the research tool: a model was constructed describing the attributes associated with the genius loci of a place, in order to facilitate the evaluation of the places studied. The adopted model incorporates the attributes of tangible and intangible heritage that make up the genius loci. It is a dynamic model that can be used to map variations in context, meanings, and experiences, especially in relation to local communities. The model was used as a tool to assess the state of preservation versus transformation of the analysed sites. Thanks to the tool's structure, it was possible to assess both tangible values (author's assessment, based on document analysis, in situ research, comparative analysis) and intangible values (author's assessment, based on in situ research and interviews with the local community, etc.)

General research involved analysing all monuments and sites within the study area in order to create a typology based on the variety of conservation approaches present, and the varying degrees to which the structure and physical substance of monuments and their appearance had changed. This resulted in the identification of six typological categories (full list found in Section 4).

Detailed research: The three most prominent categories relating to state of preservation vs. transformation were selected for further detailed research. They represented three extreme approaches:

- a. reversible transformations;
- b. irreversible transformations; and
- c. untransformed (authentic) sites;

For each of the three types, representative examples were identified and evaluated using the adopted model (research tool) to assess the tangible and intangible values that make up their identity.

Discussion and final conclusions: The results obtained from the assessment formed the basis for the final conclusions regarding the totality of the characteristics that build the genius loci of places. An attempt was made to assess the state of preservation of each site's genius loci and the possibilities for its protection.

Theoretical research perspective and definition of concepts

In order to construct a theoretical model that could serve as a starting point for the research, we began by defining fundamental concepts central to our considerations: place, identity and genius loci. A comprehensive review of existing research in this area allowed us to formulate the desired definitions.

Many authors addressing the concept of place emphasise that it goes beyond mere physical location.⁹ The notion of place dates back to ancient philosophy, but its contemporary development has undergone significant change since the 1960s.¹⁰

⁹ LEE, Vernon. *Genius Loci: Notes on Places* (1899). In: *Travel essays*. [S.l.]: Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017.

¹⁰ A synthetic overview of the development of place theory can be found in the works of various authors: CRESSWELL, Tim. *Place, a short introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005; ŻMUDZIŃSKA-NOWAK, Magdalena. *Miejsce – tożsamość i zmiana*. Gliwice: Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej, 2010; LEWICKA, Maria. *Psychologia miejsca*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2012; SARYUSZ-WOLSKA, Magdalena, TRABA, Robert. *Modi Memorandi – leksykon kultury pamięci*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2014; BEVILACQUA, Francesco. *Genius loci. Il dio dei luoghi perduti. Copertina flessibile*. [S.l.]: Rubbettino Editore, 2009.

The definition adopted in this study is built upon classic theories, including David Canter's, which posits three components of a place: a) physical attributes, b) human activities and c) concepts, understood as mental and emotional relations between people and the place.¹¹ Another significant concept for us is the humanistic definition of place initiated by Y.F. Tuan, who emphasises that a place is formed through experience and the attribution of values and meanings to space.¹² Similarly, Edward Relph describes the relationship between a person and a place as consisting of individual, profound and often subconscious experiences,¹³ while Robert Sack adds a further perspective of the physical aspects of place.¹⁴ In this study, we based our definition on a synthesis of these views: "Place is a world of spatial and humanistic values, with humanistic values being crucial for the emergence, existence and development of a place".¹⁵

One of the fundamental values that make up a place is its identity. The identity of the place is the core that integrates all of its characteristics and values, both spatial and humanistic. These accumulate over time through people's experiences of the place and the construction of collective memory. Identity determines the authenticity and uniqueness of a place.

A related concept, though more challenging to define, is the term *genius loci*, the spirit of a place. This concept dates back to ancient times, where it referred to the protective spirit of a place. A wide review of the history of this concept can be found in the work of many researchers.¹⁶ It appears as a local value or local memory,¹⁷ as a polyphony of voices and a mosaic of relations – a palimpsest of overlapping elements.¹⁸ Christian Norberg-Schulz builds the concept of *genius loci*, presenting it as the sum of all physical and symbolic values and meanings in a natural and human-made environment, perceived, experienced and understood by people, thus representing the outcome of the natural and cultural landscape.¹⁹

A crucial definition for our considerations comes from Zbigniew Myczkowski, who states that "Identity is the 'deepest' dependence that occurs between the landscape perceived by a person (environment) with its historically layered elements: content (culture, tradition of the place) and form (the canon of the place)." The author introduces the notion of the spirit of the time (*Zeitgeist*) as a distinguishing factor of identity in a given era, thereby distinguishing between "old" and "new" identity, with the latter responding to contemporary changes while originating from the roots of the former identity, serving as its creative continuation.²⁰

Therefore, when constructing the theoretical model adopted in further analyses, we assumed the existence of relationships between the physical and humanistic values of a place, its identity and the *genius loci* in the context of human activities and experiences, as well as changes

¹¹ CANTER, David. *Psychology of Place*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977.

¹² TUAN, Yi-Fu. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. Columbia University Press, 1990; TUAN, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

¹³ RELPH, Place..., pp. 34–55.

¹⁴ SACK, Robert D. The Power of Place and Space. In: *The Geographical Review*, vol. 83, 1993, p. 328.

¹⁵ ŻMUDZIŃSKA-NOWAK. Miejsce - tożsamość... p.83.

