

Mine and/or your woods?

Sharing the outdoors among different user groups. Case study of the Enduro Trails in Bielsko - Biala

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Abstract

Due to significant increase in both disposable income and leisure time (which is now visible in many developed countries), tourism and recreational activities are becoming a more and more important part of countries' economies as well as peoples' lives. Particular growth in popularity can be seen when it comes to adventure activities, one of which is mountain biking.

This growth in the popularity of mountain biking can be observed in countries such as Poland. At the same time, new and rapidly growing user groups (mountain bikers), who haven't necessarily had a place available to pursue their desired activity beforehand, now face fresh conflict with previous users of these natural areas. Bielsko – Biala is one of the cities where such conflict has emerged, due to the development of Enduro Trails – which is a complex of mountain biking trails located in the Mikuszowice Śląskie neighborhood, on the verge of the city. The two sides of this conflict: enduro mountain bikers and hikers along with pedestrians. These struggle in sharing the natural area where the trails are, and the conflict, which started in 2015, has grown bigger throughout time.

This thesis follows Enduro Trails development, from the year 2015 up until the year 2018, moreover at the same time sharpens on the development of conflict around such. In this thesis, I focus on both sides of the conflict, presenting their standpoints and needs. This is mainly done based on ecosystem services theory, with a particular attention given to the selected cultural ecosystem services: aesthetic, recreational, tourism, cultural identity, sense of place and heritage services.

Finally, the thesis discusses possible common grounds for the conflicted groups, analyzing how the space could be shared in a way that would satisfy both sides. It also adheres to proper planning and the responsibility of the local authorities in making sure that the needs of all users, as they make use of public space, are met.

Acknowledgements

“Well, that was fun” is a common saying of mountain bikers after finishing a challenging yet exciting and entertaining ride. It is a very suitable description of the process of writing this thesis as well. There were ups and downs, few challenging technical sections, and a couple of times I nearly crashed. But here I am, at the end of the trail, astonished how tired and happy one can be at the same time.

Thankfully, mountain biking is a social activity, and there have always been people around me, the best company one could ask for a demanding ride:

This thesis would have never been completed if not my interviewees: dear hikers and bikers who I stopped during those warm and sunny days – dziękuję! I appreciate your time and interest and I hope I presented your arguments well. Szanowni Państwo z Rady Osiedla Mikuszowice Śląskie – Państwa wkład jest nieoceniony, dziękuję! Enduro Trails managers and city of Bielsko-Biała Officials, I highly appreciate your help and input. Special thanks go to 2B Eco Riders Association, representatives of which met with me several times, making sure that I have all that I needed - po stokroć, dziękuję!

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Agata Balbina Zbijowska,

Oslo, 28th May 2018

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List of abbreviations

IMBA: International Mountain Bicycling Association

NOTS: Norsk Organisasjon for Terrengsykling

GDP: gross domestic product

ET: Enduro Trails

CES: Cultural Ecosystem Services

DH: downhill mountain biking

MTB: mountain biking

AM: all-mountain biking

ES: ecosystem services

CES: cultural ecosystem services

MEA: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

WES: World Enduro Series

PB: participatory budgeting

PLN: polish national currency

1 Background and context

1.1 Introduction

In his essay “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren”, written in 1930, John Keynes prognosticated that in 100 years most of us would work about three hours a day and probably only by choice, facing real and pressing problem on how to occupy leisure (Keynes, 1931). And although this problem may seem unreal to most of us, research shows that from the 1770s to the 1990s individual leisure time in developed countries increased from 23% to 41% of a person’s lifetime (Molitor, 2000:77). Over the past 20 years, general tendency to reduce working hours continued (Lee *et al.*, 2005:22), and much of the time gained throughout is now spent on recreation and tourism – one of the fastest growing sector in the world (UNWTO, 2014:10), accounting for nearly 11% of global GDP (WTTC, 2018:5) and adding up to 9,5% of total employment (WTTC, 2016:1).

Keynes dreaded that the times of abundance and lack of pressing economic needs - which are nowadays to be welcomed in many developed countries - will deprive mankind of its traditional purpose. Spoiled with too much leisure, we would long thrills and emotions that modern-day life could not provide. Keynes was, perhaps, too pessimistic regarding our capability of accommodating to those new conditions, as complaints about too much leisure are not particularly common (e.g., *The Economist*, 2014). Nevertheless, it is true that adventure activities and extreme sports (of which important elements are overcoming challenges and coping with various personal risks and dangers - things we may miss from the past), have vastly increased in popularity during recent decades. Adventure recreation became a cornerstone of the tourism experience, constituting 42% of all the traveler departs, making the sector worth \$263 billion (UNWTO, 2014:20), with a yearly growth of 65% during the years 2009 to 2012 (ATTS, 2013:2).

One of such adventure activities is cycling: according to the European Cyclist Federation, bicycling brings in over €44 billion annually to Europe, resulting from 2.3 billion cycling trips (ECF, 2016:7). While popularity of road cycling is slightly decreasing in many places around the world, mountain biking is becoming more and more fashionable (ex. *The Outdoor Foundation*, 2016:8, or *CONEBI*, 2015:30). As the

discipline has progressed through the years, new and more extreme forms of mountain bicycling emerged, attracting a currently growing number of enthusiasts. All of these new styles differ significantly in terms of skills, motivation, equipment and terrain that riders use. As a result, risks connected to development of these vary as well: not only when it comes to environmental impact, but also social, which is researched in this Master's thesis.

This thesis is based on the case study of Enduro Trails in Bielsko-Biała, Poland. To large extent, it determines the type of mountain biking that will be analyzed, which is well-known as *enduro mountain biking*. Since there are no strict definitions of mountain biking itself, nor its styles, I find it necessary to briefly describe the difference between enduro biking and other forms of mountain bicycling, since to my understanding, will lead to better comprehension of the problem analyzed in the thesis.

