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## Enhancing the Attractiveness of Architectural Monuments as Tourist Attractions: Medieval Castle Ruins in the Area of Jura Krakowsko-Czestochowska in Poland as a Case Study

To cite this article: Jolanta Sroczyńska 2019 *IOP Conf. Ser.: Mater. Sci. Eng.* **471** 082062

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# Enhancing the Attractiveness of Architectural Monuments as Tourist Attractions: Medieval Castle Ruins in the Area of Jura Krakowsko-Czestochowska in Poland as a Case Study

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**Abstract.** The author explores a recent phenomenon that is gaining popularity in Poland and causes alarm amongst conservation professionals, namely a series of initiatives undertaken to enhance the attractiveness of architectural monuments to meet the needs of cultural tourism. The ensuing challenges relate to the erosion of cultural significance caused by alterations to the fabric made also tangible changes in attitudes and behavior of local communities. So far, the effects of these policies are debatable to say the least. The issue is discussed using three case studies – ruined castles forming part of the medieval fortification defense system of the area of Jura Krakowsko-Częstochowska in southern Poland. The analysis of these case studies leads the author to present her own model of changes that can minimize loss to monuments' heritage value and significance.

## 1. Introduction

Many Polish specialists consider that the interpretative presentation of architectural monuments, created to address the needs of cultural tourism, often impede the audience's ability to recognise the heritage values of those historic assets [1]. The term 'tourist attraction' in relation to an architectural monument is most frequently and favourably replaced in Polish scholarly literature with the term 'tourist value'. This probably results from a reluctance to include such a monument in the category of tourist product, with its intrinsic implication of a packaged offer comprising services and goods designed for marketing and consumption.

Due to their frequently restrictive laws of monument protection in Poland, it is difficult to transform architectural heritage into tourist attractions. Most interventions impacting on the monumental substance of such heritage assets are forbidden, and consequently it is sometimes impossible to open these to mass tourism (hence the limits on visitor numbers in Alhambra, or absolute ban on public access to Lascaux cave, which had been replaced with a mock up replica). Nevertheless, those managing heritage sites, even while being aware of many such constraints, undertake a variety of initiatives in order to make them more appealing and attract larger audiences. Such initiatives take on different forms and their effects can have unsettling results which can lead to some loss of heritage value despite outwardly appearing to be a success, measured in increased numbers of visitors. At the same time, marketing as a standard tool of sale and promotion of various services (also those of a touristic nature) should introduce some limitations in advertising monuments. Usually this relies on showing a few, well-composed, classic images of a monument and several sentences on its location, together with information on opening hours. It is extremely rare to encounter



provocative, aggressive or witty adverts which, through their novel form or content, could attract the client/tourist's attention and inspire a visit to that specific place.

Furthermore, the term tourist attraction is difficult to define even for specialists and this is due to the complex character of the attraction sector. The term was introduced into specialist literature in 1972 by Eric Cohen [2]. Exploring the phenomenon of international tourism one can conclude, that often the attractiveness of heritage sites is artificially and deliberately enhanced for the needs of mass tourism.

This issue has been the subject of the author's research since last two years. Taking this opportunity, the author would like to put forward for discussion some of the perils and challenges related to the subject and focus on three case studies – ruined medieval castles in the area of Jura Krakowsko-Częstochowska in Poland – which have been, in recent years, transformed into tourist attractions by their management companies.

## **2. Polish historical determinants that shaped the manner of adapting monuments for the purpose of cultural tourism**

The Polish heritage protection system and legislation, which is founded on Aloise Riegl value theory, principally guards the educational role of the historical monuments. This has always held a special position in Poland, especially in the face of the loss of state independence. Protection of the heritage of the past, particularly that pertaining to the glory of the nation, is still guaranteed by Constitution [3]. Visiting monuments has always been a favoured pastime in our country, and direct contact with a monument served as a lesson in history and patriotism. Entertainment and fun were not appropriate in a place of national cultural heritage, and connecting such monuments with any form of commerce was met with distaste as it led to a diminishing of those impressions and experiences that were expected from contact with authentic monumental values. Admission to museums and heritage sites was usually free of charge, and all expenses ensuing from their day to day operation and conservation were covered by the state.