¹⁶ For example, ČEPAITIENĖ, Rasa. *Genius Loci as a "nameless value" of natural and built heritage*. In: SZMYGIN, B. (ed.). *How to assess built heritage? Assumptions, methodologies, examples of heritage assessment systems*, Florence–Lublin: International Scientific Committee for Theory and Philosophy of Conservation and Restoration ICOMOS, 2015, pp.75–96.

¹⁷ SARYUSZ-WOLSKA, TRABA, *Modi Memorandi ...* p. 24.

¹⁸ COPIK, Ilona. *Genius loci jako figura antropologiczna – transformacje znaczeniowe, konteksty interpretacyjne*. In: *Transformacje. Pismo interdyscyplinarne*, vol. 76-77, 2013, No. 1–2, pp. 92–109.

¹⁹ NORBERG-SCHULZ, Christian. *Genius Loci – Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, New York: Rizzoli, 1979.

²⁰ MYCZKOWSKI, Zbigniew. *Tożsamość miejsca w krajobrazie*. In: *Fenomen Genius Loci - Tożsamość miejsca w kontekście historycznym i współczesnym*. Warszawa, 2009, pp. 154–167.

occurring over time. The theoretical model is shown in Figure 1.

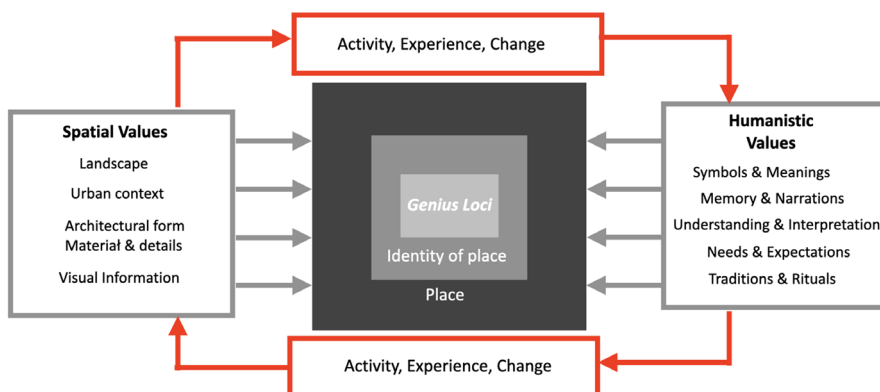


Fig. 1: Author's model of relationships between the values of a place.

General analysis of the selected research area

The next stage of the research involved verifying the adopted theoretical model through on-site investigations. In search of suitable examples for the study, we established two co-existing criteria for the selected sites:

They must constitute a collection of monuments with similar characteristics (spatial, semantic, landscape-related).

They should represent extreme diversity in terms of their state of preservation, degree of transformation, and utilisation for tourism and commercial purposes.

Field analyses allowed us to identify a cluster of medieval castles within the Kraków–Częstochowa Upland in southern Poland as a group of sites that met the established criteria and thus were representative of the phenomenon under study. The research scope therefore encompasses defensive constructions in the Jurassic region, which constitutes a unique example of an invaluable natural and cultural landscape. Currently, this region is undergoing perilous transfor-



Fig. 2: Location and regionalisation of the Kraków–Częstochowa Upland (source: Kondracki 1988, elaboration: B. Fojcik).

mations due to the development of commercial tourism, private construction investments, and uncontrolled efforts to renovate and adapt individual historic sites.

In terms of physical geography, the Kraków–Częstochowa Upland, also known as the Kraków–Częstochowa Jura, is situated within the belt of Polish uplands. It constitutes a distinct macrogeographical region, covering a narrow band approximately 10–12 km wide and about 100 km long, from Kraków to Częstochowa (Figure 2).

The Kraków–Częstochowa Upland is one of the most captivating natural and cultural regions in Poland and, indeed, Europe. Its uniqueness and exceptional character result from the harmonious interweaving of natural environmental with material manifestations of human activity.²¹ A wide variety of historic sites and objects can be found in this area, including churches, chapels, statues of saints, wayside crosses, strongholds, watchtowers, manors, palaces, hydrological systems and industrial facilities. In addition, there are significant manifestations of intangible spiritual and symbolic culture encompassing various customs, rituals and pilgrimages to places of special veneration.

The landscape of this area is not merely a sum of individual elements differentiated based on their characteristics. The concept of landscape is rooted in human activities, which are contingent on circumstances determined by both natural and cultural conditions, and subject to change over time. The relationship between humans and the geographical and cultural environment is an ongoing process that evolves over historical periods. The totality of these values and relations forms the unique identity of places and their genius loci.²²

The exceptional natural beauty and simplicity of the culture have made the Kraków–Częstochowa Uplands an area that is intensively visited by tourists. This area offers a variety of attractions that appeal to various types of tourism, including cognitive and recreational tourism, as well as specialised interests such as landscape enthusiasts. The touristic infrastructure generally complements the spatial structure of the region in a harmonious way. However, the influx of mass culture poses a threat to this harmony. The appropriation of landscapes for settlement purposes under the pretext of “recreation” has become widespread, resulting in areas falling victim to construction and development activities. These landscapes have become symbols of a consumeristic era, where the genius loci gives way to “spiritual deserts” – loci communes.²³

The research method used in this article is based on an interdisciplinary approach, combining elements of historical, architectural, urban planning and cultural geography studies. To assess the degree of identity loss and the value of genius loci in the selected medieval defensive monuments in Poland’s Jurassic region, in-depth field research was conducted. The first stage involved creating an inventory, which involved conducting a detailed survey of the objects, their history, architecture and the changes they have undergone over time. Subsequently, an iconographic analysis was carried out using available iconographic and photographic sources documenting the appearance of these sites at different points in time. This analysis facilitated the reconstruction of their original form and allowed us to identify the transformations they had undergone.

