

POPULAR OR IGNORED? ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE IN MUNICIPAL MONUMENTS CARE PROGRAMS IN POLAND

POPULARNE CZY IGNOROWANE? DZIEDZICTWO ARCHEOLOGICZNE W GMINNYCH PROGRAMACH OPIEKI NAD ZABYTKAMI W POLSCE

Aleksandra Chabiera

Faculty of Archaeology, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0698-7059>
aleksandra.chabiera@amu.edu.pl

ABSTRACT: This article presents preliminary results from a nationwide survey investigating the inclusion of archaeological heritage in Municipal Monuments Care Programs (MMCPs). The research addresses a significant knowledge deficiency regarding the extent to which archaeological assets are recognized and integrated into local development strategies. Although previous findings indicate that, despite the cultural and historical significance of archaeological heritage, its presence in municipal strategic documents is limited and often superficial, a lack of concrete data makes it impossible to conduct a knowledge-based analysis of the problem. The survey included questions about whether, and in which components of the MMCP, archaeological heritage was present, in order to determine how archaeological heritage is addressed at different stages of the planning process. The study reveals a pronounced gap between the formal recognition of archaeological heritage and its practical implementation in local policy. The results highlight the need for more comprehensive and participatory approaches to heritage management at the municipal level.

KEY WORDS: Municipal Monuments Care Program, archaeological heritage, local management, local development

The aim of this article is to present the preliminary results of a survey conducted among Polish municipalities, as well as their initial interpretation supported by findings from other existing research. The key research question concerns the extent to which archaeological heritage is considered in Municipal Monuments Care Programs and

whether it is regarded as a resource for development. The survey focused on collecting data regarding the inclusion of archaeological assets in programming documents such as Development Strategies, Revitalization Programs, and Municipal Monuments Care Programs (further: MMCPs). Preliminary results concerning the first two documents have already been published (Chabiera, 2024), which allows the present article to focus specifically on the MMCP – a document that is fundamental for heritage asset management. This article is part of a broader research project focused on examining the provisions and implementation of educational activities concerning archaeological heritage in Polish local strategies. The project, titled “Education about Local Archaeological Heritage Assets as a Factor in the Development Processes of Selected Municipalities in Poland” aims to address a significant knowledge gap concerning the role and presence of archaeological heritage assets in local development processes of Polish communities. Despite the cultural and historical significance of these assets, no comprehensive studies have been undertaken to assess their integration into strategic documents across Polish municipalities. It remains unclear to what extent local governments actively include educational activities related to archaeological heritage in their policies, and at what level such initiatives are implemented. The insights of scholars and their experience of cooperation with self-governments reveal that such provisions are rare. To accurately assess the extent to which archaeological heritage is utilized in local development, analyze emerging trends, and formulate effective improvement strategies, it is essential to rely on data-driven information which the mentioned project proposes. What is known, however, is that archaeological heritage is one of the least understood forms of cultural heritage in Poland (Chabiera et al., 2017, p. 35, 53). Educational initiatives related to archaeological heritage are scarce and mainly carried out by institutions such as archaeological museums and universities (Urbańska et al., 2021, p. 41). However, these efforts lack central support and coordination among stakeholders.

As mentioned before, the primary objective of this project is to gather and analyze scientific data to address these challenges. A significant component of the project involved a nationwide survey among Polish municipalities, which concluded in May 2024. The survey offers an overview of how archaeological heritage is currently utilized across communities, and this article highlights some findings from this research, focusing on the MMCP, a planning document essential for local heritage management. As both an administrative body and a self-government, a municipality holds the responsibility for formulating and executing local policies. These policies reflect the goals and developmental directions that residents collectively deem appropriate and beneficial for their community and living environment. The MMCP refers to the role of heritage within a community’s life.