This attitude in Polish society changed in the 1990s with political and economic changes related to accession to the European Union. The possibility of generating an income through heritage management and a global development of cultural tourism transformed monuments into cultural products. The selling of heritage as a commodity was a quick learning curve, and tourists became consumers, whose attention was to be competed for in the same way as in any other customer service industry. Achieving the highest visitor figures has therefore become one of the main aims for heritage managers, especially since all state subsidy was withdrawn.

The incorporation of heritage protection initiatives into a policy of sustainable regional development became one of the ways of saving local heritage assets. These assets were now re-shaped to become places providing consumption and cultural services. Undoubtedly, these initiatives have had a positive effect on local communities, if they are included in the share of income derived from exploitation of their monuments. This is not limited to the specific increase of individual income per head, but also less material benefits such as a general expansion of perception of higher values and improvement of inter-social relations in the area. The range of possibilities which cultural tourism brings is difficult to underestimate.

The formula of an attractive monument which is 'earning its keep' must be regulated by conciliatory initiatives that emerge from the new heritage protection policy. Neither administrative enforcement policy nor intensive social education, for which conservators are constantly appealing, will solve the gap between particular interests. This is because society's attitude to monuments had changed irrevocably, and because tourists' expectations of a place that constitutes an attraction are different to what they had been even at the end of the 20th century.

### 3. Three examples of adaptation of ruined medieval castles for enhancing the appeal of a place: a case study

In order to illustrate the essence of this phenomenon one can select three monuments of similar character, yet each representing entirely different approaches of their managers to the adaptation of a monument in order to create a tourist attraction. A lively debate is now taking place in Poland on ways of reusing ruined medieval castles [4]. Many initiatives are undertaken to seek the best way of raising funds for the protection and conservation of the castles that were demolished during the 17th century Swedish invasion. The prevailing fashion is for partial or total reconstruction of historical ruins [5]. Government conservation offices make every effort to arrest this tendency which results in falsification of history through the creation of buildings which pretend to be monuments. And thus the officially promoted solutions advocate models of management that respect the maintenance of the ruin as a tourist attraction while turning a blind eye to a variety of actions which eventually contribute to the erosion of the monumental heritage values of the place.

The selected sites are located in the area of the so-called Jura Krakowsko-Częstochowska – a micro-region situated in southern Poland, comprising an 80 km-long belt of hills rising to 515 m above sea level. This is where the border of the Polish Kingdom was in the 14th century, and many castles were constructed as the royal foundation of Kazimir the Great. The majority were destroyed during the Swedish invasion and despite several rebuilding attempts, never regained their original glory. At present 90% of those sites are presented as picturesque ruins (Figure 1).

The analysis and conclusions presented in this paper have been constructed basing on site visits and field research as well as on the existing tourist guidebooks, information included on the official internet page, opinions expressed by visitors on various travel portals and comments given in media.



**Figure 1.** Postcard showing the castles of Jura Krakowsko-Częstochowska. Mentioned below castles are framed in red.

#### 3.1 Ogrodzieniec Castle

Constructed in 14th century as a private castle, it was demolished by Swedes and rebuilt several times. Practically unoccupied since the mid-19th century it began to decline. In 1906 the completely ruined site was purchased by the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society who consolidated and opened it to the public. In 1967 it was entered on the Monuments Register List. Since 1995 the castle has been managed by 'Castle Ltd.' Company founded by local administration. The company is tasked with

creating a visitor experience, initiating events and promoting the castle as tourist attractions. Its work has received general public applause as a social and economic success [6]. However, in the opinion of conservators, its work has led to a gradual erosion of heritage significance of the cultural landscape [7]. The latest analysis produced for regional council (in 2016) strongly demonstrated that it is necessary to halt the processes of degradation of monuments and prevent negative impact on the historic character of those areas which have cultural values. Critics of those changes clearly show that the cause of present conflicts lies in the mass consumption and the latest development of various forms for tourism and recreation [8].



