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Local Experts in World Heritage Cities: Understanding their Role in Polycentric Governance of Heritage Sites in Poland

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Abstract

In cities of significant historical value, including those with World Cultural Heritage status, there is a substantial and ongoing need for expertise due to the numerous sites requiring attention. This research explores the involvement of local experts in the decision-making processes concerning these heritage sites within a polycentric governance framework. The study features a comparative analysis of two Polish cities that are World Cultural Heritage sites: Toruń and Zamość. It investigates scenarios in which local expert involvement is most critical, especially in decisions that could impact the preservation of these cities and their World Heritage status. This research is empirically grounded on semi-structured interviews with individuals identified in city administration documents as experts in World Cultural Heritage matters in Toruń and Zamość, local city activists, city administration officials, and representatives from the ICOMOS National Committee. This study hypothesizes that in polycentric governance systems, the structures of World Heritage local expertise are becoming less hierarchical. An increasing number of participants are being included in expert reviews, influencing this process and determining the content of recommendations.



Iuliia Eremenko is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Warsaw. She leads the research project "Local Experts in Polish and German World Heritage Cities: understanding their Role in Polycentric Governance of Heritage Sites," which has garnered support from the National Science Centre and the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program. She holds a PhD from the University of Bamberg, Germany. In her work, she investigates how citizen engagement can influence the decision-making processes regarding the preservation and management of cultural heritage sites.

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