Enduro biking is a relatively new style of riding, partly because of the equipment that the riders use, which is more technically advanced than what was available decades ago. Body armor, full-face helmets and full-suspension bikes are preferred, as enduro mountain bikers favor terrain with obstacles such as rocks, roots or – sometimes – purpose-build features. While downhill mountain bikes are intended for high speed descends and thus riders would usually use lifts, or rather shuttle or push the bikes uphill, enduro bikes (although not primarily designed to climb), give users the possibility to ride uphill as well as downhill. As a result, enduro riders are less limited when it comes to choosing trails, given that they are able to cycle in bike parks, additionally use singletracks¹ and other types of trails not necessarily dedicated for mountain biking. Furthermore, the durable and heavy design of enduro bikes gives mountain bikers the opportunity to ride aggressively, gain further speed and overcome hindrances, which is usually not the essence of cross-country biking. Simplifying this biker's parlance, it is a rather intense type of mountain biking, usually labeled as an extreme sport (ex. Greenwood, 2014).

On the other hand, being a more toned and affordable version of DH biking, enduro cycling attracts an ever-increasing number of participants, ranging from “weekend

¹ *singletrack* – is a word used by mountain bikers to describe very narrow trail (big enough only for one person to fit in), which is often *technical* - that means that there are obstacles and features on the trail, which one must overcome; type of such obstacles, together with latitude of the trail determined its difficulty level.

warriors” to “regular practitioners”. In 2012, the Enduro Mountain Bike Association was created to further develop this discipline. One year later, in 2013, when the first World Enduro Series (WES) took place, there were ca. 120 riders in the official qualifying system, while in 2017 the number increased to more than 1300 (information acquired through the email correspondence with WES). Therefore, we can see how Enduro mountain biking is visibly rising in popularity, likewise there are arguably more enduro events in the world than any other mountain biking discipline (EWS, 2017:1). As a consequence, demand for places to ride is growing as well. As mentioned above, not being limited to certain category of trails, for instance smooth and wide gravel trails used by less experienced cross-country riders, or dependent on additional infrastructure, such as lifts for DH biking, gives enduro mountain bikers the ability of finding their own place in the wilderness, using existing paths (hiking trails included), or instead taking matters into their own hands by building new trails or using designated enduro trails, now almost ubiquitous in Western and Central Europe.

This is also the case of Poland, where plenty of initiatives to build enduro mountain bike trails are spreading all over the country. Some are based on the crowdfunding principle (ex. “Suliwoods Trails” near Ślęza or “Trasy Enduro Srebrna Góra”), others are funded by private investors who see flourishing business opportunities (ex. bike parks “Góra Żar”, “Kasina”, “Palenica”). Lastly, a number of trails are endowed by municipalities and cities, such as “Złote Ścieżki/Singletrack w Głuchołazach” or “Enduro Trails Bielsko-Biała”.

Also, the scope and pace of this sport’s development is not always warmly welcomed by all other people using these newly targeted natural zones, especially in countries where access to nature is somewhat limited and now has to be shared among a growing number of users (i.e. Poland). This poses legal, administrative and social challenges. However, in this Master’s thesis I will solely focus on one of this issue’s aspect – conflict creation and rivalry for the limited natural resources among the described new user groups – enduro mountain bikers – and those who traditionally enjoyed nonmaterial benefits that nature can provide.

This topic will be analyzed based on the case study of Bielsko’s Enduro Trails and the reasons of choosing this particular area are further explained in subchapter 1.4

(Rationale and significance). In the following chapter, I will now present the purpose of this thesis and the research questions that I attempt to answer.

1.2 Research questions and statement of purpose

Enduro Trails in Bielsko-Biała were established in October 2015, and it was soon after the opening that the first tensions among mountain bikers and other user groups of this area began to surface. By in-depth analysis of what happened in Bielsko-Biała, including but not limited to how did conflict evince itself, what were the reasons for it, how was it perceived by the parties involved and what are their expectations and needs, I will try to gain better understanding of factors that are crucial when it comes to sharing public space based on the example of building new trails, for a certain group of users only, in public space traditionally shared by several actors. Hence, the first research question for this thesis is the following:

- 1. What are the main sources of conflict and tension between mountain bikers and other trail users in Bielsko-Biała?*

Answering to this general question through the sub-questions listed above should provide me with good basis to continue my analysis and think about possible common grounds for the conflicted groups. My second research question will therefore focus on building bridges: is there something that all the users have in common and, if so, to what extend can it bring those users together? Can we seek such commonality within values, history, traditions and the respect for common goods such as landmarks and sites that can be found in this area? Thus, my second research question arises:

- 2. What is the role of culture, heritage and local history in both creating and mitigating such conflicts?*

The first research question, together with its additional sub-questions, should serve the purpose to provide an analysis of why Enduro Trails projects face difficulties with regard to its social sustainability. The goal of the second question is to find possible ways of overcoming these difficulties. In answering the second question, I will also try to analyze the responsibility of different groups involved in mitigating such conflicts, by elaborating on their positions and the tools they have to their disposal.

1.3 Rationale and significance

1.3.1 Choosing the topic

As I tried to point out at the beginning of this chapter, due to the increase of disposable income, leisure time, and advancements in technology, popularity of adventure activities and extreme sports is growing. Many authors point out that existing research on the topic of mountain biking is limited (ex. Quinn & Chernoff, 2010:21), and in combination with the growing popularity of this sport, there is a pressing need to fulfill those knowledge gaps.

When choosing the topic of my Master's thesis, I thought about mountain biking several times given my certain knowledge about the activity I enjoy practicing in my free time, while being painfully aware of some of the consequences that this sport might cause when performed without sufficient consideration, motivated me to explore the topic further, now from an academic perspective. Since my background is in public law, and due to my current studies in the Center for Development and the Environment, I have decided to use this experience and write about the social dimension of mountain biking, and hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the topic wherein I am personally vested.