**Figure 2.** Ogradzieniec: ruined castle and its replica. Fot. E.S



**Figure 3.** View of Ogradzieniec castle in a typical summer day. Fot. E.S.

The medieval ruins of castle have always been regarded as one of the most picturesque landmarks in the region. It can be explored along the specially designed tourist trail connecting different castle levels with spiral staircases and ramps. Three rooms have been adapted as the castle history museum. It takes 45 minutes to complete the trail that is not accessible to disabled visitors. Neither it is recommended for children because of inadequate protection on high-level passages and terraces. In consequence, access has been limited to a narrow audience group and this has not been mediated even by the provision of a virtual trail, possibly constructed as a digital kiosk at the foot of the ruins. Furthermore, what is lacking is an adequate interpretation of the monumental values of the site. Apart from an information board located at the entry to the ward, which sets out the site's history, the trail includes hardly any interpretation of significant views or architectural remains. However, in the museum the visitors can see models showing the condition of the castle in different periods of its history. The foreign language offer is very weak and although an audio guide has recently been introduced, it can only be downloaded on visitors' own mobile devices with private internet access.

In an effort to attract the largest possible visitor numbers, and in competition with managers of several other ruined castles in the area, the company created alternative trails promoting other cultural and natural heritage values in the area. Additionally, many tournaments and night events, are organised during the summer months. In order to attract wider audiences, it was decided in 2010 to invest in the Park of Miniatures, located in the outer yard, approximately 50 m from the ruins of the castle core. It displays reconstructions of all castles in the Jura area in 1:25 scale. The Park created an opportunity to present to the tourist the historical values of the whole Jura area, and compare the Ogradzieniec castle with the neighbouring fortress (Figure 2). The place got a good infrastructure with a children's' playground and catering kiosks. Within nearly a year of this new investment, visitor numbers reached over 165000 but began decreasing soon after. Despite taking good care to provide additional attractions, regional administration was not capable of managing the increased tourist

traffic. The site still suffers from insufficient parking facilities, too few catering points while the absence of public toilets adds considerably to visitors' discomfort. There is no room for permanent public conveniences due to conservation regulations which forbid to construct any permanent new structures in the direct vicinity of the castle. However, in touristic season various temporary tents, stalls and catering vans, appear as if by magic. The souvenir trade has also developed rapidly although Chinese products dominate and, because of their low price, they have pushed out the local crafts. The same fate befell the local small food businesses, replaced by mainstream offerings such as Italian ice cream, hot dogs or pizza. So the chance to promote local enterprise has for now been lost. The only way in which local people can benefit from the popularity of the castle is by renting car parking spaces on their land to individual tourists.



**Figure 4.** Rabsztyn castle with its reconstructed parts, [9]



**Figure 5.** Rabsztyn Typical event organized by Rabsztyn Castle Society in summer, [10]

Overall, the short-term exploitation approach of the present investors, which admittedly generates high tourist flow, contributes to the impression of spatial and functional chaos in this small settlement. New developments, despite mass and scale constraints imposed by planning regulations, have unappealing forms and colours which detract from the historic character and regional traditions. The overall negative experience is compounded by the presence of a great number of advertisements, lacking cohesion in style and size. All this is happening without regard to the monument's setting and views protection zone. Soon the tourist numbers began once more to decline. In 2014 an attempt was made to remedy this by adding new attractions such as: The Entertainment Park, the Park of Physical Experiences, the Abseiling Park, the House of Legends and Dreads and a Tobogganing Track. This has once again arrested the decline in popularity and the visitor numbers reached 163000 back in 2015. Currently, in the spring-summer season, the number of visitors to the Entertainment Park by far exceeds the numbers of those exploring the castle ruins unless a festival or show is being held there. A rich tourist experience programme is well advertised on the castle's webpage and in social media [10]. Many tourist agencies promote the site as providing an educational offer for schools [11]. However, the monument is promoted not for its historical values but because of its events programme. These show that efforts to enhance the attractiveness of the historic site in Ogrodzieniec have gone in the direction of pop-culture consumption. In the author's opinion the Ogrodzieniec castle, as a tourist attraction, has fallen victim to commercialisation and degeneration, causing a loss of value emanating from the authenticity of the site (Figure 3).