To better understand and analyze the problem, the project also comprises several phases beyond the survey itself. It includes an in-depth analysis of the specialized literature and of the strategic documents mentioned above from nine preselected municipalities. Additionally, the project involves conducting in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders, such as municipal officials, managers

of cultural centers, and museum employees. This will enhance a case-based analysis grounded in the assessment of the local implementation of MMCP provisions in practice and of potentially undertaken activities not formally included in the MMCP. For the case study component, three municipalities will be selected for comprehensive, multifaceted research. This approach will enable a thorough examination of the scope of archaeological education in Poland, as well as its recognition and utilization within local development policies. Ultimately, the project seeks to demonstrate the extent to which education about archaeological heritage undertaken by municipalities aligns with the theoretical assumptions formulated in the specialized literature, and whether archaeological heritage and education about it are recognized as factors of socio-economic development.

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

The survey was conducted in the spring of 2024 using the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interview) questionnaire method. CAWI is a research technique that involves an online survey (in this case, a quantitative one) administered through a web browser or mobile application. Survey links can be distributed via email, mobile application notifications and other channels (Staniszewska, 2013, p. 48). Respondents complete the questionnaire independently, without the assistance of an interviewer, which necessitates that the survey scenario be clear and precise, as no additional explanations can be provided. Consequently, this method is effective for collecting large sample sizes but offers limited depth of insight into the subject matter (Przewłocka, 2009, p. 99). As of January 1, 2024, Poland had 2,477 municipalities. A survey link, accompanied by introductory information and a recommendation letter from Adam Mickiewicz University, was distributed via email to all of them. However, 22 municipalities could not be reached due to invalid email addresses or full inboxes. As a result, the survey was successfully sent to over 99.1% of the targeted population. Of these, 637 completed the questionnaire, and 519 responses were included in the analysis – those that answered the initial substantive question about the presence of archaeological monuments in their territory. The survey achieved a response rate of approximately 21%, making the sample representative. With a sample size of $n=519$, the estimated measurement error (random and sample error) is 4%, assuming a confidence level of 95%. This indicates that the survey results can be generalized to the entire population of Polish municipalities.

The survey was carried out by an expert organization with the close cooperation of the author of this article regarding the detailed scenario of the questionnaire. It included both demographic questions (such as the municipality's name, county, province, and type) and substantive ones. Municipalities were asked about three planning documents mentioned above: the MMCP, the Development Strategy, and the Revitalization Program. Municipalities were therefore asked to indicate, through yes/no answers, whether and in which components of the policy documents provisions related to their archa-

eological heritage were included. Although these documents are composed of specific components, they may be referred to by different terms or, depending on the needs, certain components may be omitted altogether. Consequently, the survey provided possible terms for individual components of the strategies. For the purposes of this article, these terms have been standardized as follows to clarify the scope of the questions addressed to municipalities: diagnosis, conclusions of the diagnosis (including SWOT analysis of the assets), goals, priorities, directions of intervention, as well as indicators, planned activities, and projects (the last two specifically relating to archaeological heritage). The questions were to determine whether archaeological heritage plays an active role in local policies, regardless of the scale of such a role.

For the purposes of this article, the data obtained from the survey were analyzed using both descriptive statistics – such as percentages and ranges – and inferential statistics to enable generalization of the findings. In certain cases, a qualitative review of the content of individual MMCPs was conducted to verify variables that could not be identified through statistical analysis alone. Furthermore, the survey results were juxtaposed with findings from previous available surveys to provide broader contextual insight.

LOCAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT AND THE ROLE OF THE MUNICIPAL MONUMENTS CARE PROGRAM

The obligations of municipalities towards heritage stem from the Law on Care and Protection of Monuments. It describes their mandatory activities (and also optional competences not discussed here) concerning monuments (Dz.U. 2003 nr 162 poz. 1568 – Journal of Laws 2003, No. 162, item 1568):

1. Inclusion of monuments protection provisions in the local spatial development plan or in the location decision of public investment (Article 18 and 19 of the Law);
2. Development of the inventory of monuments. This is a database of historical sites and objects maintained on local, regional, and state levels. On the local level, it is a municipality's responsibility to develop and keep the inventory. The local inventory includes all the monuments in the register of monuments (i.e., under legal protection) and those proposed by the municipality to enter the inventory, as important for inhabitants, their identity, and local history (with the agreement of the Regional Conservator's Office; Article 21, points 4 and 5 of the Law);
3. Development of the Municipal Monuments Care Program (Article 87 of the Law).

