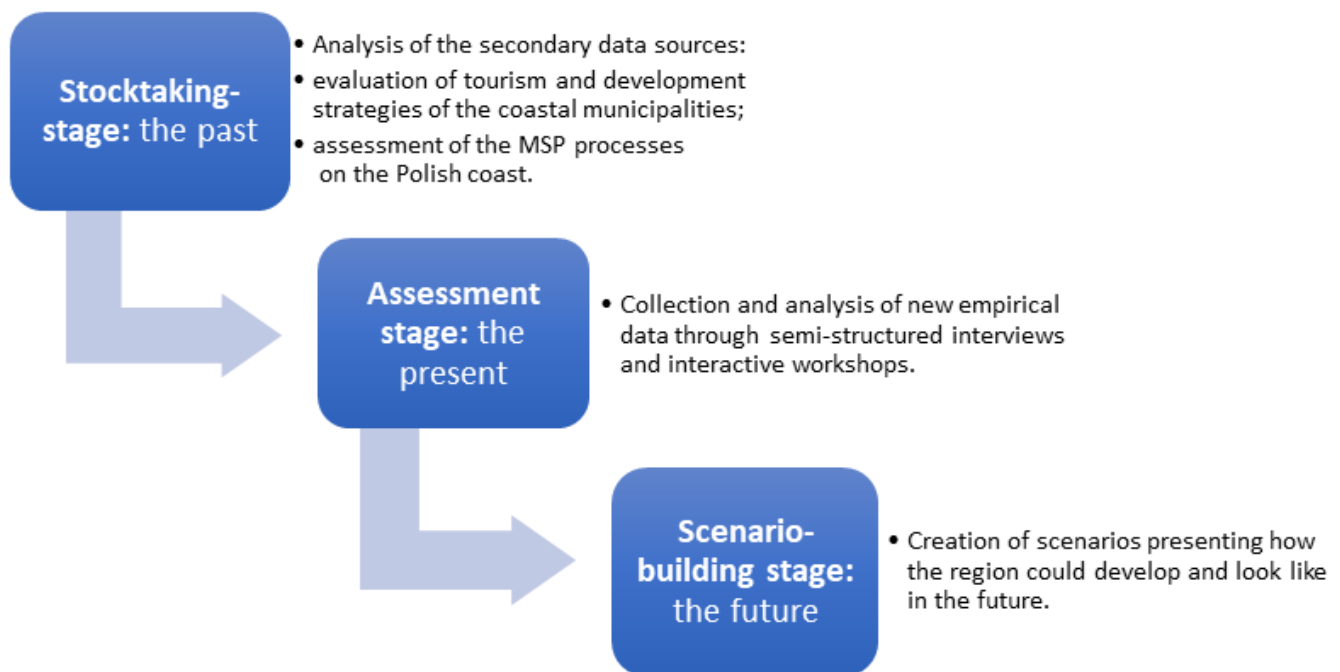


ASSESSMENT OF MARITIME CULTURE: AN EXAMPLE¹

Polish case study: cultural values in Maritime Spatial Planning and Blue Growth

The Gulf of Gdańsk case study is framed around the notion of cultural values, i.e. tangible objects and intangible practices, experiences and emotions that are linked to the sea and the coast. It also investigates the use of these values in Blue Economy (culture-based and ecosystem-based tourism) and their recognition in the MSP processes. The case study included three general phases concerning data collection, data treatment and data analysis. These phases addressed – to some extent – the past, the present and the future of maritime cultural values. The aim was to explore how the values were acknowledged in the past (stocktaking stage), at present (assessment stage) and their expected futures (scenario building stage).



Workflow of the Polish case study in the Gulf of Gdańsk

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Stocktaking-stage: the past

The stock-taking stage involved data collection and was based on the analysis of secondary data sources (existing information). Its main purpose was to ‘set the scene’ for the future explorations of the cultural values through active involvement with local stakeholders and community members. At this stage two sets of documents underwent content analysis.

- Firstly, an evaluation of the tourism and developmental strategies of the coastal municipalities and provinces around the Gulf of Gdańsk was conducted.
- Secondly, the assessment of the relevant – i.e. culture-related – remarks submitted within the MSP processes on the Polish coast was done.

Assessment stage: the present

The assessment stage included analysis of new empirical data, gathered predominantly through semi-structured interviews and various forms of interactive workshops and focus group discussions. Here, the analyses were performed within two frameworks that combined scientific research with practice-focused approaches.

