

Awareness of local communities about the value of their city's cultural heritage and the need to protect it on the example of selected historic towns in the Małopolska region (Poland)

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Abstract

This article focuses on the problem of local communities' awareness of heritage values in terms of urbanism, architecture, and construction and the traditions of place within a historic town. To study this problem, the authors conducted qualitative and quantitative research using the questionnaire method. They were carried out in the area of two selected small historic towns located in southern Poland in the Małopolska region: Muszyna and Piwniczna-Zdrój. Their aim was to determine the level of awareness of the cultural heritage values of both towns among their inhabitants. The results of the research are expected to identify areas of real educational needs in terms of the knowledge and a sense of value of local monuments. The authors believe that social participation and involvement of local communities is essential in the process of protecting and caring for monuments of indigenous cultural heritage.

Keywords: level of awareness of inhabitants, historic city, cultural heritage, architectural heritage, urban heritage, heritage structures, history of architecture and urbanism, conservation of historic buildings, qualitative and quantitative research

1. Introduction

Cultural heritage, whether tangible, in the form of buildings, complexes of buildings and urban layouts, or intangible, which consists, inter alia, of the tradition of a place, has no chance of comprehensive and effective protection without the involvement of local communities in this difficult and long-term process.

This involvement, in turn, has a chance to occur when local communities know the cultural heritage monuments (tangible and intangible) of their “small homelands” and if they understand their value and the need to protect and preserve them for future generations (Kuśnierz-Krupa et.al, 2021: 847–857).

This article presents a qualitative and quantitative study that was carried out among local communities of two historic towns located in southern Poland (within the Małopolskie Voivodeship): Muszyna and Piwniczna-Zdrój. This research allowed the authors, among other things, to draw attention to the awareness of the local community regarding the revalorisation, repair, and protection of the architectural and urban planning monuments of both towns. The research sought to establish what knowledge the inhabitants of the historic towns have about the cultural landscape of their “small homeland”, whether they are aware of its value and whether they know the history of the town in which they live (Cechini, 2020).

Both Muszyna and Piwniczna (since 1999 Piwniczna-Zdrój), formerly Piwniczna Szyja (Neck), are now small centres, located in the southern part of the Lesser Poland Voivodeship, close to the border with Slovakia. Both towns have about 5,000 inhabitants. They were founded in the 14th century on the Poprad River by the Polish King Casimir the Great, the great “builder” of Polish towns (Kiryk, 1985; Krasnowolski, 2004). They have well-preserved, medieval urban layouts and historic architectural buildings (Kuśnierz-Krupa, 2019). This heritage needs to be cared for, protected and revitalized (Książek, 1994; Zimna-Kawecka et. al., 2021: 65–92).

2. Aim, scope, and method

The purpose of the investigation was to determine the level of awareness of the inhabitants and people professionally connected to Muszyna and Piwniczna-Zdrój of the architectural and urban planning monuments of these cities and the need to protect them, as well as to identify areas of real educational needs in this regard.

It was assumed that the adopted scope of the research, despite its pilot character, would enable the research objectives to be achieved by analysing such aspects as the self-assessment of the knowledge of those taking part in the survey, knowledge of terms such as: architectural and urban monument, knowledge of the character of the town and its history, awareness of the importance of individual monuments as the town’s assets, objective assessment of the state of knowledge of those taking part in the survey, and assessment of the degree of protection and care of monuments in the town.

The research carried out was carried out using the survey method, using self-developed questionnaires. The research was qualitative and quantitative in nature. They were carried out in both cities, on a group of 100 adult respondents, and their number was determined according to sampling rules. The selection of the research sample was nonrandom and haphazard. All questionnaires were collected using the environmental method (Wojciechowska et. al, 2016; Kuśnierz-Krupa et. al., 2021: 20–25). The prepared survey questionnaires for both cities contained 10 specific questions on the designated aspects of the investigation. The substantive part of the questionnaires consisted of closed questions. In the construction of the questionnaires, mainly single- or multiple-choice questions were

used from among the proposed answers. Some questions used estimation scales (Oppenheim, 2004; Sagan, 2004). The classification part of the survey questionnaires consisted of a metric that allowed respondents to be characterised in terms of the following sociodemographic characteristics: sex, age, place of birth, and education.