²¹ BOGDANOWSKI, Janusz. Dawna linia obronna Jury Krakowsko-Częstochowskiej. Problemy konserwacji i adaptacji dla turystyki. In: *Ochrona Zabytków*, vol. XVII, 1964, No. 4, pp.3–36.

²² MYCZKOWSKI, Zbigniew. Kompozycyjne i architektoniczne wyznaczniki tożsamości krajobrazów. In: *Problemy Ekologii Krajobrazu*. Tom XL, 2015, pp.199 – 208.

²³ REMBOWSKA, Krystyna. *Kultura w tradycji i we współczesnych nurtach badań geograficznych*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego. 2002.

As part of the research, planning documents, legal regulations and heritage protection regulations at the local and regional levels were analysed. This enabled identification of potential legal gaps and ambiguities regarding the protection of historical sites and opportunities for improvement.



Fig. 3: Location of investigated sites in the Kraków–Częstochowa Upland (own elaboration).

The castles in the Kraków–Częstochowa Upland (Figure 3) were mainly built in the Middle Ages, predominantly in the fourteenth century, although some date back to an earlier period. Most of them were associated with the defensive activities of King Kazimierz the Great of Poland, but there were also bishops' fortresses and private structures belonging to knightly families. In the Early Modern period, new castles ceased to be constructed but existing fortifications were expanded and adapted to changing military, residential and economic needs. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the castles in the Jurassic region gradually fell into ruin. It is worth highlighting that numerous defensive building construction projects undertaken by King Kazimierz the Great contributed to the increasing military significance of the Kraków–Częstochowa Upland, which served as the border between the Kingdom of Poland and the Silesian duchies in the fourteenth century.

Castles built in the Middle Ages were expanded in subsequent centuries to strengthen their defences and provide better living conditions. It is worth noting that the expansion mainly affected private castles, which served as residences for influential families. Some of these castles reached impressive sizes, reflecting the power and artistic taste of their owners. In the sixteenth century, bastions replaced towers in front of defensive walls. This period also saw the most significant transformations in castles owned by influential families in Małopolska, such as Ogrodzieniec (number 10 in Figure 3), Tenczyn (23) and Pieskowa Skala (18). They were

rebuilt as grand Renaissance residences. The Gothic castle of Ogrodzieniec was transformed into an immense Renaissance residence in the first half of the sixteenth century by its then-owner Jan Boner.²⁴ The castle in Bobolice (7) was probably expanded in the fifteenth and again in the sixteenth century by the Myszkowski and Męciński families.²⁵

Similar spatial developments occurred at the castle in Olsztyn (1), which was given to the most deserving families of the Kingdom from the late fourteenth century onwards. It was expanded in the mid-fifteenth century and later in the sixteenth century by subsequent starostas (mayors), Mikołaj Szydłowiecki and Piotr Opaliński.²⁶ In the second half of the sixteenth century, the castles on the Jura were still of significant military importance. Some of them played a role in battles against the forces of Archduke Maximilian Habsburg, who claimed the Polish crown after the death of Stefan Batory in 1587. The castle in Olsztyn managed to withstand enemy attacks, while the army of Maximilian captured Ogrodzieniec Castle and probably also destroyed the fortress in Bobolice.²⁷

Most of the castles on the Kraków–Częstochowa Upland destroyed during the so-called “Swedish Wars” – the wars between Poland and Sweden from the second half of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth century – were abandoned in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, including Olsztyn, Bobolice and Ogrodzieniec castles.²⁸

Conscious and scientifically based conservation and restoration of historical monuments in Polish lands dates back to the late eighteenth century and is related to the birth of interest in antiquity and historicism. The romantic and patriotic trends that prevailed in nineteenth-century Poland also played a significant role. The special role of castles as material carriers of national values was particularly crucial in the face of Poland’s loss of independence due to the partitions for a period of 123 years, from 1795 to 1918.

On the other hand, the prevailing “cult of ruins” and picturesque views in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, along with admiration for partially preserved architectural monuments integrated into the natural landscape, meant that the castles in the discussed area were not adequately protected from destruction and even underwent partial dismantling. On the other hand, this appreciation for ruins saved them from complete degradation and allowed them to survive precisely in the form of ruins.²⁹

Until World War II, most of the Jurassic strongholds did not experience conservation care, leading to continuous deterioration in their condition. However, it should be acknowledged that in the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, some individual conservation and restoration activities were undertaken for certain castles. However, more systematic efforts were initiated only after 1945, thanks to the initiative of the Polish Ministry of Culture and Art, as seen in the case of Pieskowa Skala and Będzin castles (18, 15). Protective measures were taken to preserve many other historical sites by the conservation authorities in Kraków and Katowice. In the following two decades, the number of conservation interventions decreased but important initiatives were still taken, such as comprehensive protective actions for Lipowiec (24) and Ogrodzieniec (10) castles, which were already secured as permanent ruins. Some

²⁴ HOLCEROWA, Teresa, HOLCER, Zygmunt. *Zamek w Ogrodzieńcu. Dane historyczne opracowane na podstawie materiałów źródłowych (okres do początków XVII w.)*. Kraków: WUOZ Katowice, n. III/2415a, 1974, p. 3.

