
ASSESSMENT OF THE MONUMENTS OF HISTORY¹ LIST BY STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS

LASKOWSKI Andrzej¹

¹ dr Andrzej Laskowski, University of Economics in Cracow
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2021-675X>

ABSTRACT: The article presents the results of the task given to students of *Commodity Studies* at the Cracow University of Economics in the spring of 2018 within the framework of the subject *Protection of Cultural Property with Customs Aspects*. The students' task was to critically address the content of the list by indicating those places and objects which they found surprising or objectionable on the list and proposing those which in their opinion should be included but are not. In this first category, most people (as many as 8 out of 32 who spoke) were surprised at the inclusion of a stud farm in Janów Podlaski on the list, 5 of which decided that the farm should not be on the list at all. Łódź - a multicultural landscape of an industrial city - was also assessed very critically (3 votes of strong disapproval). As for adding new items to the list, most people (5) noticed the need to include Auschwitz Birkenau, the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp, and the Przemyśl Fortress (4), which has since actually happened in the latter case. The implementation of the task showed that such a form of protection of historical monuments is necessary in Poland, and the emotions aroused by the content of the MH list may have an educational and popularizing value.

KEY WORDS: Monument of History, Students, Heritage, Cracow University of Economics

The Cracow University of Economics (UEK) has for many years presented an educational offer related to the broadly understood protection of cultural heritage, addressed to people of different ages and educational attainment. A sort of a "flagship" in this respect is the Heritage Academy, operating since 2001 in the form of postgraduate studies, under the auspices of the Małopolska School of Public Administration UEK and the International Cultural Centre². On

¹ I purposefully use, here and now, the spelling "Monument to History" instead of the form of "monument to history" encountered (for example in legal acts), fully agreeing with the suggestion put forward in this respect in the literature on the subject. More on this subject see M. Świdrak, *Krytyczne uwagi do instytucji monument historii*, [in:] P. Dobosz, M. Biliński, W. Górny, A. Mazur, M. Hadel, A. Kozień (ed.), *Problemy ochrony prawnej sportowego dziedzictwa kulturowego i mechanizmy prawa sportowego*, Kraków 2018, p. 60).

² See e.g. *Heritage Academy 2001-2013*, ed. B. Szyper, M. Wiśniewski, Kraków 2013 and <http://www.akademia.mck.krakow.pl/> [last access: 16.07.2019].

the other hand, students of full-time and part-time studies doing the selected courses at EUK have the opportunity to learn about: the secrets of cultural heritage management (*Tourism and recreation*), the principles of protection of cultural assets (selected majors of *Commodity Studies*), and from the next academic year also the management of cultural heritage of historical cities (newly established *Urban Studies*). The educational offer in this field is prepared and presented by employees of the Department of Cultural Heritage and Urban Studies (UNESCO Chair), co-creator of the Chair of Economic and Social History of the EUK, since autumn 2008 headed by Professor Jacek Purchla (also head of the Department since 1993)³.

This text is based on classes conducted by the author, an employee of the UNESCO Chair, with EUK *Commodity Studies* students in the summer semester (covering the period from February to June, and in principle to September) of the academic year 2017/2018. Students participated in the lecture entitled *Protection of Cultural Property with Customs Aspects*, conducted during full-time studies in the dimension of 15 hours of lessons, as part of the second degree studies (master's degree) in the specialization of commerce and customs, in the last of the three semesters. The curriculum of the classes includes a set of general issues concerning the topic, including a standard discussion of the forms of protection of historical monuments in Poland, and thus also basic information about the Monuments of History (MH). The task given to students⁴ was to thoroughly familiarize themselves with the current list of MH (as of spring 2018)⁵ and then to indicate (one or more) the entry that they found most surprising and to propose one that was particularly noticeable to them. It was therefore necessary not only to demonstrate the knowledge of the entries in force at that time (in which the website of the National Heritage Institute turned out to be particularly helpful)⁶, but also to indicate from the range of existing familiar objects those whose lack they considered as a significant oversight and thus a shortcoming of this category of monuments.