3. Muszyna and Piwniczna-Zdrój (history and cultural heritage)

The town of Muszyna was probably founded before 1356, i.e. during the reign of the Polish king Casimir the Great. The exact date of its foundation is not known, as the charter of the town has not been preserved (Kiryk, 2007: 76).

A defined orthogonal urban layout was laid out in the previously partially settled area, to the north of the prelocal settlement, on the Poprad River, based on the measure of a large rope, otherwise known as the Cracow rope, with a dimension of 45 m. In its centre was a rectangular square surrounded by individual building blocks. These blocks were divided into residential plots, which were filled with residential buildings (Cechini, 2020: 96–97).

Through the city, the city passed supralocal trade routes, including the road that led from Hungary to Kraków, which was conducive to the development of this center. Despite subsequent privileges, numerous fairs and markets were held in Muszyna (Wierzbowski, 1912: 291). As early as the beginning of the second half of the 14th century, sources mention the alderman, the town council, and the town's inhabitants (Kiryk, 1985: 136).

Probably soon after the location, a town hall and defensive fortifications, probably of wood or wood and earth, were erected on the market square. They surrounded the town (Malik, 2017: 36).

There was also a parish church in Muszyna, built at the time of the town's foundation or even earlier. It was located in the south-west part of the city. Due to its poor technical condition, it was replaced by the new St. Joseph Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, erected in the northern part of the town around the middle of the 18th century (Kornecki, 1972).

Here was also a fortified castle on a hill behind the town, the ruins of which can still be found on a steep hill above a bend in the Poprad River. Its history has not yet been fully recognised. It was probably built in a period similar to that of the town, also from a royal foundation (Marszałek, 1993: 149).

When analyzing the current historical resource in Muszyna, it is important to highlight the rich urban and architectural heritage.

The urban heritage consists of a well-preserved 9-field model of a medieval town (Kuśnierz-Krupa, 2019: 51). However, it is not standard, but "elongated", as the market square in Muszyna and the building blocks (western and eastern) are more than twice as long as the northern and southern blocks. A strong analogy can be drawn here with the layout of the nearby town of Miastko (today's Tylicz) and the towns of Slovakia: e.g. Levoča or Bardejov (Cechini, 2020: 53–57).

Muszyna's architectural heritage, in turn, consists of the 18th-century parish church (Fig.1a), described above; the characteristic small-town single-storey buildings from the 19th and early 20th centuries (Fig. 1b); and the ruins of a medieval castle.



Fig. 1a, b. Cultural heritage of Muszyna today
(photo by authors)

The town of Piwniczna-Zdrój, or rather Piwniczna Szyja, as it was called at the time of its foundation, probably originates from the Old Polish term for a narrow passage, isthmus, which should be associated with the area where the resort was founded, i.e., near the narrow gorge valley of the Poprad River (Stamirski, 2008: 10-11).

Piwniczna was located by the Polish King Casimir the Great in 1348 "in cruda radice", i.e., on previously undeveloped land, under German law (Akta grodzkie, 1872: 3). It was given a regular, defined urban layout, which was laid out based on the measure of a large rope measuring 45 m, on a terrain elevation that gave the new town natural defensive conditions. The center of the urban layout was occupied by a rectangular square, surrounded by individual building blocks. These blocks were filled with single-story wooden buildings, erected on plots of land facing the square or the streets leading out of it (Cechini, 2020: 94–95).

Archival sources repeatedly mention the aldermen of Piwniczna and the town council, which, in addition to court matters, also dealt with day-to-day regulations related to its functioning (Kiryk, 1985: 163–164).

Piwniczna was a trading town. The Polish King Casimir the Great, wanting the town to develop dynamically and rapidly, exempted its inhabitants from all royal charges for a period of 20 years and granted trade privileges such as the right to hold fairs and markets (Akta grodzkie, 1872: 5).

Shortly after the town's foundation, the wooden, shingle-covered parish church of the Blessed Virgin Mary was built from the royal foundation (Kodeks Dyplomatyczny Małopolski, 1887: 287). The temple was built to the east of the market square and now no longer exists. Other churches were built on the same site. The parish church, built between 1881 and 1886, in neo-Baroque style, which bears the original invocation, has survived to the present day.