### 3.2 Rabsztyn castle

Constructed as a royal castle in 14th century, passed hands several times to various magnates during the 16<sup>th</sup>-century. Burnt in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century, it has never returned to its original glory. Before World War II it belonged to the Board of State Forests and afterwards was given to the regional

administration. It was entered on the Monuments Register in 1982 and automatically fell under the protection of the regional Conservator's Office in Olkusz. Since 1986 the structure has been subject to several restoration campaigns with some intervals caused by lack of funds in the city's purse [12]. A Rabsztyn Castle Society was formed in 2000 and lobbied for a reconstruction of the structure. As the castle lies in a scarcely populated area, the ruins were not a tourist attraction. The absence of any infrastructure in the immediate surroundings, and a desire to improve and make safer the access to the castle, caused a change of approach from previously rather unyielding conservators. And thus in 2009 consent was granted for, together with consolidation works, a reconstruction of the gatehouse where a small museum exhibition was created. In addition, adaptation and partial reconstruction of the innermost (high) castle was undertaken introducing a modern staircase. Incredibly enthusiastic social support for the reconstruction works facilitated further investment. In order to adapt the site as a tourist attraction it was decided in 2016 to reconstruct also the envelope of the middle castle but in contemporary form. The steel and glass pavilion envelopes the original remains of the middle castle since 2017 (Figure 4). It will accommodate a cafe, public conveniences, a gift shop and some exhibition rooms. These works were funded by the local administration with subsidies from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage [13]. A carpark was already built at the foot of the castle. A hard-surfaced, comfortable track climbs up to the Moat Bridge and Gatehouse. Without entering into discussion on the philosophical merits of selecting a contemporary form for reconstruction of part of the castle, it has to be admitted that the decision by the Town Council to invest in the castle has considerably invigorated the tourist traffic here. As many as 25000 tourists visited the site in 2015 although previously there would have been no more than 14000. Debate on the merits of the modern additions, has undoubtedly inspired many people to see and judge for themselves the impact of this sort of intervention. Although the project has not been completed, visitor numbers are constantly increasing. This place is gradually becoming a tourist attraction, its appeal enhanced by the high quality aesthetics of contemporary creation incorporated into historic walls. Already in 2017 over 32 000 visitors have been registered in the castle. With full conservation control of the restoration carried out within the castle, the works are progressing to timetable, and the response in social media is unwaveringly positive assessing the development as a good initiative which well reflects the monumental values of the site.

In order to enhance the visitor experience the local Cultural Centre organises, in partnership with Rabsztyn Castle Society and Chivalric Brotherhood 'Raven', regular tournaments (Figure 5). The conservation protection zone around the castle perimeter effectively prevents the spread of private commercially-focused developments. Residents of Rabsztyn village have only recently begun to consider how to benefit from increasing tourist numbers. A timber-built, stylised private inn constructed at the foot of the castle, successfully caters to the needs of the visitors. It is still too early to say if Rabsztyn can compete with the nearby Ogradzieniec. However, it is certain that those who come to Rabsztyn will have a chance to understand and appreciate the cultural values of the site.

