

*„... today (...) ensuring that a monument has its user as *lex suprema*, even if it means some necessary transformations.”<sup>1</sup>*

Similarly to many natural resources, cultural heritage resources are non-renewable, limited and constantly exposed to destruction associated with an irreversible reduction of some unique values. Providing adequate protection for all remnants of cultural heritage is one of the most important social challenges to face and the expression of responsibility for future generations. Nevertheless, many of them have been ruined or neglected. Others, left unattended or destined for improper functions, slowly deteriorate, waiting for the necessary conservation actions to be taken in order to protect their structure.

Most of the buildings from the past no longer perform their original functions (palaces, castles, post-industrial buildings, etc.) and thus do not meet any of current social needs. In addition, only few of them represent sufficiently unique and universal values, from the perspective of history, art or science, to perform solely museum functions. Given the financial constraints and the rapidly growing number of such facilities, their passive protection might prove unjustifiable or impossible to ensure. Finding an optimal strategy assuming adaptation of buildings to modern needs and standards (adaptive re-use) may become a condition for their maintenance and the only way allowing for passing time to pose as an opportunity rather than a threat. The solution, although controversial, has become a commonly accepted practice stopping the progressive degradation of many facilities. It requires a compromise between the socially desirable option and conservation issues assuming minimal architectural interventions. The scale and form of transformations must be chosen in a way that does not endanger the fragile structure of the historic building and, at the same time, ensures sufficient funds for its maintenance. This significantly complicates decisions related to heritage management.

From an economic point of view, cultural goods (including immovable heritage) embody or create passive-use values (due to a number of social benefits these goods bring), making the total value much higher than only the use-value disclosed by the market. It creates the basis for financing from public funds. Due to pragmatic reasons, the social benefits (use and passive-use values together) of providing sufficient and continuous protection of a given object must outweigh the costs of its conservation and other security works. Many objects do not fulfil this criterion. While it is difficult to increase passive-use value, adaptation may increase the use-value, changing the unfavourable outcome of the investment effectiveness assessment. The theory of economics has developed several valuation methods to estimate the total social benefits generated by heritage objects, what is crucial for the credible cost-benefit analysis. Methods may become helpful in shaping cultural policies and in heritage management under certain conditions. Although the expression of passive-use values in monetary terms raises objections in the cultural sector, it is crucial for the evaluation of policies to be implemented.

The general aim of the study is to learn social preferences towards immovable heritage management. For this purpose, we will use stated-preference based non-market valuation methods. Next, we will estimate consumers' willingness to pay (WTP) from both passive conservation and the adaptive-re-use programs. Additionally, using the Discrete Choice Experiment (DCE) method will allow us to evaluate potential changes in attributes related to these programs. The analysis will concern stated preferences of visitors (direct users of heritage objects) and non-visitors (those who gain only passive-use benefits). Further research also aims to test the transferability of the estimated values between different regions and objects, leading to a more justifiable fund allocation. This will be done using the benefit transfer method (BT). We will present the obtained results in quantitative terms.

The project will propose a novel approach to non-market valuation of cultural heritage that suffers from consequences of inadequate and irresponsible decisions on a global, national and regional level. Results will provide an empirical and methodological contribution to cultural economics, which is fledgeling to elucidate valuation guidelines, and its role in shaping cultural policies has been diminished so far. Progressing towards a better understanding of cultural value will allow for making complex and multi-dimensional decisions on heritage protection according to social preferences. Hence, cultural policies will become better matched to contemporary issues and the idea of sustainable development. The project fits perfectly into the current scientific, practical and political debates providing useful implications and leading to wiser use of the extremely important but fragile resource. The results may turn out to be important not only for researchers and public administration bodies but also for managers, investors, conservators, architects and many NGOs.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Tomaszewski, *Polityka ochrony dóbr kultury w Polsce*, „Ochrona Zabytków”, nr 3-4 (190-191) XLVIII, Warszawa, 1995, s. 251.