²⁵ GUERQUIN, Bohdan. *Zamki w Polsce*. ed. 1, Warszawa: Arkady. 1974.

²⁶ KAJZER, Leszek, KOŁODZIEJSKI, Stanisław, SALM, Jan. *Leksykon zamków w Polsce*. Warszawa: Arkady. 2012.

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ GUERQUIN, Zamki..., pp. 12–25.

objects received thorough restoration combined with partial reconstruction, while others were secured as permanent ruins or underwent temporary, often insufficient, conservation efforts. Despite quite a few conservation interventions, many historic sites are still threatened by ongoing destruction. Furthermore, not all actions taken on the castles and ruins can be positively evaluated.

In later years, especially after 1989, which marked the political transformation from communism to democracy in Poland, a drastic decline in conservation interventions was observed, leading to a significant deterioration of many historical monuments. Only recently has this negative trend been overcome. State funds and grants from the European Union have been obtained to carry out essential conservation works, including those in Bydlin (14), Smolenie (13), Rabsztyn (17) and Tenczyn (23). On the other hand, a completely new threat to the ruins has emerged: many objects have fallen into the hands of private owners whose “reconstruction” activities are often carried out without regard for the historical value and architectural form of the buildings. Their commercially driven initiatives are detrimental to the authenticity and integrity of historical objects, as well as to the identity of these places and their *genius loci*.

As a result of the analyses, a systematic classification of the examined objects was achieved based on the time and type of works carried out (conservation, restoration, reconstruction) and their scope (comprehensive, partial, permanent, one-time, etc.). Therefore, due to the complex nature of the conservation of Jurassic strongholds, they can be divided into several groups:

1. Castles restored after World War II – Pieskowa Skala (18), Będzin (15).
2. Castles secured in the form of permanent ruins – Ogrodzieniec (10), Lipowiec (24), Ojców (19).
3. Strongholds subjected to ad hoc conservation efforts (maintenance, stabilisation and potential educational presentation of ruins) – Olsztyn (1), Ryczów (25), Suliszowice (2), Przewodiszowice (4), Morsko (8), Mirow (6), Sławków (16), Smoleniec (13), Bydlin (14), Pilica (11).
4. Castles undergoing conservation with elements of reconstruction – Siewierz (9), Tenczyn (23), Rabsztyn (17).
5. Castles “rebuilt” around the turn of the twenty-first century – Korzkiew (20), Bobolice (7).
6. Monuments without conservation protection – Biały Kościół (21), Ostrężnik (3), Udórz (12), Łutowiec (5).

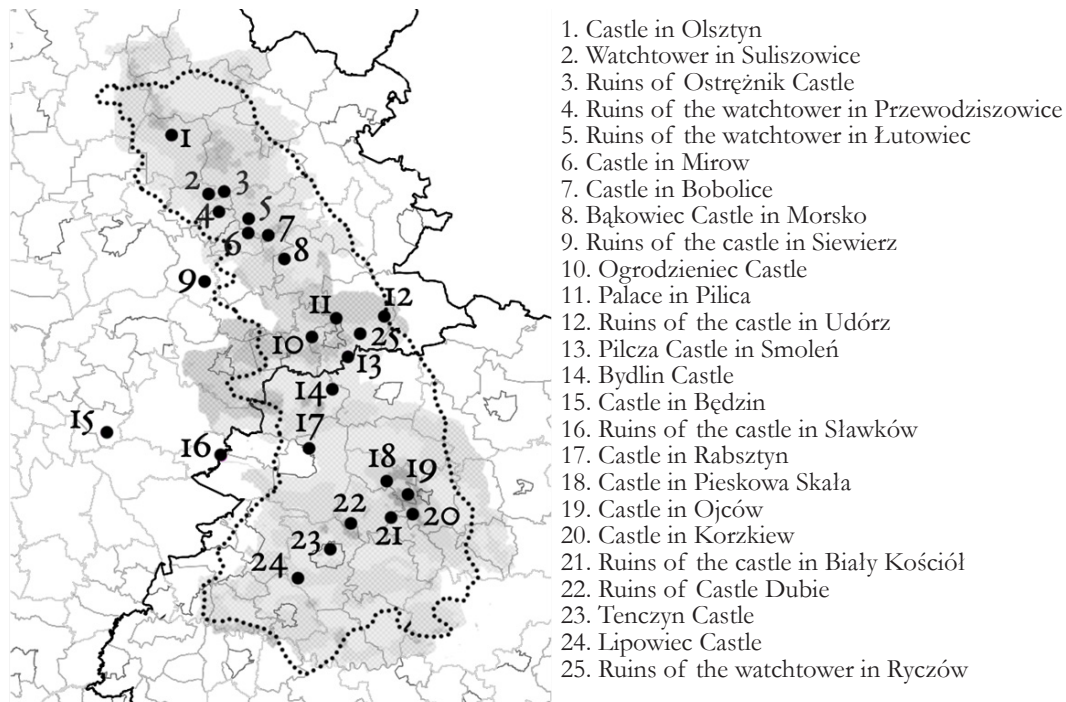
Finally, three main groups of sites were distinguished, taking into account the degree and reversibility of the transformations they underwent:

1. Sites where the changes are irreversible. These include places that have become commercial entertainment venues and have fallen victim to transformations that are difficult or impossible to reverse. Their identity and *genius loci* have been lost and the alterations raise serious doubts about whether their authenticity and historical significance can be preserved.
2. Sites which have undergone reversible changes. These include places where there is potential to restore their original identity through appropriate conservation and

revitalisation efforts.

3. Sites where the spirit of the place has not yet been compromised. These are places that have maintained their identity and authenticity, without experiencing irreversible changes thus far.

The delineated groups form key categories for further detailed research.



In-depth analysis – case studies

From within the previously established divisions into three types of site, the most representative monuments were selected to exemplify the relative nature of each set.

Representing the first group, which includes sites with irreversible changes, are the castles in Korzkiew and Bobolice.

Korzkiew Castle (20) has been undergoing reconstruction by private investors since 1997. Unfortunately, this restoration led to the loss of its historical value as instead of preserving the authentic but poorly preserved ruins. Modern structures were introduced which bear little resemblance to the historical character of the buildings.

However, the most representative example for the first group is the castle in Bobolice (7) (Figure 5); the concept behind its reconstruction can be considered even more controversial than that of Korzkiew Castle. Bobolice Castle was destroyed by the Swedes and later abandoned, turning into ruins by the late eighteenth century. The lack of iconography depicting the castle before its destruction made it difficult to precisely reconstruct its form. Two watercolours from the mid-nineteenth century, made during the inventory of monuments in the Kingdom of Poland, unambiguously attest to the scale of the castle's destruction, and its condition has worsened since then. In 1960, limited conservation work was carried out at the castle, aiming to stop the erosion of walls, especially in the most weakened areas. Local repainting of



Fig. 4: *View of Bobolice Castle from the north. Watercolour by T. Chrzyński, c. 1844–1846. According to Kazimierz Stronczyński, descriptions and views of monuments in the Kingdom of Poland (1844–1855). Source: Atlas 1: Gubernia Radomska, Warsaw 2010 (elaboration: K. Guttemejer)*



Fig. 5: *View of Bobolice Castle from the west, photo by the authors, 2022.*

foundations and crowns of the walls was carried out, and gaps and cracks were filled. In 1990, Marcei Antoniewicz created a historical documentation of the castle, and in subsequent years, photogrammetric documentation of the ruins was conducted. However, full-scale conservation works were not undertaken until the time of the controversial “reconstruction” in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Due to the lack of iconographic sources, the reconstruction process relied solely on the results of archaeological and architectural research from the early twenty-first century and on the description contained in the castle inventory from 1700, which, of course, was not a comprehensive or detailed registration of the building’s appearance. The project aimed to reconstruct the upper castle with the appearance of the seventeenth century and partially rebuild the remaining parts of the complex. Among the rebuilt elements, one can mention the gate building, identified during archaeological research, the shape of which can be considered a product of the designer’s imagination. Also, the southern part of the middle castle received entirely arbitrary designs. Only the silhouette of the upper castle could be more accurately reproduced, as its fragments were relatively better preserved. However, even there, hypothetical forms were added to the upper parts along with roofing, and the wooden bay window introduced in the northwest wall must be regarded as the result of the designer’s fantasy. The new monument was built in reinforced concrete construction, clad with limestone. This structure is based on preserved relics that have previously been subjected to conservation. Other significant works included the raising of large sections of defensive walls and the addition of battlements to their crowns.

Generally speaking, it is hard not to agree with Paweł Dettloff’s diagnosis that Bobolice Castle in its current state is an “architectural forgery” that misleads visitors, evokes dissatisfaction and protests from genuine connoisseurs and enthusiasts of historical monuments, and lacks the

features and values that the unforgettable ruins once possessed, and which can now only be admired through archival photographs and graphics.

These “rebuilt” castles have lost their historical and heritage value, becoming inauthentic objects. In both cases, investors launched a widespread propaganda campaign to present themselves as patrons of culture working for the preservation of national heritage. Numerous examples of such presentation can be found in traditional and electronic media. For instance, in Bobolice, a picture of the current owner is displayed on the information board, placed alongside the castle’s benefactors, placing them on the same level as King Casimir the Great. All of this demonstrates a specific and very dangerous trend, wherein ruins are reconstructed for the investors’ prestige and business purposes. The example of Bobolice also reveals the risk of turning ruins into specific tourist attractions, where the pursuit of optimal use of the object for commercial purposes takes precedence over the preservation of its scientific, educational and emotional values.

Furthermore, due to the investor’s plans to divide the surrounding areas of the castle into building plots for sale, the natural landscape surrounding the object is also at risk. The planned investments and the owner’s arbitrary construction activities have led to irreversible changes in the character of the region and the loss of the place’s exceptional atmosphere.