It is clear that a decision to entrust the management of the site to an administrative unit, which is fully dependent on the Town Council even if it has a status of a commercial organisation, meant that the development had to comply with regulations imposed on local and state regulations. This probably lead to a lack of fund-raising activities and efforts to secure funding from private benefactors. This lack of funds has in this case both negative and positive implications. It allows for careful planning of all development, and strategically managing the changes ensuing from the increase of numbers of tourist attractions in the region. On the other hand, one may say that the castle transformation is too slow. It will become evident in due course whether it will be possible to maintain visitor interest by limiting the experience solely to the presentation of the values of the site and balance this with sympathetic cultural landscape protection measures. The visitor response to the forthcoming interpretation scheme displayed in the new pavilions of the middle castle will be the best test. Will this interpretation provoke sufficient interest to merit return visits? It is difficult to tell but experience of such high quality developments as the Rynek Underground permanent exhibition in Cracow demonstrates that, owing to skilful incorporation of modern architectural elements into historical

forms, and thanks to an innovative and creative presentation strategy, such exhibitions can function as tourist attractions for many years.

### 3.3 Bobolice castle

This royal castle from 14<sup>th</sup> century was demolished and rebuilt several times. It started decaying in the 18th century. Robbing activities of 19th- century treasure hunters contributed to further deterioration. After World War II remaining walls were robbed, using material to construct the local road. The castle, together with surrounding grounds, belonged to the family of a local farmer, who at the end of the 20th century sold it to the private business of the Lassoeki family (Figure 6). The new owner decided to rebuild it in a 16<sup>th</sup> century mood and open some rooms to visitors. As no visual or written archival sources have been found it was decided to base the reconstruction on the investigation and analysis of the form and layout of the existing ruins and through analogies to other castles of this period. A large group of art historians and architects specialising in historical reconstructions worked on this project [14-16]. Works lasted for 12 years and were funded entirely by the owners as the idea had no support from conservation authorities. Although traditional materials and building techniques were used, the result provoked a lively national debate on the merits of such a ‘historicising pastiche’. The reconstruction was completed in 2011 (Figure 7). According to statistics presented by the managers of the site, it was visited by 150 000 people in 2012. However, one has the impression that the castle was reconstructed to cater to the needs individual tourist and the 30-minute time limit given for a group visit does not allow for a thorough and reflective experience of the building.



**Figure 6.** Bobolice castle. The first stage of reconstruction.



**Figure 7.** Bobolice castle after reconstruction.

The view of the castle, which is supposed to transport visitors back to the glorious past of the site, is the main attraction. There is no opportunity to widen knowledge of the site by purchasing a guidebook but a very short promotional leaflet highlights mostly the story of a treasure found here in the 19th century. The webpages of the hotel and restaurant that were built at the foot of the castle hill have a wide events and hospitality offer in the site. However, they are aimed at wealthy clients. And so a wedding or baptism ceremony in the castle chapel costs 500 Euros. One can also attend a training event to learn how to cook a traditional roast (120 Euros for a group of 8) or, enjoy a ‘Neanderthal feast’(private dinner) at the entrance to a nearby cave (250 Euros for a group of 8). The establishment also offers an opportunity for an active tour of the area with a private coach on a specially prepared trail. One can hire canoes or bikes, enjoy organised trekking to the caves, rock climbing, etc. The owners have chosen to focus on well prepared commercial activities for smaller groups of wealthy tourists who define their entertainment needs in advance.

The Lassoeki brother’s enterprise has the overall support of local residents and they have now purchased the ruins of the neighbouring castle Mirów, adapting them to include in their extended tourist offer. One of the brothers, who is presently serving as a senator in the Polish government is a

good communicator and has been able to inspire the local community to feel proud of the spectacular castle which attracts eminent and wealthy guests. The prospering business guarantees jobs for them. The access to the heritage asset is regulated through high prices and private events. Data provided by the owners indicate that visitor numbers in Bobolice are level with Ogrodzieniec but the audience profile and type of attractions is different. The Bobolice offer is certainly based to a larger extent on historical and natural values than that in Ogrodzieniec. The site has become a considerable tourist attraction because of the controversial reconstruction of a medieval form in the 21st century but also by catering to a specific and elite tourist audience. This deliberate strategy has led to the enhanced reputation of the site. The sophisticated business model brings the owners a considerable income and secures a comfortable existence for the local residents.