- Firstly, the MSP-supporting framework that was designed to identify cultural values was tested – may they be areas, events, places, or traditions – of the stakeholders and communities around the Gulf of Gdańsk. The aim of this framework was to translate the various values into spatial dimensions and to identify the cultural hotspots of the region. Various features were considered, including those which pointed to:
 - ‘Why’ certain values are appreciated,
 - ‘To whom’ they are important, and
 - ‘How’ they interact with the sea and the adjacent land.
- The second framework focused on Blue Growth opportunities in the region, i.e. its maritime and coastal tourism. The sustainability levels of these sectors, as well as barriers and opportunities to support transformation of the current practices into a more environmentally friendly model were assessed. Culture-based and ecosystem-based tourism was given special attention during multiple interactions with the representatives of the local communities and businesses.

Scenario-building stage: the future

Finally, in the scenario-building stage factors and driving forces that were the most likely to impact the futures of the region, and especially its cultural values were explored together with a wide range of

stakeholders. The stakeholders created ‘their visions’ on how the region could develop and look like in the future. These visions or scenarios offered the insights into the stakeholders’ expectations, hopes and concerns that could also guide the social interventions or strategic planning in order to deliver more socially accepted or socially desired outcomes.

All these stages could, and actually did, produce some useful recommendations for the managerial processes applicable both for the marine areas and for the coastal zone (or the coast). The second and the third stage also acted as learning processes that – through active stakeholders’ involvement – supported capacity building within the region and allowed for social co-production of knowledge.

Assessment of maritime culture: the Polish case study

Background

Identification of maritime culture related values is an important aspect from the social perspective of land-sea interactions (LSI), which would also have to be addressed in MSP – a process by which authorities organise and analyse anthropogenic activities to achieve ecological, economic, and social goals (EPC 2014, Gee et al. 2017). Ecological and economic values are well-developed and included in MSP which is not true for socio-cultural values.

Some of the explanations of maritime culture include: material and immaterial practices that form the world around us and the ways in which this world is perceived and experienced (Gee & Siedschlag 2019); other by Gee et al. 2017: “Wide approach to marine culture: connections and meanings people put on the sea and their relations with this environment”; approach based on cultural ecosystem services: “Benefits humans obtained from the (marine) biodiversity that positively influence their well-being” (IRC 2019); and the narrower approach: “Meanings and relations are linked with the resources originating from the past; somewhat misses the contemporary dimensions of culture”.

The challenges of addressing the marine culture in the Polish MSP are that:

- Marine culture was reduced to tangible underwater cultural heritage – it was defined rather narrowly, including only objects such as wrecks or remains of ancient constructions under the sea;
- The concept of paleo-landscape was relatively new for the Polish MSP; it was not used in the proceedings for the whole Polish Marine Areas, but rather raised in stakeholders’ concerns during the proceedings for the Gulf of Gdańsk;
- Additionally, the interactions between the sea and the coast (e.g. lighthouses and associated landscapes) were laying outside the scope of MSP.

Implementation of the method in the case study

The main aim of the Polish case study was to reconstruct (cultural) values and opinions that the coastal communities associate with 'their sea' and 'their coast'. The first step of mapping culturally significant locations was to understand what marine culture is by analysing the different concepts listed above. The other aspect important to consider was the historical background and levels of being marine. The Gulf of Gdańsk has two fishing communities which have strong bonds with the place (especially those from the Puck Bay), while the second region – the Vistula Lagoon was established after World War II and has little or no marine-environment culture.

Applying different forms of stakeholder interaction was deemed to be the best fit for identifying and mapping places of significant cultural value, their role in the tourism sector, and to develop scenarios for the future. Furthermore, this gives wider perspectives enabling better management of cities/towns.

The case study used semi-structured interviews and interactive stakeholder workshops with various groups of selected stakeholders and local communities to learn about their relations/perceptions with/of the sea and to determine sites of cultural, historical, and social importance. All the information needed to map culturally significant locations was collected in 50 semi-structured interviews, covering most important stakeholder groups. During interviews there were four main research questions answered:

- What exactly is being valued, e.g. a city or part of it, a beach, a viewpoint or specific tourist attraction?
- Why is it being valued, e.g. for its landscape, for the view, for the use for sport, relaxation or for the nice atmosphere?
- Who is it for, i.e. is it important at individual, sectoral or community levels?
- What are its relations with the sea, i.e. is the object sea-related, land-related or are LSIs important to sustain the feature(s) in the long term?

Further analyses of the above-mentioned questions were conducted to identify what is valuable, why it is valuable, who it is important for, what are its relations with the sea. Additionally, 24 on-line interactive workshops were organised. These workshops allowed researchers to deepen their knowledge on the investigated issues (i.e. culture and tourism), and to stimulate interactions and discussions between various stakeholders involved in the case study.

Then, the places and features were mapped to identify which parts of the region represent the highest concentration of culturally significant areas. Examples of such places/features include: "Mały Holender"

restaurant, the museum of emigration in Gdynia, beach close to Rozewie, viewpoint close to Chłapowo, city districts, coastal towns etc.

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