Based on the information obtained during the classes, it can be estimated that more than half of the authors of the task (18) were people from the Małopolskie Voivodeship (including 5 from Kraków) [the initials were marked with the following symbols: M, MK, and MK respectively, and the remaining ones were mostly students from the Podkarpackie Voivodeship (7) [P]. Moreover, several persons (2) represented the Silesian Province [Ś], and one person each represented the Opolskie [O] and Świętokrzyskie [ŚW] Provinces. In several cases (3) the place of origin of

³ For the history of the mentioned cathedral see A. Laskowski, *50th Anniversary of the Department of Economic and Social History*, Cracow University of Economics, "Quarterly of the History of Material Culture", R. LVII, 2009, No. 3-4, pp. 474-475. In 2019 the cathedral celebrated its next anniversary, associated with the 60th anniversary of its activity.

⁴ 32 people took part in the task.

⁵ After handing over 10 new nominations on 20 April 2018, the MH list consisted of 91 items and this is the condition of the list was familiarized with by the students. Another extension of the list took place with the presentation of 10 more nominations on 10 December of the same year. Since then, the list has consisted of 105 entries.

⁶ See https://www.nid.pl/pl/Informacje_ogolne/Zabytki_w_Polsce/Pomniki_historii/; [last access 22.07.2019].

students was impossible to determine [N]⁷.

In the following text, in order to present arguments and/or motives for the choice, students' statements are often used. When quoting them, the initials of the author of the statement are given and, after a slash, the province of their origin (with a possible addition of Krakow itself), are given. Their form was adjusted to a minimal extent, only due to structural or linguistic errors, and very often (as well as later in this text) the term "Monument of History" was consistently replaced by the abbreviation (MH).

In carrying out the task, some students referred to the definition of MH. Although it was known to everyone in class, some students felt the need to return to it after familiarizing themselves with the full list of entries⁸. As one of the participants of the task admitted, "I have never wondered what a MH could really be, and certainly did not think it could be a whole city. My idea about it was completely different, I always considered individual objects or squares and exceptional places to be MH". [KT/P]. Another one said: "In my view, a MH always seemed to be a building or a natural object [sic!]" [KG/P]. Many of the participants of the task stressed the need and importance of creating this category of monuments, having the status of "the most important and most valuable historical buildings in the country". [MK/WW]. However, there was no shortage of votes that some proposals are controversial due to their non-standard character (see below).

In the first part of the task, which concerned the indication of controversial or surprising MH, one of the persons made - and rightly so - a reservation that "the MH List is a collection of monuments whose recognition for the highest value is preceded by an appropriate procedure, therefore it is difficult to question the presence of any of the objects on the list. You can only isolate the element which, in your own opinion, has the lowest value in comparison to the others". [JH/M].

Following the selection of an unexpected or surprising object(s), an attempt was made to explore the rationale for specific decisions and, in general, to reassess the validity of the alert. Among the objects and teams on the list of the MH, the most controversial turned out to be the following ones:

- **Janów - a stud farm** - out of 8 persons expressing doubts as many as 5 remained unconvinced as to the validity of giving such a high rank to this facility. They argued, among other things, yes: "I understand the idea of promoting Poland on the international arena and certainly thanks to the pedigree stud farm in Janów Podlaski many people have heard about our country, but it seems to me that the farm lags behind the other objects on the list". JT/O); "It is undoubtedly a unique architectural and landscape complex, but [...] it does not have such special significance for the culture of our country." AD/MK]; "[...] there are more important buildings for the history of Poland than the stud farm, which is mainly famous for its Arabian

⁷ A similar structure, apart from the recently growing number of students from Eastern Europe (especially from Ukraine), is present in other fields of study at our university. There were no foreigners in the described group, as the yearbooks started their studies when the boom in studying at the EUK among foreigners had not yet taken place.

⁸ During the classes it was possible to present only some entries from the increasingly extensive list.

horse breeding". [AS/Ś].

- *Łódź - multicultural landscape of an industrial city* [Fig. 1] - 3 people indicated this position as doubtful and all remained skeptical about it. The argument was yes: "There are many industrial cities in Poland, as well as multicultural ones. Each of them has its own history and culture, but in my opinion Łódź does not stand out from among them in any way by its historical or aesthetic values. [KG/P]; "Such a landscape is usually associated with factories, their chimneys and many "clouds" of smoke and pollution, which in my opinion is quite a controversial choice". [KS/P].