The second group of objects comprises those where the changes are reversible. An example of such a site is Ogradzieniec Castle (10), which underwent significant reconstruction and conservation work, resulting in the preservation of a substantial portion of the castle. The castle was built near a wooden–earth fortress on Mount Birów which was still in use in the first half of the fourteenth century. Although there is no direct historical evidence that the castle was built by King Casimir the Great, it is highly probable.

In 1949, provisional works were carried out on the ruins of Ogradzieniec Castle involving the clearance of debris and reinforcement of the most damaged sections of the walls.

In the early 1960s, a project was developed to secure the castle, which included cleaning the ruins, filling in the gaps and reinforcing the weakest parts of the walls.³⁰ Conservation work in the form of a permanent ruin, combined with thorough research, was conducted between 1964 and 1973.³¹ The first stage of the work involved cleaning, followed by conservation of the walls with minor restorations, including “soft” restoration of the crowns. The new remortarings were separated from the existing joints by zinc sheet strips, visible up close. Where structural reinforcement of the walls was required, supports made of flat stone with varying weft were used.³² The actions taken at the ruins of Ogradzieniec Castle were in line with the principles of the so-called English School of heritage conservation, which emphasises minimal intervention, the use of traditional materials and techniques, and the importance of maintaining the historical and aesthetic integrity of the structure or artifact. With regard to the conservation of ruins, this approach advocates conserving ruins in the state in which they have survived, without embellishments or new additions. According to the Venice Charter, such actions fall within the

³⁰ KAMIŃSKI, Krzysztof. *Rozpoznanie stanu technicznego i projekt zabezpieczenia ruin zamku w Ogradzieniu*. Kraków: WUOZ Katowice, nr inw. II/780b. 1961.

³¹ GRUSZECKI, Andrzej. *Sprawozdanie z uzupełniających badań terenowych architektoniczno-historycznych przeprowadzonych na zamku w Ogradzieniu we wrześniu 1966 r.* WUOZ Katowice, nr inw. II/784a. 1966.

³² GRUSZECKI, Andrzej. *Zamek w Ogradzieniu. Badania architektoniczno-historyczne*. Część I. Sprawozdanie za rok 1971, b.m. b.d., maszynopis, WUOZ Katowice, nr inw. III/2163a; Idem, *Rozwarstwienie chronologiczne zamku w Ogradzieniu*, Warszawa. WUOZ Katowice, nr inw. III/2407b.1973.

scope of restoration rather than reconstruction.³³ It is worth noting that within the English School, significant attention is also paid to adapting ruins for tourism purposes.



Fig. 6: Aerial views of castles in A – Bobolice, B – Podzamcze and C – Olsztyn (general pictures: photos by the authors, special event picture in Ogrodzieniec: www.ogrodzieniec.pl).

Unfortunately, despite the very good condition of the monument itself, which serves as an example of a well-functioning open-air museum,³⁴ the area below the castle is an example of significant oversaturation with “tourist products”. The castle’s offerings include food stalls, souvenir stands, and an overwhelming number of attractions for children, such as a toboggan run, a miniature park, a tunnel of fear, and much more, all within a small area leading to the castle (Figure 6). However, this aggressive commercial offer, despite the impression of chaos and cluttering of the surroundings, does not constitute a permanent transformation and can be relatively easily removed.

The third group of monuments includes those that are currently not at risk of losing their identity, although threats may arise. One example of this category is Olsztyn Castle (1), which still retains traces of its original architectural elements and carries an atmosphere of authenticity. The castle is one of the oldest monuments in the Kraków–Częstochowa Upland and was built in the second half of the thirteenth century. Originally, it was a guard post surrounded by ramparts and moats, with a dominant cylindrical stone tower.

It is difficult to determine, on the basis of indirect historical sources, who initiated the construction of the fortress. There are many indications that around the turn of the fourteenth century, it was under the control of Bishop Jan Muskaty, and that after 1306, the castle was taken over by Duke Władysław Łokietek.³⁵ In the mid-fourteenth century, the castle was expanded by King Casimir the Great.³⁶

In the early 1950s, conservation work was carried out on the remains of Olsztyn Castle, mainly focusing on reinforcing the walls of the artillery tower.³⁷ The work primarily focused on

³³ TAJCHMAN, Jan. Konserwacja ruin historycznych. Uwagi o metodzie. In: *Ochrona Zabytków*, n. 4, 2005, pp. 27–45.

³⁴ KOŠTIALOVÁ, Katarína. The specific museum presentation forms of cultural heritage in rural areas, based on the example of the Hont ecomuseum and educational public footpath. In: *Muzeologia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, vol. 10, 2022, Is. 2, pp. 6–8, doi: 10.46284/mkd.2022.10.2.1.

³⁵ HOLCER, Zygmunt. Zamek Olsztyn pod Częstochową – zarys historii [Olsztyn Castle near Częstochowa - an outline of its history]. In: *Zróżnicowanie i przemiany środowiska przyrodniczo-kulturowego Wyżyny Krakowsko-Częstochowskiej*, t. 2: *Kultura*, Ojców: J. Partyka, 2004, pp.75–77.

³⁶ KAJZER, KOŁODZIEJSKI, SALM, *Leksykon...*, p. .23.