1.3.2 Choosing the place

Mountain biking is rising in popularity throughout many European countries. For example: in France, in 2014, adult's mountain bikes sales went up by 10% (CONEBI, 2015:30), in Norway, from 2004 to 2014, percentage of male mountain bikers tripled from 9 to 27%, and the number of female rides rose more than ten times, from 2% in 2004 to 21%, in 2014 (Vaage, 2015:63). In that sense, increasing popularity of mountain biking in Poland, where since 2012 to 2015 the number of bicycles sold, mostly mountain bikes (IPC, 2016:23), rose by 20%, is not particularly distinguishing in the European context. Thence, since mountain biking is not a country-specific activity, nor it is particularly embedded in, for instance, Polish culture, the topic analyzed in this Master's thesis should be similarly relevant to other places where mountain biking trails are currently being built.

This thesis is based on the case study conducted in Bielsko-Biała, located on the south of Poland. There are several reasons why I have decided to use Bielsko-Biała as an

example, starting from my personal motivations, arising from the fact that it is a city I was born in and used to live for over a decade, and thanks to that I am familiar with its topography, history and culture. Another important factor is language: using my mother tongue to conduct interviews and reading through archives, local news and forums was particularly beneficial as, I believe, it allowed me to grasp a better understanding of meanings which could sometimes be interpreted as subtle suggestions hidden behind words. This had particular importance when interviewing conflicted groups, who would avoid, for multiple reasons, presenting their arguments explicitly.

In addition to that, although (and as mentioned in the previous subchapter) Enduro Trails are just one of many trail building initiatives that have recently taken place in Poland, it is one of the biggest – includes 12 different trails. It is also well-known within the biker's community described in newspapers and on various websites related to mountain biking, (i.e. *Bike Magazine*, December 2016, *BikeBoard Magazine*, January/February 2017). A large network of hiking trails in the area used extensively by a vast group of locals and tourist coming to Bielsko intensifies conflicts around the trails being described in this thesis. I remember that when meeting representatives from Polish Mountain Biking Alliance present during IMBA Europe Summit 2017 in Águeda, Portugal, they asked me about my thesis' topic, and I responded that I am writing about conflict around the trails. They instantly replied: "You should go to Bielsko then". Prominent interest about Enduro Trails, large scale of the project and opportunities to learn from the case resulting from its accessibility in terms of location, language and culture have influenced my decision to choose Bielsko-Biała as a study site.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. In the first chapter, I have introduced the problem, my motivations and objectives of my research together with the research questions. In the second chapter, I will explain the methodology I used, focusing on the benefits and downsides of using a case study, explaining field work I conducted in Bielsko-Biała and ethical considerations related to the chosen methodology. In the third chapter, I will present the ecosystem services theory used in the analysis, with particular attention given to the cultural ecosystem services. In the fourth chapter, I will provide

background information about Enduro Trails, presenting historical and geographical context wherein the project is located, additionally portray the development of trails, as well as conflict that arose around them. In the following chapter 5, I will focus more on the conflict between mountain bikers and hikers, as I try to analyse their position based on the CES theory. Using the data gathered during my field work, I will analyse actors' attitudes and expectations toward Enduro Trails and the development of the surrounding area. In the sixth chapter, I will discuss my findings, answering research question posed in this thesis, and draw some conclusions.

2 Methodology

Before starting to write this chapter I went through “The Methodology Chapter” in *Doing Qualitative Research* (Silverman, 2005:302-307), and read that “a bland account in the passive voice is an entirely inappropriate format for your methodology chapter”. I have never felt particularly comfortable writing in such a formal way, so Silverman’s advice seemed very appealing to me. As a result, in this chapter I would like to elaborate on the underlying process of data analysis: choosing the research approach (2.1), deciding where the data will be gathered – elaborating on my research site (2.2), whom the data will be gathered from – describing participants (2.3.), and discussing my data collection methods (2.4).

2.1 Research approach

This thesis is based on the case study of Enduro Trails in Bielsko-Biała. According to Gerring (2007:20), “a case study may be understood as the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of the study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases”. Hence, using the nomenclature proposed by Stake (2005:445), one could say that the case study research serves a combined purpose whereby through understanding of a particular case (the goal of *intrinsic case study*), we are provided with insight into an issue, and thus the case study helps us to redraw a generalization (the goal of the *instrumental case study*). With regard to Enduro Trails, the purpose of this Master’s thesis is to find and describe some of the factors that influenced the development of the mountain biking trails in the area, particularly those factors that are related to the conflict that aroused around the trails (which is an intrinsic interest). This was done through qualitative analysis of the case, by way of drawing on “the nature of the case, its historical background, its physical context and other contexts (i.e. economic, legal, aesthetic), other cases through which the case is recognized and informants through whom the case can be known” (Stake, 2005:447). Based on those elements analyzed altogether, I tried to portray the uniqueness of the case research of Enduro Trails. In order to achieve this goal, I kept in mind the simplest, yet most challenging rule for method in qualitative casework, namely to “place your best intellect into the thick of what is going on” (*ibid*, 449). This was done by spending extended time on site, looking at several individual stories, embedding in the local

context, keeping personal contact with activities and operations of the case, and following how those activities were perceived by all the relevant actors.

According to Yin, case study research can be done through qualitative as well as quantitative research methods (Yin, 1994:13). Although most authors “are more supportive of a more holistic and inductive approach to data-collection that does not resort to quantification” (David, 2006: xxvii), Yin is more vigilant in ensuring that several perspectives are taken into consideration, “supporting the value of quantitative research embedded within more broadly qualitative studies” (*ibid*). In agreement with Yin, I believe that complex situations require mixed methods and triangulation: it is because of this reason that my research methods vary from qualitative interviews and participant observation to document, news articles and audiovisual material analysis, which served a purpose to clarify meanings, verify my observations by “identifying different ways the case is being seen” (Stake, 2005:454). In addition to that, I will support some of my claims using quantitative data gathered by IMBA Europe through their annual survey as well as several other quantitative studies. Notwithstanding the auxiliary function of the survey and those studies for case study, I find it important to mention it in my methodology chapter.