Fig. 1 Łódź - an example of MH difficult to accept for the students. Photo A. Laskowski: II 2008

- **Augustów Canal - waterway** - this entry was indicated by as many as 5 people, but eventually 2 people declared themselves as strong opponents. It was argued, among others, that "despite its charming location, it should be considered a tourist attraction, and not a MH. It was not constructed [...] by outstanding architects, but merely military engineers. [AK/P]. The second, similar entry - the **Elbląg Canal** - was made by 2 people as a surprise, 1 of whom considered it unacceptable.

- **Gliwice - radio station** - the entry of this object was indicated as surprising by 5 people, but only 1 remained unconvinced of the idea of giving it such a high distinction. In her opinion, "despite its historical connection, it is [...] a place reminiscent of the present buildings". [BK/N].

• **Ozimek - an iron chain bridge suspended over the Mała Panew River** - was considered controversial by 4 people, 2 of whom remained unconvinced. One of them expressed the opinion that the bridge "does not have such a high historical value for our country as the Wawel Royal Castle. [...] it only shows us what industrial culture looked like in the 19th century, and it is not connected with any important historical or cultural events".

• **Wrocław - Centennial Hall** - the surprise of the classification of this object as a MH was expressed by as many as 3 people, of which 2 definitely held the opinion. One of them stated that "it could be replaced by many other items that were created in a similar period of time [...], and their appearance and history encourage visitors to visit and learn about their history. For me personally it is just an ordinary oval hall, of which there are many in Poland. [BK/P].

• **Bohoniki and Kruszyniany - mosques and mizars (cemeteries)** - this entry surprised 2 people and both of them remained skeptical about it. One of them, referring to the MH definition, stated that "mosques and mizars are the cultural heritage of another culture and other countries [sic!], another religion. The fact that they are located in our country does not necessarily mean that it has an important value for Poland. I believe that this is not quite rightly included in the MH list and that there would be several other places in our country that could be of greater importance in this context". [MW/M]. However, she did not support this position with any concrete proposals.

• **Katowice - the Nikiszowiec workers' housing estate** [Fig. 2] - this group was questioned in the same proportions as Bohoniki and Kruszyniany. One of the opponents briefly justified his position: "[...] in my opinion, the workers' housing estate is not a MH". [GT/MK].



Fig. 2 Nikiszowiec - an example of MH that is difficult for the students to accept. Photo A. Laskowski: XII 2016

• **Other** items on the MH list were indicated by only one person each. Out of 8 such indications, 3 (Srebrna Góra Fortress, Szalowa - the parish church of St. Michael the Archangel, Świdnica (cathedral) met with final acceptance, while 5 (Gościkowo-Paradyż - post-Cistercian monastery complex, Krzeszów - former Cistercian abbey complex, Lublin - historical architectural and urban complex, Warsaw - William Lindley and Żyrardów Filter Stations Complex - 19th-century Factory Settlement) were considered as an overstatement. Various arguments were put forward, e.g. it was believed that the filter station could be protected by an entry in the register of monuments [LK/M], the factory settlement is not sufficiently "rooted in the memory of the Poles" (unlike the ones mentioned for example: the Kraków urban complex or the battlefield at Grunwald), and the Lublin urban complex is disqualified by numerous and careless restoration works and numerous, hasty modifications [JK/MK].

Against the background of hesitations and doubts related to the nominations accepted by the decision-making bodies, no less interesting is the list of student proposals concerning what is missing and, therefore, what should be placed on the MH list. The most striking thing about the presented proposals is their location in different parts of the country and their typological diversity. The latter aspect of these proposals, on the one hand, undermines the belief that students would be willing to narrow down the repertoire of HM objects to the most obvious examples (e.g. sacral objects, residences or old-town complexes) and, on the other hand, shows that getting acquainted with objects already on the list has clearly broadened their thinking horizons and imagination as to what kind of objects may receive this honorable title.