The inventory of monuments is also crucial for the MMCP, as according to the Law on Care and Protection of Monuments it forms the foundation of the Program (Article 21 of the Law). But as public statistics show, municipalities often fail to meet these obligations: in 2019 only 1875 of them had the Inventory created (percentage varying depending on the voivodeship from 41% to 87%), and only 32% had enacted the MMCP (Statistics Poland Report, 2020, p. 18, 36).

There is a formal difference between care and protection of monuments in Poland, indicated in the Law on Care and Protection of Monuments (Article 4 and 5). Protection is an administrative duty, while care is a duty of an owner. Municipalities usually act both as an owner and as an administration; this last role not only assigns them administrative tasks but also allows them to adopt a strategic and creative approach in the community's heritage management process. The MMCP has exactly this task: as a mandatory policy document directly linked to heritage assets, it includes, among others, the overall identification of local heritage, the diagnosis of the preservation state, restoration priorities, education and investment plans, or cooperation with stakeholders. The properly developed MMCP sets goals for local heritage management.

The MMCP should be aligned with other programming policies, especially with the Development Strategy or the Revitalization Program. It is important to emphasize, however, that as an interdisciplinary task, heritage management should be performed in cooperation between municipality and other stakeholders interested in heritage preservation and promotion, such as central institutions, scientists, NGOs, and museums. Although Poland is not implementing any systemic changes related to the ratification of the Faro Convention (CoE 2005), there are nevertheless tools and systemic initiatives that support interdisciplinary heritage management and take into account the inclusivity of this process. However, the more comprehensive implementation of the Convention's provisions within the Polish heritage management system remains a crucial and necessary undertaking. The Faro Convention emphasizes the right of all individuals to access, interpret, and benefit from cultural heritage as part of human rights and democracy. It promotes an inclusive and participatory approach, encouraging the integration of heritage into social processes and fostering active involvement of communities and civil society.

At the regional level, sixteen Provincial Offices of Monuments Protection, led by Provincial Conservators, are responsible for maintaining registers, issuing permits, and overseeing scientific research in monuments. The Offices cooperate with municipalities not only as administrative bodies that accept the content of the Municipal Programs but also by providing substantive support, offering specialized knowledge about individual monuments and their conservation needs and managing funds for conservation work (although limited in budget).

On the central level, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage provides funding for archaeological documentation and publication, but there is a notable lack of dedicated support for science communication and public engagement. While some broader cultural programs can be leveraged for archaeological promotion, these are not tailored to the unique needs of archaeological heritage. Still, the prioritization of protection over participation is a common challenge in heritage policy, often resulting in limited public impact (Smith, 2006, p. 29–35).

National Institute of Cultural Heritage, a national institution of culture subordinate to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, plays an important supportive role, focusing primarily on expert tasks such as site documentation, legal protection, and the coordination of national inventories. But it also engages in educational and pro-

motional activities aimed at raising public awareness, providing training for local and regional stakeholders (primarily municipal offices), and coordinating initiatives such as the European Archaeology Days. An important initiative was the nationwide competition entitled “Local Government for Heritage”. The aim was to promote and disseminate best practices in the development and implementation of Municipal Monuments Care Programs by showcasing exemplary models in fulfilling the obligation to develop and implement MMCPs. Among the municipalities that submitted their program for the competition, winners were awarded promotional films about their cultural heritage, produced by the National Institute of Cultural Heritage (the films can be found on YouTube by searching “Samorząd dla dziedzictwa” – https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=samorz%C4%85d+dla+dziedzictwa).