As to the instrumental purpose of this case study, I believe that my in-depth research of Enduro Trails in Bielsko-Biała will also be of value for further investigation concerning this, and other similar projects, now increasingly common in Europe. While it is not necessary, or even unwise, to seek generalization of the case study I conducted, exploration and description of a single case can contribute to better understanding of the general phenomenon.

2.2 Study site

As Professor Robert E. Stake pointed out, “the more the object of study is a specific – unique bounded system, the greater the usefulness of the epistemological rationales” (Stake 2005:455). It may then seem unadvised to start my study site description from the profile of the whole country, however in this case, putting Enduro Trails in a larger context depicted in the following paragraphs seems inevitable. Therefore, in this chapter, I will begin with a brief description of the topography of Poland (2.2.1), highlighting location of mountainous and sub-mountainous regions, situated mainly

on the south of the country. I will then elaborate on the unique characteristics of the Upper Silesian voivodship (2.2.2), and the city of Bielsko-Biała (2.2.3), where the trails are located. Finally, I will describe my research site in the Mikuszowice Śląskie neighborhood, focusing on three identified areas where the study was conducted.

2.2.1 Poland



Figure 1 Map of Poland with marked location of Bielsko – Biała (source: <https://www.google.com/maps>)

Poland is a country located in Central Europe. Occupying a total area of 312,679 square kilometers, Poland is 9th largest country in Europe and is inhabited by 38 million people (GUS, 2017). The country is a unitary state, divided into 16 administrative subdivisions called voivodships (pol. *województwa*).

At the north, Poland borders the Baltic Sea with 1,032 kilometers of coastline. Northern parts of Poland are largely dominated by low-lying rolling plains with numerous small lakes on the northeast. While the central part of Poland is mainly flat,

covered with fertile farmlands, as one moves to the south the land rises into hilly uplands. The southern part of the country is a mountainous region. The major mountain ranges in Poland include the Sudetes and Carpathian Mountains. Polish Carpathian Mountains – consisting of Tatras (the most elevated part of the Carpathian Mountains with the highest point, Rysy, being at 2,499 m), Pieniny, Bieszczady and Beskids mountain ranges - are well known and particularly popular among tourists (Kaczmarek et al., 2001:45).

2.2.2 Upper Silesia



Figure 2 Map of Upper Silesia voivodship (source: <https://www.google.com/maps>)

Upper Silesia (pol. *Górny Śląsk*) is a voivodship located at the south of Poland. This voivodship is known as a region rich in natural resources and an important industrial area. Since the 18th century, coal has been mined in this Silesia and in the late 1970s Górny Śląsk became one of the world's largest producers of coal (Bendyk et al, 2015:76). Because of mining and multiple industries located there, for many years up to this date Upper Silesia has struggled with high pollution and, as a result, worse

health outcomes than in other parts of Poland. Cancer, cardiovascular diseases and mental disorders are more common in Upper Silesia in comparison to the Polish average (GUS, 2015).

Even though the coal-mining industry is restructuring, this part of Poland is still the most industrialized and urbanized region in Poland (*ibid*). On the other hand, Upper Silesia is the second most affluent voivodship (after Masovian voivodship, where the capital city is located). Salaries in Upper Silesia are higher and unemployment rate is lower than the Polish average (*ibid*).

2.2.3 Bielsko – Biała

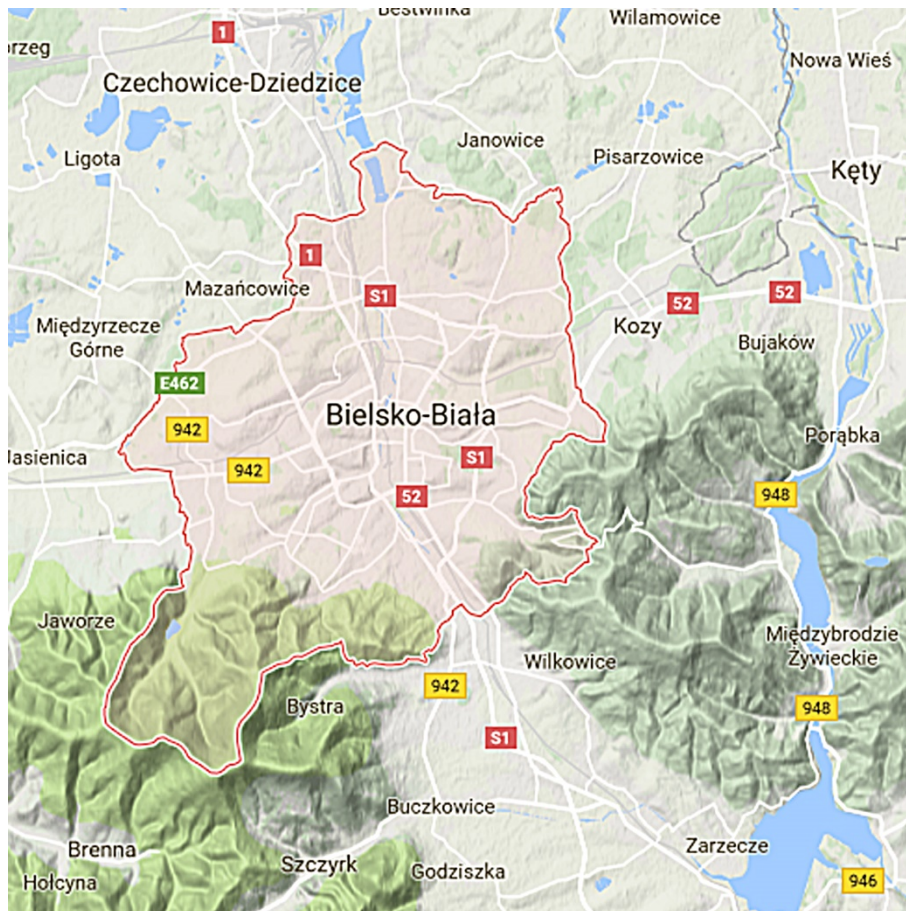


Figure 3 Map of Bielsko-Biała (source: <https://www.google.com/maps>)

Bielsko-Biała is located on the south of Upper Silesia voivodship. Despite being a rather large city (173,000 inhabitants), it is different to other Silesian regions. Many people in Bielsko-Biała might be offended if called Silesians, often saying that “Bielsko-Biała is not a Silesia, it is Podbeskidzie”, which means – if literally translated – *Under the Beskids* area (pol. *pod* – under, *Beskidzie* – possessive form from Beskids).