Fig. 3 Auschwitz Birkenau – in the students' opinion, the most obvious omission on the MH list.
Photo A. Laskowski, VI 2008

Auschwitz Birkenau, the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp [Fig. 3], received the highest number of votes (5) on the list of omissions. Students disapproved of the fact that this important symbol of international significance, which has long been on the UNESCO World Heritage List (hereinafter: UWHL), is not on the list of the MH. Among the objects from the UWHL that are still not included in the list of the MH, Dębno Podhalańskie - St. Michael the Archangel Church (inscribed in a group with other selected wooden churches in southern Małopolska) was also indicated⁹.

Fewer indications than Auschwitz Birkenau, i.e. 4, were given to **Przemyśl Fortress**, and one person also separately indicated **Przemyśl - the Old Town complex**. These suggestions turned out to be prophetic, because at the end of the same year, the President of the Republic of Poland recognized both these groups as MH. The same happened to the candidacy indicated by one person: **Gdańsk - Gdańsk Shipyard, the birthplace of "Solidarity"**. According to the nominee, the shipyard "should have been there [i.e. the MH list] much earlier, as it is a place of transformation important for Poland, Europe and the whole world". [BK/N].

Two persons each postulated that the MH list should include: **Modlin - Modlin Fortress** ("due to its history, size and "awesomeness of fortifications complex [KG/M]) and Niepołomice - the Royal Castle ("it is called the second Wawel Castle"), built by order of King Kazimierz Wielki, [...] it was a place of important political and diplomatic meetings. From there, kings set off on hunting trips to the nearby Niepołomice Forest. [...] over the centuries the castle has been rebuilt several times [...] today it looks amazing after the renovation works. And it is accessible to visitors"). Both of these proposals, as it seems, deserve to be considered in this context¹⁰.

Other potential candidates were submitted by individuals, but there were at least a few who, according to the writer of these words, should be in the orbit of interest of the decision-makers and their caretakers should seriously consider taking concrete steps to submit an appropriate application. I include the following suggestions (in alphabetical order of place names):

- **Chochółów - a village (part of it)** - by increasing the importance of wooden, highlander residential buildings and the fact that it continues to perform its original function, and by drawing attention to its role played during the 1846 Chochółów Uprising, it was stated that it "meets all the main criteria that a building awarded the title of the Monument of History must fulfil". (EZ/M). It is worth noting that another important argument here would undoubtedly be the issue of the spatial arrangement of the village, which, however, was not mentioned in the students' proposal.

- **Kłodzko - Kłodzko Fortress** - in the context of this proposal, its historical values [AS/N], dating back to the Middle Ages, were raised, which should also be supported by landscape aspects and - not always unambiguous - city-forming aspect.

⁹ Perhaps by oversight, one of the persons in this category demanded that the Marian shrine in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, already present both in the UWHL and in the list of the MH, be entered into the register.

¹⁰ The state of preservation of the fortress seems to be a problematic issue. As far as the castle is concerned, it seems reasonable to treat the possible entry more broadly, at least taking into account the local parish church complex.

- **Pszczyna - the castle** [Fig. 4] - apart from the strictly historical ones, in this case, also arguments concerning authenticity were put forward, relating to the well-preserved original decoration and furnishings of the neo-baroque residence with a long-standing tradition, as well as the high values of the surrounding vast landscape park [AS/Ś].



Fig. 4 Castle in Pszczyna as an example of objects suggested by the students for inclusion in the MH list. Photo A. Laskowski, III 2007

- **Szczyrzyc, the Cistercian abbey**, as it was argued, "has a very long and colorful history. [...] During the partitions of Poland, Władysław Orkan was a pupil of the monastery elementary school. During the Nazi occupation, the abbey was a shelter for refugees from various places in Poland. The abbey was decorated with the Virtuti Militari Cross for bravery during World War II. [JK/M].

- **Wadowice - Basilica of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Family House of the Pope John Paul II** - nomination indicated because of the direct relationship of both objects "with the person born in Wadowice, Pope John Paul II", which makes it a place "important for every Pole". [PS/M].