³⁷ BOGDANOWSKI, *Dawna linia ...*, pp. 3–36.

maintaining the building's existing condition, often by strengthening and restoring the crown of the walls, filling gaps with new building material, repairing cracks and establishing a rainwater drainage system. Although the site is currently not at risk, there is a need for appropriate measures to ensure its protection and preservation of the genius loci in the face of changing social and tourism conditions (Figure 6).

Discussion of results and final conclusions

The research we conducted indicates that in recent decades the majority of castles and ruins in the Kraków–Częstochowa Upland have been subjected to various conservation efforts, with varying degrees of advancement. Unfortunately, some historical sites have not even received basic protective measures, leading to rapid deterioration of their remains, while others have undergone irreversible transformations for commercial purposes. The entire area is a destination for mass tourism, which visibly affects both the sites themselves and the cultural landscape in which they are situated, leading to the loss of identity, ambiance and genius loci.

Based on the findings, an attempt has been made to assess the values that historical sites currently manifest from the perspective of criteria adopted in the initial research model, namely, the spatial and humanistic aspects that constitute the identity of places (summarised in Table 1). Taking into account the process of historical sites' transformation toward supporting commercialisation and the development of mass tourism, we seek answers to the research questions posed at the beginning: 1) How can we assess the degree of identity loss and its value, including genius loci, and 2) can the process of identity loss of places be stopped in the face of ongoing changes?

Table 1: *Criteria for assessing the value of historic places* (own elaboration).

	Spatial value	Humanistic value	Attractiveness to tourists	Commercial value
Urban scale (landscape-oriented)	Site morphology, natural surroundings, exposure of the site/complex. Local/vernacular development context.	Indicator of local and supra-local identity sense of familiarity, tradition of place. Aesthetic and semantic value.	Environmental, recreational and cognitive values, accessibility.	Market value of land, development potential of tourism and investment facilities.
Architectural scale (object-oriented)	Authenticity of structure and substance integrity of the premises.	Educational, emotional value authenticity of the message atmosphere of the place.	Cognitive and aesthetic attractiveness. Spatial and communication accessibility, presence of accompanying services.	Promotional potential, place branding, continued strengthening of market attractiveness.

The proposed evaluation involves assessing the spatial value of places in terms of the surrounding landscape, object exposure, the value of the natural environment, and the context of local development, as well as the extent of potential destruction and threats. From an architectural perspective, we suggest assessing the integrity and authenticity of the site's heritage

substance, its state of preservation, the adopted conservation approach, and the degree of potential transformations and threats. Regarding its significance values, the site and its context are assessed in terms of their importance as carriers of visual and historical information.

The humanistic values of places can be considered in relation to their connections with local culture and history. It is also worth examining whether objects play a role as identity markers within local and broader communities.

Simultaneously, by applying the adopted research model, changes in the values of places as a result of their commercialisation and development for mass tourism should be analysed. Valorisation from a tourism perspective is a highly complex issue, starting from the complexity of defining tourism, tourist movements, the tourism market, and the tourism potential of places and objects.³⁸ A strong focus on satisfying tourists' needs and providing experiences is a precondition for effective competitiveness, which aligns tourism offerings with commercial activities.³⁹ Analysis of reports from tourism development organisations (i.e. from within the tourism industry) clearly indicates that the "place brand" plays a significant role in the process of building and promoting a comprehensive, certified tourism product, adeptly utilising elements related to the authentic value of the place, with the ultimate goal of selling the product.⁴⁰

Given the complexity of the issue of valuing places for tourism attractiveness, for the purposes of this study, we propose analysing them based on the following two criteria:

1. Evaluation of aesthetic and cognitive value, i.e., state of the natural environment, scenic exposure, informational and educational values, etc.
2. Evaluation of utility value: accessibility, accommodation, restaurants, etc.

As a result of detailed analyses and observations of phenomena related to the commercialisation of spaces, not only in the context of tourism development but also in terms of spatial transformations, the following concerning phenomena were noticed:

- On an urban scale: the market value of investment areas adjacent to historical sites is higher, leading to uncontrolled investor development in areas that should be designated as protected zones. The dynamic growth of accompanying infrastructure, such as transportation, hotels, and restaurants, results in a high degree of spatial interference and visual intrusion into the landscape.
- On an architectural scale: noticeable and permanent transformations of historical objects lead to the loss of authenticity in their substance and structure, resulting in the distortion of their symbolic significance and the erosion of their historical credibility.

³⁸ DUDA-SEIFERT, Magdalena. Kryteria oceny atrakcyjności turystycznej obiektów architektury w świetle literatury. In: *Turystyka Kulturowa*, No. 4, 2015, pp.74–87; NITKIEWICZ-JANKOWSKA, Anna. Potencjał turystyczny a możliwości kształtowania produktów turystycznych w regionie. In: *Geographia. Studia et Dissertationes*, T. 33, 2011, pp. 101–154.

³⁹ FEDYK, Wojciech, CIEPLIK, Justyna, SMOLARSKI, Tomasz, GRUSZKA, Izabela. Atrakcyjność turystyczna i komercjalizacja obiektów turystycznych. In: *Rozprawy Naukowe Akademii Wychowania Fizycznego we Wrocławiu*, No. 46, 2014, pp. 3–15.

⁴⁰ *Sprawozdanie z działalności Polskiej Organizacji Turystycznej w 2021 roku* [Report on the Activities of the Polish Tourist Organization in 2021]. Polska Organizacja Turystyczna.