Indeed, Bielsko-Biała is surrounded by Beskids Mountains and many hiking trails start in Bielsko. In addition to its unique location, the city is also easily accessible by two major roads: expressway S1 and national road 81. As a result, Bielsko has always been a popular tourists' destination (see chapter 4.1) not only for tourist coming from Silesian region (who would refer to it as the “Green Lungs of Silesia” – Polak, 1998:12), but also a more distant, and rather flat and urbanized part of Poland.

2.2.4 Mikuszowice Śląskie and Beskids Mountains

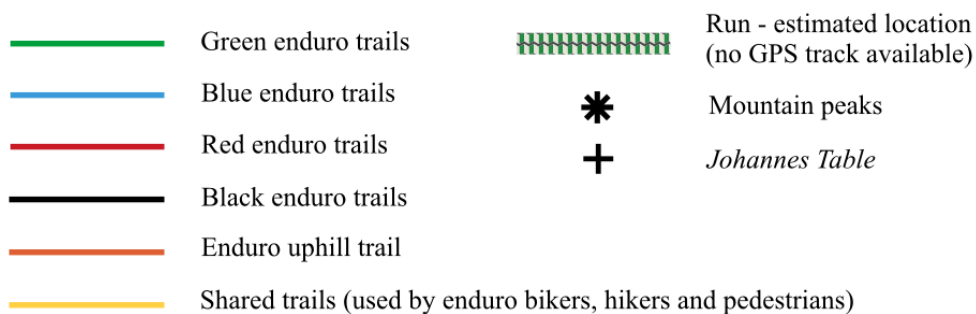


Figure 4 Map of researched area together with the map's legend (source: <https://www.google.com/maps>)

Bielsko-Biała is divided into 30 neighborhoods (pol. *osiedla*), which are auxiliary units, created by decision of the municipality of Bielsko – Biała. The Mikuszowice

Śląskie neighborhood is a part of the city located closest to the Beskids Mountains, and it is this neighborhood's council that was most involved in the process of building the trails.

The enduro mountain biking trails are located in Beskids Mountains, which is a vast area, with most of the trails located on Kozia Góra (683 m a.s.l.), and a few other on the Szyndzielnia Mountain (1028 m a.s.l.), Kołowrót pass (also called Salty Mountain, pol. *Słona Góra*) – (770 m a.s.l.), and Dębowiec Mountain (686 m a.s.l.). This is why I had to limit my research to just the 3 most significant and relevant locations, all of which are part of Mikuszowice Śląskie neighborhood. These are the following:

- **Kozia Góra** (eng. *Goat's Mountain*) – a 683 meter high mountain, where 7 Enduro Trails and a number of other hiking trails are located. Kozia Góra is popularly called *Kozia Górka* which is a hypocorism of the original word that intentionally highlights its small size. Another common expression referring to this mountain known in Bielsko is a *Pensioners' Mountain* (pol. *Górka Emerytów*), which refers to the accessibility of the mountain due to relatively easy trails on its peak.
- **Cygański Las** – urban forest and popular recreational area (Polish word *las* means forest in the English language). Although according to some sources, Cygański Las is 793 hectares of land located between Mikuszowice and Olszówka neighborhood (Barański, 1995:223), neither it is possible for me to explicitly indicate where its boundaries are, nor have I found any map which does so. For instance, people familiar with this area, to whom I spoke with and have lived over 20-40 years in Bielsko-Biała described Cygański Las very differently: one arguing that Kozia Góra is a part of it while the other narrowing it down simply to the area closest to the bus stop on the verge of the forest. On that account, on the map displayed above (Figure 4), I have decided to show the area where I approached my informants, or where interesting objects, monuments and buildings are located.
- **Błonia** – a vast meadow designated for recreational purposes which include many playgrounds, basketball courts, public gyms, a pumptrack, a skate park, bars and open-air restaurants where large public events are frequently hosted.

BB Bike Bar and Enduro Trails office are located on Błonia. This area is fenced and locked at night.

Geographical and socio-economical context of my study site, located at the “entrance point” to the mountains yet at the very edge of a densely populated industrial area in the country dominated by plains, has significant implications for this thesis.

2.3 Research participants

As one of the research methods I used was qualitative interviewing, my second task, after determining the study site, was to choose research participants. My sampling strategy was to choose a rather small and purposeful group of people that could best inform me about the research problem under examination (Cerswell, 2007:118). According to Silverman (2005:130), “sampling in qualitative research is neither statistical nor purely personal: it is [...] theoretically grounded”. This has been explained by Mason (2002: 93-94), who describes the link between sampling and theory as selecting studying objects primarily based on their ability to provide explanations, but also relevance to our research questions and theoretical position. Therefore, my research participants were mainly representatives of the two conflicted groups I have decided to study: mountain bikers and hikers and pedestrians. In this Master’s thesis, I would like to stress the importance of properly planning and building partnerships between various groups benefiting from local natural surroundings by way of the cultural ecosystem services as a theory. Thus, various actors engaged in designing and operating Enduro Trails in Bielsko-Biała (i.e. city officials, local community representatives, trails managers), were equally important research participants.