Although the competition has only been held in 2020, 2021 and 2022, it was conceived as a means to provide municipalities with exemplary models and inspiration for developing mandatory planning documents, which have often been neither regarded as strategic nor effectively implemented. More information about the outcomes of the competition, as well as interviews with officials from the winning municipalities can be found on the website run by the National Institute of Cultural Heritage (www.samorzad.nid.pl). This website is yet another tool for municipalities and other stakeholders, as it constitutes a knowledge base on the heritage management. The Institute also published a manual intended to guide municipalities in the preparation of MMCP (Błyskosz et al., 2009). However, given that the manual was issued in 2009, it is quite outdated and requires revision to align with contemporary principles of inclusive, and integrated approach. Despite its obsolescence, the manual continues to serve as a reference for municipalities, largely due to the lack of more current, officially endorsed guidance.

Support from museums and academic institutions can also play an important role in assisting municipalities; however, such support remains inconsistent and unsystematic. It largely depends on whether a municipality hosts a museum with an archaeological collection or if nearby archaeological excavations have been conducted by universities. Of the 956 museums in Poland, only 31 are dedicated to archaeology, with 96 others housing archaeological departments or collections (Museums, 2022). Despite this there is little systematic cooperation with local authorities (Liibert et al., 2014). This situation limits the potential for museums to act as engines of public engagement aligned with the municipality’s development plans. On the other hand, archaeological festivals and fairs are often organized by local governments in partnership with museums and cultural institutions, and they have emerged as important platforms for public engagement in recent years. Such events combine entertainment, education, and experiential learning, attracting diverse audiences and fostering local pride (Pawleta, 2016).

Academic archaeologists in Poland, particularly those affiliated with universities and the Polish Academy of Sciences, have limited formal obligations to engage with local communities or promote archaeology outside scholarly circles. While many report conducting educational activities, these are typically confined to notifying local authorities about excavations or sharing information on social media

(Chabiera, in press). More proactive forms of engagement, such as organizing open excavation days, workshops, or public lectures, remain rare, but the survey of the National Institute of Cultural Heritage shows that there is an understanding of such a need in academia, despite the lack of systemic support for such activities (Chabiera, in press).

In summary, while municipalities benefit from various forms of support in the field of heritage management, this assistance remains fragmented and lacks a cohesive, systemic framework. Despite these limitations, municipalities do have access to several tools that can facilitate a more effective and strategic approach to managing local heritage. Crucially, there is a pressing need to raise awareness among local governments that archaeological heritage represents a valuable resource – one that communities can and should leverage as a catalyst for cultural, educational, and socio-economic development.

THE SURVEY RESULTS: RECOGNITION WITHOUT IMPLEMENTATION

Before presenting the preliminary results of the MMCP study, it is worth noting the low level of inclusion of archaeological heritage in the municipality's primary document, namely the Development Strategy. This strategy does not directly address heritage, as it is one of many resources that the municipality plans to utilize strategically for development, specifically archaeological heritage is extremely rarely included in it. Clearly this asset is not perceived by municipalities as a developmental factor (Chabiera, 2024, p. 611). Even among the general objectives of the strategy, it appeared rather infrequently among answers in the survey (11% of responses), and its percentage share decreased further in subsequent components, reaching just over 3% in specific projects designated for implementation. It was initially assumed, of course, that in MMCP, a document directly concerning heritage, archaeological monuments would be included more frequently. An interesting issue, however, was whether a similar trend of decreasing positive responses would also be observed in the questions concerning increasingly specific elements of the MMCPs. Among 519 municipalities qualified for analysis, 72.4% declared having archaeological monuments on their territory. Also, 155 municipalities declared having enacted the Monuments Care Program (fig.1).