- **Zakopane - "buildings built in Zakopane style with Villa Koliba at the forefront"** - nomination put forward not only because of its diverse values (national style, propagation of regional motifs, Stanisław Witkiewicz as a creator), but also due to the fact that the MH list "does not contain any monuments from the Podhale region" [AK/M].

• **Żywiec - the castle park in Żywiec** - as it was argued, "established in the 18th century, is a place loved by the inhabitants of Żywiec and the nearby towns and villages". [BK/N]. It is worth noting that the park - of undoubted landscape and historical value - creates a common complex with an important residence, therefore a potential candidacy can and should include both these elements.

Apart from those mentioned above, among the candidates submitted by one person there are also two monuments of technology. This category, accepted with such great resistance (or even rejected) by many students evaluating the existing entries, was understood by others to such an extent that they proposed to place them among the MH:

• **Giżycko - a rotating bridge over the Giżycki Canal (now: Łuczański Canal)** - an object from the end of the 19th, century situated on a waterway dug in the 3rd quarter of the 18th century. According to the person nominating the entry, the bridge's structure is original and its traditional manual operation and uniqueness on the scale of Poland and Europe [AK/P].

• **Solina - a water dam** - a concrete structure piling up the San River in the Bieszczady Mountains, designed in its original version as early as in the interwar period, put into service (after modification of the old plans) in 1968. According to the student's justification, the building deserves to be called the MH due to its historical values (fact of construction in 1968), uniqueness ("the highest in Poland") and originality of its construction (it is built "on natural stone foundations") [AS/P].

Contrary to the fears of the lecturer, resulting from the noticeable number of participants in classes related to Krakow, the proposals for potential nominations were not focused on Krakow's buildings. There were few such territorially related candidates, among them 1 nomination was given to: the remaining **Kraków mounds** (apart from the Kościuszko mound, which was entered on MH list relatively recently at the end of 2017), a vast meadow of medieval origin situated in the very center of the city, i.e. the **Kraków Błonia** [Fig. 5] (in 2000 it was entered in the register of monuments; according to the student, they are "an important element of Kraków for its inhabitants. [...] have been a venue of many events and celebrations", [MT/MK]) and the **old (i.e. socialist-realist) part of Nowa Huta district** ("is a special place, long rooted [sic!] in Krakow" [MT/MK]).

In a few other cases, local (this time outside Kraków) patriotism was also the guiding force, indicating those sites which, in the homelands of the students who spoke, are renowned and presented as important elements of local or regional heritage, relatively important tourist attractions, but are not well known to the general public. Examples of such applications include **Chroberz - Wielopolski Palace** [MK/ŚW], **Grodków - Church of St. Michael the Archangel** (here, for example, argued: "for the beauty of the temple and the sound of the recently renovated organ made by the renowned "Berschdorf from Nysa" company". JT/O)), **Jarosław - Franciscan-Reformat church and monastery complex** [AC/N], and **Tarnobrzeg - sanctuary of Our Lady of Dzików** [KS/P]¹¹.

¹¹ Official nomination of these facilities, which are undoubtedly significant on a local or even regional scale, seems very unlikely.



Fig. 5 Kraków Błonia (Cracow Commons) as an example of entries suggested by students on the list of MH. Photo A. Laskowski, III 2007

Summary

The state of awareness and assessments made with regard to the MH list as described in this article concern young people (usually 24 years old at the time of performing the task) living in Poland (mainly in the south-eastern part of the country), who are just finishing their education at the level of MA studies. Currently, most of these people have most likely entered the labour market, and soon they will decide on the fate of many aspects of our everyday lives and publicly formulate evaluations of certain phenomena. The relatively young form of legal protection, which is MH although very imperfect and requiring many improvements, requires and deserves to be popularized and rooted in social awareness. It is worth shaping this awareness at various levels of education, including university level, indicating the advantages and drawbacks of the system of monuments protection in Poland, bearing in mind the fact that it will be the next generations who will have to modify or change it. The political reality of the last decades in Poland shows that the fate of supervision and modelling of the system of protection of historical monuments does not depend only on people with specialist training, hence the universality of this awareness is something totally desirable.