In the following three subchapters (2.3.1 – 2.3.3), I will now present a more in-depth characterization of research participants together with some of observations that I find important to include in the methodological chapter.

2.3.1 Mountain bikers

Although I did not set any specific targets for either age or gender of my interviewees, most of the bikers I talked to were male, ranging in age from their early 20s to early 40s. There were many teenagers riding their bikes in the area, but I avoided

interviewing children and adolescents under the age of 18 years because of practical as well as ethical considerations². Only one mountain biker I interviewed was female. There was one more woman who, after an initial refusal to take part in my study, joined me later while interviewing her son's biking instructor. However, because of the rather short length of our conversation and its superficial character, I decided not to include it in my thesis. At one point, I became quite worried about the underrepresentation of women among my interviewees, especially since men and women often approach conflictive situations somewhat differently (e.g. Oftedal *et al*, 2014). On the other hand, mountain biking is a male dominated sport (IMBA, 2015). The most recent IMBA European Mountain Bike Survey (ibid), clearly shows that women scarcely engage in mountain biking – 94% of responders of IMBA survey were male and only 6% were female. Because of that, even though gender could be an important factor shaping the way individuals perceive conflictive situations, purposely adding more female bikers would negatively affect the validity of my findings.

At the very beginning, reaching bikers was quite problematic for me. Most of them would park their cars, unlock their bicycles, put their helmets on and eagerly pedal all the way up to Kozia Góra, where most of the trails begin. Once there, being interviewed for app. 45-60 minutes was possibly the last thing on their agenda. When approached at the end of the trails down in Cygański Las, provided they were tired yet excited after the ride, these were not particularly chatty either. Despite spending a few days solely on observation, it took me a little while to find the right place to reach my informants – BB Bike Bar, located on Błonia, approximately 200 m from Enduro Trails' starting point and 20 m from the pumptrack. Although there were a few similar bars and open-air restaurants in the area offering comparable facilities (e.g. bike stands), for a majority of trail users BB Bike Bar was the place to go to. After a few rides, mountain bikers would usually go there to eat and rest before they hit the trails again, which gave me the chance to talk with them in relaxed atmosphere. Additionally, students working in the bar truly were invaluable source of information and of great help. Acting as “gatekeepers”, they opened the doors to a whole new world

² Interviewing adolescents' participants might require me to redesign questionnaire in a way that suits development level as well as experience level of younger riders. Moreover, even though no ethical threats to the participants were anticipated, especially when interviewing adolescents, special approaches and strategies are required.

of illegal trail builders, local bike celebrities and people informally involved in the Enduro Trails project.

Tempting as it was to stay in the safe zone of newly established connections (and cheaper ice-creams offered by BB Bike Bar), I found it necessary to go beyond local biking community members. My goal was to interview mountain bikers from Bielsko as well as those coming from more distant regions and thus less personally attached to the trails. As a result, 5 of my interviews were conducted with Bielsko's dwellers, and 5 others with mountain bikers from more distant locations. I believe that in this particular case, not using the snowball method and not networking through just the local community helped me to investigate the topic more critically as I aimed at more valid findings. While quoting my recordings, I will refer to those interviewees as: *Biker 1, 2, 3...*

2.3.2 Hikers and pedestrians

The age and gender of hikers and pedestrians I interviewed was much more diverse than that of bikers. The youngest person I talked to was 23 years old, whereas the oldest was 72, and the female-male ratio was 6:4. Despite my earlier concerns, approaching hikers was much easier than what I initially expected. In contrast to mountain bikers, hikers and pedestrians would usually be alone. They were less motivated to reach their destinations in the shortest time possible and most of them were citizens of Bielsko, hence familiar with the area. They did not have limited time to explore local trails, so my interruption was more positively received. Some of my interlocutors were young mothers keeping a watchful eye on their children while these played on Błonia, some others were pensioners enjoying sunny days and watching the wildlife, others were simply strolling alone or with their pets. I used to join them in their activities or hike along while we talked. This method proved to be very beneficial, as many of my interviewees could point out examples of the situations we were discussing, which otherwise could be hard to describe. On the downside, hiking up and down in quite high temperatures (around 30°C), was tiring and time-consuming. While quoting my recording, I will refer to those interviewees as: *Hiker 1, 2, 3...*

2.3.3 Other participants

In addition to the two main groups described above, I have also conducted 4 other interviews with:

1. **Creators and managers of Enduro Trails** - one of the most important interviews conducted was with people who came with the idea of building mountain bike trails on Kozia Góra, then designed them, applied for funding, built the trails, and are now in charge of their management and maintenance. While quoting my recording, I will refer to those interviewees as: *ET Manager 1* and *2*.

2. **Members of Mikuszowice Śląskie Neighborhood Council** (further in the text – I will refer to it as a Neighborhood Council) - equally important was the interview with the members of the Neighborhood Council, who were the strongest voice against building mountain bike trails in this area. While quoting my recording, I will refer to those interviewees as: *Council Member 1, 2, and 3*.

3. **Bielsko – Biała City Council officials** - I have conducted two interviews with city council officials from: the Department of City Promotion and the Department of Municipal Engineering. Both interviewees are responsible for Enduro Trails in Bielsko – promoting it as a tourist attraction and taking care of the administrative and legal aspects of the project. While quoting my recording, I will refer to those interviewees as: *Official 1* and *Official 2*.

2.4 Data collection methods

My primary data collection methods were: qualitative interviews (in-depth, unstructured interviews, group interviews and elite interviews) and participant observation. This was done throughout more than 3 weeks of fieldwork in June, July and August 2016. I have also visited the site in June 2017 for about a week in order to witness occurring changes as in 2016 four trails were open and one year later 7 additional ones were added. These were then discussed with the people responsible for the project.