Piwniczna, like Muszyna, had no defensive masonry fortifications. It is likely that a perimeter of police-defence (wooden or wooden-earth) with three gates was marked out around the city.

The material cultural heritage of Piwniczna-Zdrój consists of urban and architectural heritage.

The first is related to the town's urban layout, which has been well preserved to the present day and is based on a turbine or windmill model (Kuśnierz-Krupa, 2019: 68). This model consists of one street emerging from each corner of the square and each street facing a different direction. Only a few medieval towns in the former Małopolska region had similar layouts (Cechini, 2020: 95).

In contrast, Piwniczna's architectural heritage is made up of the 19th century parish church of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Fig. 2a), historic residential buildings dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries, and a historic well in the market square dating back to the 17th century (Fig. 2b).

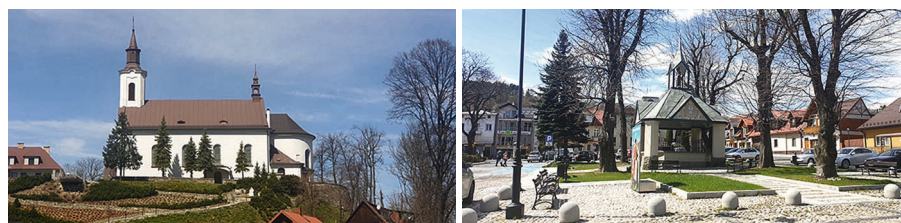


Fig. 2a, b. Cultural heritage of Piwniczna-Zdrój today (photo by authors)

4. Discussion of the studies carried out

This research into the level of public awareness of cultural heritage, its value, and the need for revaluation and protection is innovative. Researchers in the history of architecture, urban planning, and heritage protection are very rare to study this important issue. In the opinion of the authors, determining the level of awareness of local communities in terms of sensitivity and

knowledge in the field of heritage protection is necessary to build successful educational programmes aimed at local communities. In turn, education on the value and need for heritage conservation is essential for the conservation process itself to succeed.

In terms of a discussion of the research in question, it is worth identifying the structure of the respondents who participated in the research.

Among the Muszyna respondents, women were 44% and men 56%. The surveyed population included five age groups. The most numerous were people aged 50 to 60 (43%), followed by people aged 19 to 29 (24%), aged 40 to 49 (20%), and the least numerous were people over 60. The respondents were mainly people born in the Muszyna area (62%), followed by those born in Muszyna (22%) and people from other areas accounted for 16%. Respondents with primary, secondary, undergraduate, and tertiary education participated in the survey. The most numerous set of all the defining respondents' education levels were those with secondary education (72%).

Among the respondents to the Piwniczna-Zdrój survey, women outnumbered men with 62%. The age structure of the respondents in the first three age groups (19–29; 30–39; 40–49) was even (between 26 and 34%), while the age groups 50–60 and over-60 were significantly less numerous. The respondents were overwhelmingly associated with Piwniczna since birth (52%), while the respondents born in other regions of the country were the least numerous (13%). In terms of education, as in Muszyna, the most numerous group was those with secondary education (84%).

When characterising the level of awareness of residents, it is necessary to state first what is the subjective assessment of the respondents' knowledge of their city. Data on the declarations of the respondents in Muszyna and Piwniczna-Zdrój on the assessment of their level of knowledge about the history and architecture of the city and urban planning of the city are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Self-assessment of the level of knowledge of historic architecture and urbanism

Self-assessment of knowledge of the city's historic architecture and urban planning	Muszyna (% indications)	Piwniczna-Zdrój (% indications)
Very high	4	2
High	12	17
Medium	57	62
Very small	19	14
Neither	5	3
Difficult to say	3	2

(own elaboration)

In the subjective assessment of the knowledge of the respondents, positive responses were taken as assessing a high level of knowledge: "very high" and "high", followed by indications of "medium" representing a medium level of knowledge, while negative responses were taken as assessing a low level of knowledge: "very small" and "neither" (Diagnoza stanu wiedzy i świadomości