The survey asked about if and in which components of the programs archaeological heritage was included in provisions, thus, the results below show the response percentages among these 155 municipalities. As mentioned above, the survey scenario included questions about such elements of the MMCP as: diagnosis, conclusions of the diagnosis (including SWOT analysis of the assets), goals, priorities, directions of intervention, as well as indicators, planned activities, and projects. However, to better understand how the role of archaeological resources is perceived in the MMCP, these elements were treated as components of the subsequent stages of planning.

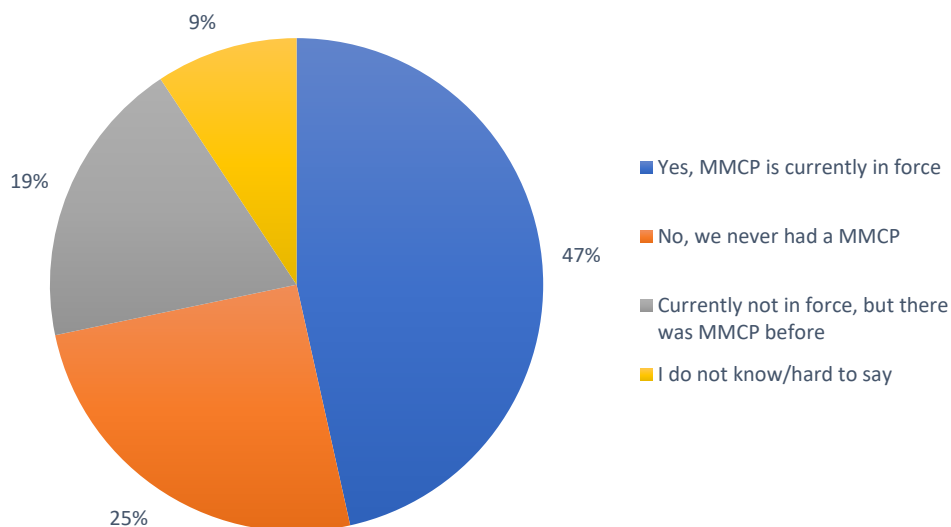


Fig. 1. Municipal Monuments Care Programs in municipalities qualified for the survey

Diagnostic Phase (the initial stage of programming in which the current conditions of the municipality are assessed, including the identification and analysis of available resources, as well as internal and external factors influencing the community): An overwhelming majority of municipalities (135 out of 155, so 87%) recognize archaeological heritage in their initial diagnostic assessments. This is not surprising, as the diagnosis contains the description of the assets and, among them, all the monuments in the register and in the local inventory. Thus, if a municipality has an archaeological monument on its territory, such an asset has to be at least mentioned.

Diagnosis Conclusions (summarize the key findings of the assessment, identifying the most important challenges, needs, and opportunities, based on the analysis of the diagnosis of the assets): The recognition of archaeological heritage is already lower in this component which is by its nature a strategic analysis of the local heritage assets. Around 43% of municipalities include archaeological monuments in their strategic analysis, which means that only this proportion perceives them as resources subject to the management process. Even fewer (37%) municipalities included this asset in SWOT, although it should be noted that not all MMCPs use a SWOT analysis in the document. However, archaeological heritage rarely appears in more than one category of strategic factors (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, or Threats), indicating a one-dimensional approach to its strategic evaluation. It also previews a declining tendency in the scope of archaeological monuments' presence further in the MMCP provisions.