2.4.1 Participant observation and informal conversations

The first method used during field study was participant observation. This method focuses on human interactions in everyday life situations and settings, observed and later described by the researcher who is the key instrument of participant observation (Denscombe, 2007:221). Although possible benefits gained through this method are remarkable (acquiring an in-depth understanding of issues and questions addressed in the study), risks that the very instrument - person of a researcher - might not fully use or perhaps misuse this opportunity are also high. Pessimistic view as it is, that “we (novice researchers) are bumbling incompetents, largely oblivious to complex and multiple layering of our informants’ lives, identities and histories” (Simpson, 2006:125), is also accurate. Accepting it was the first step in trying to get over this dilemma, intrinsic to the research method I have chosen. I understand that 4 weeks spent in Bielsko did not allow me to fully comprehend complexity of my case study, nevertheless I hope that my observation will still turn out to be useful.

After arriving to Bielsko – Biała, for the first few days I focused only on establishing contacts and familiarizing with mountain bike trails (which did not exist before I moved out from Bielsko). I used to observe trail users’ behaviors: places they would go to, things they would do, but also users themselves: their age or gender. Because of the car plates registration system that is employed in Poland, it was possible for me to determine where trail visitors were coming from (in Poland, vehicle’s origin is encoded in the first letters of the registration plate). Although this method was far away from being error-proof, certain tendencies were visible (i.e. increasing number of cars from Kraków during weekends). I also observed equipment used by bikers, types of bikes and their reactions to others (bikers or trekkers). Again, this method was not false-proof either (i.e. bikes could have been borrowed, and reasons for unpleasant reaction toward others could be endless, nevertheless it helped as background information and drew certain context (i.e. most of the bikers used full-suspension enduro bikes and full body armor).

I tried both mountain biking and hiking in the studied area to see firsthand how the trails are made, where are they located, and to verify if some of the arguments raised by conflicted parties were accurate. I also enrolled in many informal conversations with people working in the local kiosks, shops, bars and on the camping side nearby

Blonia. It was quite natural to start talking with people I used to see every day, so I never had any time set or agenda to follow, talking rather spontaneously. This is why I distinguish those conversations from the actual interviews, where my agenda for the discussion was always, more or less, set, and interviews recorded.

I remember one time when it started raining heavily and I looked for a shelter to wait out the bad weather. There was an older man running to the wooden gazebo in which we later sat and chatted for more than one hour, despite the rain was long gone. Although my research topic was discussed, and my interlocutor was an incredibly nice person, thus I did not find it appropriate to suggest interviewing. It could have been a mistake, but - as Simpson (2006:125) quoted his supervisor - “you don’t do fieldwork, fieldwork does you”. Rephrasing this quote into my research situation, it was usually fieldwork who spontaneously and unexpectedly put me in the informal conversations. Nonetheless, I cannot neglect their value and importance in this bigger process of field studying.

I continued my observations throughout the entire stay in Bielsko-Biała, writing reflections after my interviews, which hopefully, haphazard as they were, helped me gain better understanding of my Master’s thesis topic.

2.4.2 Interviews

In-depth interviews with mountain bikers and hikers

After few days of observation, I begun with the qualitative interviews. My intention was to talk with both mountain bikers and trekkers about the same issues and see whether if, and if so how, their opinions, experiences, and expectations differ, additionally to what extent. This determined my data-collecting method, which had to suit the nature of such topic. I decided that unstructured interviews would suit best for such purposes.

My role as a researcher was to be as un-intrusive as possible, letting my informants speak freely, going back and forth if they wished to, and allowed them to use their own words and develop their own thoughts (Denscombe, 2007:176). I did not always follow my interview guide, in efforts of not to pushing my informants in any direction, but

rather following their thoughts, only making sure that both trekkers and bikers referred to the same topics.

I was surprised with the results this method gave me: I remember being excited when my interviewees mentioned something that seem to be a perfect example of what I was thinking, or – on the contrary – giving new perspective of things I would never thought of. Bertaux describes a good interview as when an “interviewee takes over the control of the interview situation and talks freely” (Bertaux, 1981:39). I believe, that many of my interviews were following Bertaux’s advice, and I am satisfied with the insights provided.

In total, I have conducted 20 interviews. All of them were recorded and later transcribed. The average length of those interviews was around 45 minutes, with the shortest interview lasting for 30 minutes, and the longest one nearly 2 hours.

Other interviews

In addition to the interviews described above, I also conducted 3 more interviews that do not entirely fit into the category of in-depth interviewing. Those were: group interviews and elite interviews.

Doing group interviews was not my intention, but rather an opportunity that I had and eagerly took. I have conducted two group interviews. The first one took place during the Mikuszowice Śląskie Neighborhood Council meeting, to which I was invited as a response to an email sent. The meeting lasted for 1,5 h, five council members were present, and it was entirely devoted to discussing mountain biking trails. While 2 members were quite passive, 3 others engaged in very serious and lively discussion. The second interview was conducted with Enduro Trail representatives in the bike rental office, where many people connected with Enduro Trails’ work. 4 representatives of Enduro Trails were present at that time, two of which were creators of the Enduro Trails. Still, one of these clearly lead the conversation. Same as in the case of Neighborhood Council meeting where I was not expecting to conduct group interviews, but the office in which I was supposed to meet was occupied by three other people who were interested in my research. This interview lasted for about 1 hour, including few interruptions due to customers renting bikes in the office.

Both of those interviews had certain things in common. One of the most significant difference between group interviews and other interviews I have conducted is that my participation in the conversation was much less needed. Especially during the Neighborhood Council meeting, where people seemed to be open, engaging in the discussion spontaneously and more freely. Some voices might not have been always heard, but in the general spectrum of responses, opinions and experiences, increased dramatically even though my input was small. Because of lack of specific preparation to such interviews, I backed away, observing, following the discussion and proposing new topics, rather than questions.