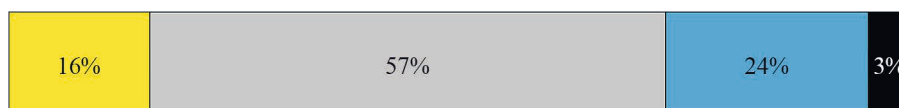
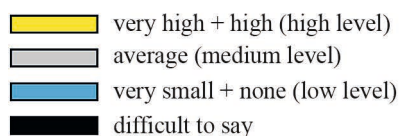


Fig. 3. Subjective assessment of the level of knowledge of Muszyna's historical architecture and urban planning (own elaboration)



ekonomicznej Polaków, 2020). The structure of the subjective assessment of the respondents' level of knowledge of the respondents of the history and architecture and urban planning of Muszyna is presented in Fig. 3, while that of Piwniczna-Zdrój is shown in Fig. 4.

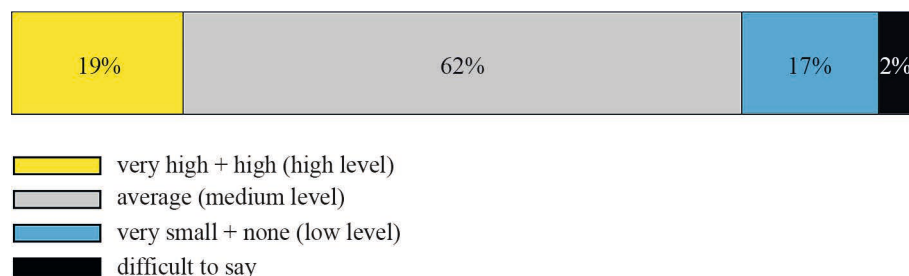


Fig. 4. Subjective assessment of knowledge of the historical architecture and urban planning of Piwniczna-Zdrój (own elaboration)

By analyzing the self-assessment data of the respondents in both towns, one should find a high percentage of negative responses, indicating a low assessment of their knowledge of the towns they are connected with. In the case of Muszyna it is as high as 24% of indications, and in the case of Piwniczna-Zdrój 17%. 16% declared positive responses about the level of their knowledge of Muszyna were declared by 16% and concerning Piwniczna-Zdrój by 19% of the respondents from these towns. The above clearly indicates a dominant self-assessment at the average level, with Muszyna at 57% and Piwniczna-Zdrój at 62%. These declarations will be verified on the basis of the answers given to the subsequent questions in the survey.

An important aspect included in the survey was knowledge of terms such as monument of architecture and urban planning. Respondents were given the opportunity to indicate the correct answers through multiple choice of sets of correct and incorrect examples. The data on the given answers are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Architectural monuments in the cities analysed

Architectural monument	Muszyna (% indications)	Piwniczna-Zdrój (% indications)
Historical Town Hall	64	42
Historical church	60	69
Urban planning system	20	16
None of the above	8	0
Other	8	3

Explanation: indications do not add up to 100%, multiple choice possible (own elaboration)

The indications of the Muszyna respondents were 74% correct, with an almost identical percentage for Piwniczna Zdrój. Most indications of Muszyna's architecture refer to the historic town hall and church. In addition, respondents gave architectural monuments in Muszyna that were not included in the list, such as the market square, castle ruins and tenement houses in the market square. The list of historic buildings in Piwniczna-Zdrój included only one example, namely the historic church, which received 69% of indications. Respondents also indicated a well in the market square, which was not included in the list. The erroneous indication of the urban layout as an architectural monument in Muszyna (20%) and Piwniczna (16%) may indicate a problem with the distinction between the terms architectural monument and urban monument by some respondents. An explanation for this problem can be found in the data presented in Table 3 on the monuments to urbanism in Muszyna and Piwniczna-Zdrój.

Table 3. Urban planning monuments in the cities analyzed

Urban planning monument	Muszyna (% indications)	Piwniczna-Zdrój (% indications)
Castle	40	5
Historical church	24	44
Urban planning system	48	45
None of the above	8	2
Other	4	14

Explanation: indications do not add up to 100%, multiple choice possible (own elaboration)

The urban layout as the only monument to urban planning received less than 50% of the indications in these cities. The indication of the castle in Muszyna (40%) and the historic church in Muszyna (24%) and Piwniczna-Zdrój (44%) as monuments of urban planning clearly shows a lack of knowledge of the differences between the terms monument of architecture and monument of urban planning.