The final result of the conducted analyses is a proposal for a tool that can be used to evaluate historical sites in the context of changes and potential threats. Table 2 contains the proposed assessment criteria for spatial, humanistic, touristic, and commercial values.

The second research question was: can the process of identity loss of places be stopped in the face of ongoing changes? The research revealed that the spatial and humanistic values of places are assets which attract tourist and commercial activities, but they also make important heritage sites vulnerable to such activities. Preserving identity in the face of transformation is contingent upon the continuity of development and the preservation of the site's unique characteristics. On the other hand, cultural disconnection, commercialisation and commodification often lead to irreversible loss of form, significance, identity and, consequently, the most ephemeral value: the genius loci. These findings are corroborated by numerous studies which emphasise that commercial tourism can destroy places and their specific character, transforming cultural iconic centres into mass entertainment venues.⁴¹

Table 2: Summary of interview insights on perceptions and impact of ruins in the Jurassic Belt, Poland

Group of respondents	Main aspects of conversations	Impact on local identity	Challenges/ recommendations
Local residents	Preservation of historical significance of the ruins – Concerns about conservation state	Ruins as symbols of local history and identity – Strong emotional responses	Maintaining the integrity of the sites – Avoiding excessive changes
Tourists	Aesthetic and educational experiences – Need for better informational materials	Deepening knowledge of local history – Increased interest in the region	Better signage and information – Organising guided tours
Site managers	Challenges related to maintenance – Balancing accessibility with conservation	Structural safeguarding for future generations	Modern interventions minimising impact on historical sites – Sustainable tourism practices
Site employees	Daily maintenance challenges – Visitors' reactions to changes	Working towards cultural heritage preservation	Strengthening conservation efforts – Educating visitors
Heritage conservation Experts	Conservation methods – Balancing restoration with authenticity preservation	Impact on long-term heritage protection	Minimising interventions on original structure – Promoting sustainable conservation

As part of our research, we also conducted comprehensive interviews with local communities to gather insights into their perceptions of the castles and the changes that have occurred to them. These conversations were held with a diverse range of groups, including local residents, tourists, site managers, employees working at the sites and experts specialising in the conservation of historical monuments. The questions focused on general changes to the

⁴¹ CHRISTOU, et al. The “genius loci” ..., pp. 19–32.; SOLSKA, Małgorzata. Duch miejsca, a współczesna przestrzeń życia człowieka. In: *Fenomen Genius Loci - Tożsamość miejsca w kontekście historycznym i współczesnym*, Warszawa, 2009, pp. 69–82.

structures and how these changes are perceived by visitors, as well as the impact on the local community.

Local residents often reflected on the historical significance of the ruins and expressed concerns about the preservation of these sites amidst modern developments. They emphasised the importance of maintaining the integrity of the ruins to preserve local history and identity. Tourists provided valuable feedback on their experiences and the aesthetic and educational value of the ruins, highlighting both the enchanting and deteriorating aspects of the structures. They frequently mentioned the need for better informational materials and guided tours to enhance their understanding and appreciation of the sites.

Site managers and employees shared practical insights into the challenges of maintaining these sites and the efforts made to balance conservation with access. They noted that while modern interventions are necessary for safety and usability, these changes sometimes clash with the historical ambiance of the sites. Experts in historical monument conservation discussed the delicate balance between restoration and preservation, advocating for methods that minimise alterations to the original structures.

One of the most frequently mentioned aspects across all groups was the impact of increased tourism on the ruins and the surrounding areas. While tourism brings economic benefits, it also poses risks to the structural integrity and authenticity of such sites. Many interviewees highlighted the need for sustainable tourism practices to ensure that the influx of visitors does not compromise the essence of these historical landmarks.

The ongoing changes to the ruins have a profound impact on local identity. For many residents, the castles are a symbol of their cultural heritage and a tangible link to the past. Alterations to these sites can evoke strong emotional responses, as they affect not only the physical landscape but also the collective memory and sense of place within the community. Ensuring that these changes are carried out thoughtfully and respectfully is crucial in maintaining the cultural continuity and identity of the local population.

This multi-faceted approach allowed us to capture a broad spectrum of opinions and experiences, offering a holistic view of the cultural and social dynamics surrounding the defensive castle open-air museums of the Jurassic Belt in Poland. The gathered data underscores the importance of these historical sites not only as places of cultural heritage but also as active elements which influence contemporary community identity as well as the local tourism economy.

By analysing the spatial and humanistic values of the places in contrast to the criteria which guide commercial and touristic approaches, it was possible not only to assess the degree of degradation of the identity of these places but also to describe the causes of this process. The main reasons for negative transformations are neglect of legal protections and aggressive, uncontrolled commercial activities, of which tourism is one, although it is not the sole factor. Historical places are all too often reduced to banality and pseudohistorical narratives to cater to average tastes and needs. These dangerous actions lead to the destruction of historical spaces and a diminished awareness among those who visit them. However, the most perilous actions are those that result in permanent and irreversible transformations of historical objects and the surrounding landscape through uncontrolled interventions by commercial investors. Therefore, it is essential to take action to recognise culturally valuable areas and implement tools for their genuine protection, as well as to build public awareness of their vanishing qualities.

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