Planning Phase (translates the findings from the diagnosis into targeted policies, projects, and resource allocations, ensuring an integrated and actionable roadmap for local heritage management): Only 20% of municipalities incorporate ar-

archaeological heritage into their directions for intervention. As low as 3%, that is, 5 municipalities include archaeological heritage in their general goals, and only one makes it a priority. In this one case, the municipality included actions such as allocating funds for rescue archaeological excavations, supervision during municipal investments in conservation zones, informing landowners and investors about legal obligations regarding archaeological sites, and ensuring archaeological oversight of earthworks, especially at sites threatened by development. This is a significant drop from diagnostic recognition. It is probable that a general goal linked directly with archaeological monuments applies to cases of an outstanding resource recognized at least nationwide. But the responses show that most municipalities use a citation of legislative goals as a general goal in their MMCPs instead of their own strategic one tailored for the community. This approach suggests a compliance-focused rather than value-focused approach to archaeological heritage, treating it as a regulatory obligation rather than a potential asset for local development and cultural identity. As mentioned before, municipalities often use an outdated manual to develop their MMCPs. It is thus possible that its legislative-centered approach influences municipalities, especially if they are not really focused on the document as a helpful strategy, but are only fulfilling the legal obligation.

Implementation Phase (puts the adopted plans into action by describing specific projects, and establishing mechanisms to achieve strategic objectives; This stage also includes monitoring): The lowest figures emerge in the implementation components:

- A mere 1% (2 municipalities) include archaeological heritage in designed projects, an example would be the verification of the boundary of an archaeological site planned by one of the municipality;
- Only 3% (5 municipalities) establish indicators to measure progress, an example would be verifying whether the municipality's website includes information about the threat of destruction to archaeological sites by so-called detectorists;
- Just 5% (8 municipalities) identify potential financing sources for projects.

The one exception to this downward trend is the inclusion of archaeological heritage in planned activities or tasks at 39% (61 municipalities). However, without corresponding goals, indicators, or financing mechanisms, these planned activities risk remaining aspirational rather than operational.

The results reveal a clear recognition-implementation gap in the MMCPs (fig. 2). This disconnect is evident even at the stage of the SWOT analysis. The finding that archaeological heritage rarely appears in more than one category (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) suggests a limited analytical approach, as an effective SWOT analysis should consider how internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) interact with external factors (opportunities and threats). Lack of such an approach towards archaeological heritage indicates probably the primary mistake in the process of developing an effective heritage policy, resulting in not fully exploring archaeological monuments' potential roles in development contexts.

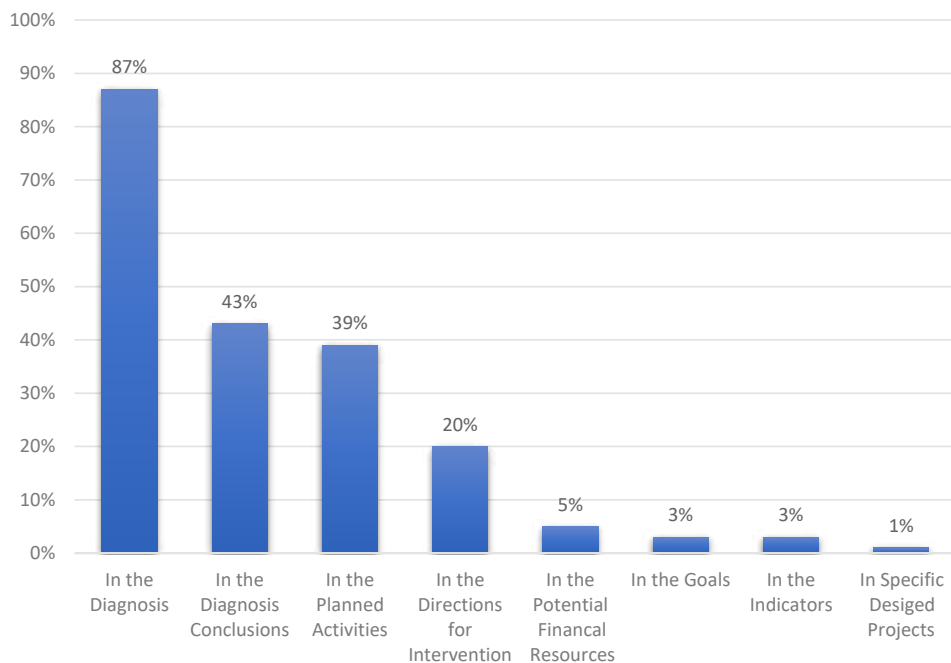


Fig. 2. Inclusion of archaeological heritage by municipalities in particular components of their MMCPs (n=155)