Another aspect included in the survey was knowledge of the history of the town and the associated character of the town. Data on the character of Muszyna and Piwniczna-Zdrój as towns according to the respondents are set out in Table 4.

Table 4. The nature of the city as perceived by respondents

Historic city	Muszyna (% indications)	Piwniczna-Zdrój (% indications)
Yes	52	57
No	8	22
No opinion	40	21

(own elaboration)

The percentage of indications that these are historic towns was low, 52% for Muszyna and 57% for Piwniczna-Zdrój. What may be puzzling is the excessive number of indications of “No opinion” on the order of 40% for Muszyna and 21% for Piwniczna-Zdrój and 22% of responses that it is not a historic town. The above cannot be regarded as a satisfactory level of knowledge of the subject. Respondents’ knowledge of the town’s history as regards the period of its foundation was the subject of the next question in the survey. Responses’ declarations are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The period of the city’s foundation as assessed by respondents

Period of the city’s foundation	Muszyna (% indications)	Piwniczna-Zdrój (% indications)
Medieval	80	95
Renaissance	16	3
19th century	4	2
20th century	0	0

(own elaboration)

Respondents’ knowledge of the Middle Ages as the period in which these towns were founded is satisfactory, as 80% of indications in Muszyna and 95% of indications in Piwniczna-Zdrój were correct.

The respondents were then asked to indicate the monuments of the highest value. The resulting ranking of the value of the monuments in these towns is presented in Table 6.

The first position of the castle ruins in the ranking of monuments of the highest value in Muszyna (68% of indications) is correct, while the resulting ranking of monuments in Piwniczna-Zdrój is incorrect. The most important and

most valuable monument in this city is its urban layout. However, it received only 14% of the indications, while the well in the market square received 75% and the parish church 55% of the indications.

Table 6. Monuments of highest value in the analysed cities

Monuments of the highest value	Muszyna (% indications)	Piwniczna-Zdrój (% indications)
Parish church	12	55
Urban planning system	8	14
Castle ruins	68	-
Well on the marketplace	-	75
None of the above	0	0
Other	12	0

Explanation: indications do not add up to 100%, multiple choice possible (own elaboration)

The respondents were then asked whether the architectural and urban design monuments were assets of the town. The responses obtained on this topic are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Architectural and urban monuments as assets of the city

City asset	Muszyna (% indications)		Piwniczna-Zdrój (% indications)	
	Architectural monument	Urban planning monument	Architectural monument	Urban planning monument
Yes	72	34	68	47
No	0	24	9	26
No opinion	28	42	23	27

(own elaboration)

According to the respondents, architectural monuments are the asset of the town. This declaration was made by 72% of the respondents in Muszyna and 68% in Piwniczna-Zdrój. However, the values of indications “I don’t have an opinion” of 28% in Muszyna and 23% in Piwniczna-Zdrój are alarming. Respondents do not attribute the role of urban planning monuments as an asset to the town. The answers “no” and “I have no opinion” constituted 66% for Muszyna and 53% for Piwniczna-Zdrój. The above distribution of indications indicates a low level of knowledge of the subject among respondents.

Taking into account the responses to the questionnaire questions related to 7 aspects concerning the scope of knowledge as an awareness of the history and architecture and urban planning of the city, an objective evaluation of the respondents’ knowledge and a comparison of its level with the subjective evaluation of the knowledge declared at the beginning of the research was proposed. The evaluation criteria are: the indicated monuments of architecture, the indicated monuments of urban planning, the nature of the city, the period of the city’s establishment, the indicated monuments of the highest value, the monuments of architecture as the city’s asset, and the monuments of urban planning as the city’s asset. As in other social surveys, the level of knowledge was classified according to the number of correctly answered questions (Diagnoza stanu wiedzy i świadomości ekonomicznej Polaków, 2020). For the seven aspects of knowledge assessment, a level of ‘high’ was adopted if 5–7 criteria were answered correctly, a level of ‘medium’ if 3–4 criteria were answered correctly and ‘low’ if 0–2 criteria were covered.