The task carried out and described here clearly shows that for students the most difficult to accept turned out to be those MH which are technical monuments and innovative construction solutions (bridge in Ozimek, radio station in Gliwice, Centennial Hall in Wrocław, Warsaw filter

station), including territorially extensive complexes of utility character (both water canals), not quite impressive architecturally and/or with a function perceived as too common (stud farm in Janów, Nikiszowiec housing estate) or related to the culture of a few minorities in Poland (Tatar mosques and mizars). As it turned out, the negative connotation for this group of recipients is also brought about by the association of monuments with high-emission, 19th-century industry (Łódź, Żyrardów). What is probably the most surprising is that a few people have indicated an object that has been in the UWHL for several years (the Centennial Hall in Wrocław, entered in 2006).

Taking into account all the entries functioning at the time of performing the task (91), the students were hardly (or not at all) objected to the inclusion on the list of important sacral objects (cathedrals, monastery complexes or individual churches, also clearly connected with religions other than the Roman Catholic ones dominating in Poland), old-town complexes, defence buildings and residences, industrial complexes of well-established fame (such as the Wrocław City Hall, the Wrocław City Hall, the Wrocław City Hall, the Wrocław City Hall, the Wrocław City Hall). These include salt mines in Bochnia and Wieliczka or the graduation tower in Ciechocinek), battlefields, parks and gardens, necropolises or objects of symbolic significance (such as mounds).

At the same time, one could notice negative influence of the chaos resulting from inconsistency in placing on MH list objects already inscribed on the UWHL list¹². Unfortunately, the principle of presenting Polish candidacies of the MH to UNESCO has not been applied since the introduction of MH as a form of protection of monuments in Poland, and what is more, the initiative taken by the National Heritage Institute include all Polish UWHL sites among the MH lost its impetus, probably as a result of arrangements made at a higher level. The result of this is the lack of cohesion between the two lists, information chaos and, in fact, the depreciation of some of the most valuable sites and facilities of national significance, which is actually incomprehensible to the recipients. It seems that the main problem requiring regulation in this case is the existence of group entries in DDS, co-created by several objects of different locations (incidentally, entered together with other similar objects from neighboring countries), which - according to the previous practice, which does not provide for group entries of objects located in different locations¹³ - should be entered in the list of DDS individually, thus extending it by several new items¹⁴.

¹² For more on this subject see M. Świdrak, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-60.

¹³ A certain, justified exception are the entries of Bohoniki and Kruszyniany, as well as Nieborów and Arkadia, made in 2012 and 2017 respectively. In both cases, however, these are not very distant locations, located within one powiat (Sokólski and Łowicki, respectively).

¹⁴ This applies, in particular, medieval wooden churches (6) and Orthodox churches (8) located in south-eastern Poland and included in the World Heritage List in 2003 and 2013 respectively. Among these objects, only the Orthodox Church in Radruż was included in the MH list - as late as at the end of 2017. At the same time, the church in Szalowa, which was taken into account in the entry to the UWHL in 2003, was also included in the list of the MH, but was not positively verified by the UNESCO delegate. In turn, the Churches of Peace in Jawor and Świdnica, entered in the UWHL in 2001, became MH as late as 2017.

From the presented review of student opinions, subjective and in many cases undoubtedly intuitive or even infantile at times, an important role of the MH emerges as a category which, with a bit of interest from the recipient, plays a significant educational role. It results from the fact that MHs in their huge, typological and functional diversity broaden the horizons of thought, drawing attention not only to places or objects obvious to every Pole, such as Wawel, Grunwald or Westerplatte, but also sensitizing to the beauty of technology or nature accompanying architecture or focusing on infrastructure that helped past generations to perform many, often mundane, everyday activities. The nature of the MH list as an open collection provokes reflection on the resources of our cultural heritage and stimulates discussion on its overlooked, undervalued or yet unnoticed part¹⁵.

¹⁵ It is regrettable that this category has not become an element of the recently conducted social research on heritage in Poland. Compare A. Chabiera, A. Dąbrowski, A. Fortuna-Marek, A. Koziół, M. Lubaś, P. Nowak, B. Skaldawski, K. Stępnik, *Polacy wobec dziedzictwa. Raport z badań społecznych*, Warsaw 2017.

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