The discrepancy between recognition and implementation in municipal management planning is mirrored in public engagement patterns. As a survey from 2020 reveals (Badanie wiedzy, 2020, p. 10, 15–17), approximately half of Poles declare awareness of archaeological sites in their vicinity, indicating relatively high recognition of archaeological heritage. About one-third (35%) of them express interest in archaeology to varying degrees, showing potential for greater public engagement. However, actual engagement with archaeological heritage – such as visits to archaeological sites, museums, or festivals – remains limited. According to recent data, 38% of Polish citizens report visiting such sites only once every few years, 27% do so annually, and merely 12% visit more frequently (i.e. semi-annually or more often). This pattern mirrors the findings from municipal planning data: while there is a widespread of the value of archaeological heritage and a moderate level of interest, active engagement and investment remain relatively low. Meanwhile, a survey on the knowledge, attitudes, and engagement of Poles with archaeological heritage, conducted in 2024 as part of the project “The Value of Archaeological Heritage from the Perspective of Local Communities – A Comparative Analysis,” indicates that Poles view active management of archaeological resources as an important systemic measure (Pawleta, Chabiera, Oniszczyk, in press). Notably, the development of local tourism was identified as the second most important action to be undertaken

(48% of respondents), following conservation and restoration of monuments, which was selected by 58% of respondents. These results suggest that, in principle, Polish citizens recognize the managerial role of the municipality in leveraging archaeological heritage for local development.

CONCLUSIONS: FROM DIAGNOSIS TO IMPLEMENTATION – A DECLINING TRAJECTORY

The survey results reveal a systematic pattern in which archaeological heritage is recognized in principle but marginalized in practice within Polish municipal heritage management planning. This recognition-implementation gap represents a significant missed opportunity for local communities to leverage their archaeological resources for education, tourism, and cultural identity-building. In addition, it should be emphasized that the survey discussed here is based on general declarations of municipalities. It indicates in which components of the MMCP archaeological heritage has been included. However, it does not show how this heritage has been addressed in the document. To better understand the problem of the rare recognition of the role of archaeological monuments in municipal policies, it would be necessary to analyze the detailed provisions concerning archaeological resources in these documents. This will be carried out in nine municipalities only, a later stage of the project, offering a more nuanced insight into the situation and thus allowing for a more in-depth interpretation of the results. Addressing this gap requires, for both procedural changes in how MMCPs are developed and conceptual shifts in how archaeological heritage is valued and positioned within local development strategies.

Archaeological heritage comprises an irreplaceable resource as a part of Poland's heritage, and ensuring its effective integration into municipal planning is essential not just for preservation but for unlocking its broader social, educational, and economic potential. Despite the existence of 7,833 registered archaeological sites and 470,875 sites in the inventory (according to the governmental Poland's Data Portal), this heritage remains challenging for communities to understand or to present in an engaging way. This mainly occurs because many sites lack visible spatial features, were never excavated, or were excavated many decades ago. For local archaeological heritage to play a more meaningful and active role in community life, local governments must first gain a deeper understanding of their own assets. Without this foundational knowledge, it is nearly impossible for communities to recognize the potential value of archaeological heritage or to integrate it meaningfully into local policies. This indicates a very urgent need for an integrated approach, as municipalities will not gain such knowledge by themselves. Effective heritage management requires the participation of all stakeholders interested in the preservation and popularization of archaeological heritage (Chabiera, 2024, p. 614–616). And as much as the need for such an approach is widely understood, it has to be grounded in the system, allowing the universality and repetitiveness of the process.

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Author's Contribution: The author confirms sole responsibility for the following: study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation.

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