The analysis of the respondents’ correct answers to the above-mentioned criteria enables an objective assessment to be made of the respondents’ knowledge of the history, architecture, and urban planning of the analysed cities. The results obtained are presented in Figs. 5 and 6.

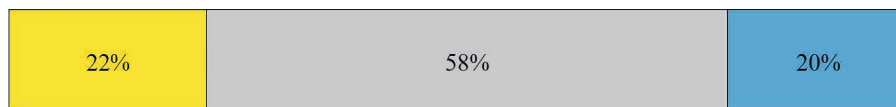


Fig. 5. Objective assessment of the level of knowledge about Muszyna's historical architecture and urban planning (own elaboration)

very high + high (high level)
average (medium level)
very small + none (low level)



Fig. 6. Objective evaluation of the respondents about the respondents' knowledge of historical architecture and urban planning of Piwniczna-Zdrój (own elaboration)

very high + high (high level)
average (medium level)
very small + none (low level)

Among the Muszyna respondents, 22% gave correct answers for 5–7 criteria. The highest percentage of correct answers, 58%, concerned the range of 3–4 criteria. On the other hand, correct answers for only two criteria accounted for 20%. Thus, the average level of Muszyna knowledge of respondents should be objectively indicated.

Analyzing the level of knowledge of respondents in Piwniczna Zdrój, it should be indicated only 13% of correct answers on 5–7 criteria. On the other hand, the highest percentage of correct answers of 48% concern the range of 3–4 criteria. A significantly high percentage of 39% correct answers concerned a maximum of 2 criteria. Therefore, it should be objectively indicated that the level of knowledge of respondents of Piwniczna-Zdrój is average, but lower than that of the respondents from Muszyna.

The last aspect of the survey was to assess the degree of protection and care (restoration) of monuments. The results obtained are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Assessment of the degree of protection and care of monuments in the cities analyzed

Assessment of the degree of protection / maintain of monuments	Muszyna (% indications)		Piwniczna-Zdrój (% indications)	
	protected monuments	well maintained monuments	protected monuments	well maintained monuments
Very good	24	20	1	3
Good	36	49	24	26
Average	20	17	42	48
They are not protected / maintained	13	10	18	19
No opinion	7	4	15	4

(own elaboration)

Muszyna monuments were positively rated by respondents in terms of their protection and care. As many as 60% of respondents gave “very good” and “good” ratings for the degree of protection, while an even higher percentage of such ratings was given for the care of the monuments (69%). 13% of the protection of monuments was given by 13% and of monument restoration. 10% of respondents.

The Piwniczna-Zdrój monuments were not as positively assessed in terms of maintenance. Only one in four respondents rated them positively in terms of protection, and in terms of care, the percentage of positive ratings was only slightly higher. Evaluations of the “medium degree” of both protection (42%)

and restoration (48%) prevailed. Almost one in five respondents gave a negative assessment of the degree of maintenance of monuments in the city.

These evaluations of the degree of protection and care, especially of Muszyna, indicate that the local community perceives actions in the implementation of the monument protection policy. In addition, the respondents appreciated the renovation work carried out. Respondents from Piwniczna-Zdrój are not so satisfied with the protection policy in this town. They are also not satisfied with the activities concerning the care of monuments.

5. Summary

The medieval historic towns of Muszyna and Piwniczna-Zdrój are examples of well-preserved centres. This is because their town planning layouts with a clear model, as well as their historic buildings, have survived to the present day, making them distinctive and valuable compared to other small towns in the Małopolska region in southern Poland.

The qualitative and quantitative research carried out using the questionnaire method, despite its pilot character, allowed the research objective to be achieved in terms of assessing the local communities' awareness of the cultural heritage of the towns under analysis and the need to protect it. Respondents from both cities had an average level of knowledge, both in terms of self-assessment and objectively taking into account the seven evaluation criteria. Therefore, there is an urgent need to intensify or expand new forms of education of the inhabitants and people professionally connected with these centers in the field of history and architectural and urban planning monuments that constitute the cultural heritage and asset of the city. Increasing the awareness of the local community is necessary for its participation in the planned and carried out activities for the development of the city and the proper protection (urban, architectural, and structural) of its cultural heritage.

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