#### 4. Enhancing the attractiveness of historical monuments – a proposal of an adaptation model

The choice of medieval castle ruins as one of the most difficult historic structures to adapt for the needs of modern mass tourism could be sufficient proof, showing the universality of proposed model. Located in remote and open landscape, usually with a difficult access, they are visited only in the good weather period. Additionally, their fragmentary nature is difficult to interpret for the average tourist. So the touristic attractiveness for such a site has to be prepared with special care, creatively and imaginatively. The proposed model has been focused on 7 fundamental issues, which are important for any type of the monumental site (See Tab.1).

**Table 1.** The Proposal for enhancing the attractiveness of architectural monuments.

No	Issue	Typical Activity	Proposed Changes
1	Technical Infrastructure	Insufficient site-presentation and interpretation tools Dispersed and incoherent facilities. Isolated investment in newest technology without sufficient plans for maintenance and modernisation.	Interpretative Infrastructure incorporated in the monumental site in terms of design, massing, scale, materials and colour. Provision of basic visitor facilities like: information, toilets, health & safety access, concentrated in entrance zone. Regular monitoring and maintenance of the facilities and interpretative installation.
2	Heritage values recognition	Mostly static information along the visitor route. Lack of diversity of information due to age and level of visitors' perception. Lack of alternative interpretation for disabled people. Site presentation relies mainly on visual imagery. Lack of tourist's satisfaction level testing.	Flexible and creative interpretation allowing for individual response to the heritage values of the site. Multi-media guides with narrative interpretation. Regular testing of visitor satisfaction level. Flexible modification of visitor routes according to tourist expectations, needs and learning styles. New forms of communication employing sensory perception and interaction.
3	Marketing	Promotion of the heritage site as a tourist attraction along the lines of 3xE concept	Promotion of heritage values as tourist attractions. Promotion of local uniqueness and identity. Controlled form of advertisements located in the monuments' surrounding.

No	Issue	Typical Activity	Proposed Changes
4	Management	Varied models based on competition rules. Commercialisation and pauperisation of heritage values in order to create a tourist attraction. High visitor numbers as a main goal of the enterprise.	Flexibility and openness to changes in the management model according to the tests results Compliance of any development with urban planning and heritage protection rules. Engagement of local community in the decision making process. Usage of high culture standards in heritage values presentation.
5	Ecological Protection	No ecological solutions, despite state plans and regulations.	Pro-ecological initiatives as part of modern management of the site.
6	Sustainable Development	The tourist attraction is managed to influence economic development of the area.	Giving priority to local residents in recruiting operational site staff. The manager of the heritage asset is a proactive partner in developing and caring for local public spaces. Open access for the cultural activities organised by local community Free admission for local residents.
7	Education and Training	Educational offer for schools.	Recognition of heritage values as a main educational goal. On-site professional training for the guides and managers Activation of volunteering and local social organisations for heritage value protection.

## 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, while planning initiatives to enhance the attractiveness of monuments for tourists and navigating between challenging visitor expectations and heritage protection legislative constraints, it is necessary to remember that the key to achieving consensus between high turnout visit in monumental site and its value protection lies in creating a product of heritage tourism rather than a tourist product. A journey into the past embodied by any historical monument, can provide high quality entertainment, inspire emotions and help in relaxation. The past is rich in interesting and exciting stories, and those can build up a narrative that will attract and maintain attention and encourage return visits by even the most discerning tourist. However, the interpretation and presentation of heritage values must be dynamic, creative and regularly updated. Communication in an engaging and accessible manner must be understood and appreciated by wide audiences. But heritage attractiveness alone is not sufficient to maintain the success of the site as a tourist attraction. Skilful marketing of the most interesting stories and values, complemented by a business offer, must play an important role. It should also promote local traditions and a management strategy that invests in local people.

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