The last type of data-gathering method I used should be described as elite interviews. According to Hochschild (2009), elite interviewing is a type of interviewing where interviewees, instead of being chosen randomly or anonymously, are selected because of their position, specific knowledge or standing. The main goal of elite interviewing is to acquire information and context that only that person can provide (ibid). I have conducted two elite interviews with officials working in the Bielsko-Biała City Council. The reason for conducting such interviews was to gain better understanding of the city's perspective and plans for developing the Mikuszowice Śląskie neighborhood. In order to do so, I have met with one employee from the Department of Municipal Engineering and one from Department of City Promotion, both of whom had very in-depth knowledge over my topic. Good preparation and a ready-set of more detailed questions was crucial, not only to benefit from the interviews as much as possible, but also to not to waste the time of my informants. I have contacted both of my interviewees before coming to Poland, and scheduled appointment in advance. Both interviews lasted for about an hour.

2.4.3 Documents, news articles and audiovisual material analysis

In addition to interviews and participant observation, which were my primary data collection methods, I have also used information gathered through reading various documents, articles, memos and opinions shared in the internet. In some places, I decided to quote posts or statement of the actors involved, corroborating them with either other sources, or my own observations.

In addition to that, in order to draw the context and gain deeper knowledge about Mikuszowice Śląskie area, I used archives, public documents and relevant literature. Some of my claims are also supported by IMBA's European Mountain Bike Survey of 2015.

2.5 Ethical considerations

During the process of gathering my data, I followed the guidelines of the Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee, and the principles of: respect, good consequences, fairness and integrity (NEM, 2014). All the interviews I have conducted were preceded by the informant's explicit consent, for which I asked only after explaining how the interview will look like, where and how it will be used, and stating that the interviewee may withdraw his or her consent at any time. Thinking about my main responsibility, to protect my informants, I decided to keep their identities anonymous. This is especially important, since my research analyzes a conflict, and additional tensions due to my research should be, by all means, avoided. Having said that, I am extremely grateful, that both sides of the conflicted groups gave me so much of their time, as well as for their patience in explaining to me the nuisances connected with the trails' development, which – without their help and assistance – I would not have understood. I hope that I have presented their voices and opinions accurately.

My main ethical consideration is, however, connected with my background and interests which could lead to a perceived bias. On one hand, I myself practice mountain biking, thus it is in my interest to have more trails available. Given the fact that the trails in Bielsko – Biała are free of charge and relatively easy for me to access, I am thus, to certain extend, a fan of this project and supporting it for my own use. On the other hand, because of my background and education (firstly in public law, and now studying Culture, Environment and Sustainability at SUM), I feel that I am aware of risks that the development of the enduro mountain biking discipline pose. Thus, during my research, I firstly tried to put aside any personal thought whatsoever about Enduro Trails and Cygański Las and secondly used my knowledge about mountain biking and trail building as leverage which gave me better understanding of what the needs of mountain bikers could be. It helped me understand why the trails are designed in a certain way, and for whom they are actually designed. I listened carefully to trekkers and hikers and all those who care about the forest and regret that part of its history is

now forgotten, while verifying the veracity all information provided by both sides and making sure that arguments I use in this thesis are indeed accurate. Being aware of, and understanding, arguments presented by both sides of this conflict, moreover carefully researching facts supporting these, hopefully did not hinder my research.

3 Theoretical approach

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical framework I used for this study, namely the concept of cultural ecosystem services (CES). I will begin with characterizing the concept of ecosystem services (ES) in general, and then focus on the cultural services – one of four categories of benefits which humans obtain from the natural environment that are recognized by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA, 2005:40). I will then provide the reasons for choosing CES as my main theoretical approach for this thesis, showing both strengths and weaknesses of this framework and elaborating on those cultural services which are the most relevant for this particular researched area. Finally, I will discuss usefulness of the chosen theoretical framework in answering the research questions presented in this thesis.

3.1 Ecosystem services (ES)

Although the very first quantitative studies of ecosystems are dated back to the 1940s (Lindeman's study "The Trophic-Dynamic Aspect of Ecology" from 1942 is often credited as a seminal study in ecosystem context), most authors refer to the 1970s as the decade when the concept of ecosystem services was firstly developed so as to "highlight a critical gap in policy- and decision-making spheres, namely, the near total lack of appreciation of social dependence on natural ecosystems (Daily 1997:54)". But it was only in the past decade when the concept of ecosystem services became recognized on a broader scale, and the number of papers addressing this theory rose exponentially (Fisher *et al*, 2007:643). The most important to be mentioned here is the publication of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment in 2005 (MEA). Because of both the scope and significance of this study, MEA is commonly referred to when writing about ecosystem services. Thus, in this Master's thesis, I will follow the same nomenclature and systematization as the one proposed in MEA.

MEA defines ecosystem services as "benefits that people obtain from ecosystems" (MEA, 2005:v), and distinguishes four broad categories of ecosystem services: provisioning services (which adhere to the products obtained from ecosystems, e.g. food, fuel, water etc.), regulating services (which are the benefits obtained from regulation of ecosystem processes, for example: air quality maintenance, climate regulation etc.), supporting services (necessary for the production of all other services, such as water cycling, photosynthesis or soil formation) and cultural services, which

are “the nonmaterial benefits people obtain from ecosystems through spiritual enrichment, cognitive development, reflection, recreation, and aesthetic experiences” (ibid, 2005:40).

The state of ecosystems changes over the time, directly influencing their capability to provide services mentioned above. Due to human activity, some of the services are enhanced, others remain unchanged and a large portion of them become degraded (ibid, 2005:41-45). MEA, as well as many other research papers, tries to assess those changes by looking for trends in past use of the services and predicting directions for the future. Knowing how dependent we are on the services provided by the biosphere, understanding ecosystems conditions, as well as trade-offs involved, is a necessary prerequisite for sound decision-making.

3.2 Cultural ecosystem services (CES)

Cultural ecosystem services are highly important for this thesis, even though they are, perhaps, most neglected by both researchers and policy makers. Assessment of the condition of cultural ecosystem services is “the most difficult and least accomplished task in ecosystem services research” (Schaich *et al*, 2010:270). Even MEA, which aims to comprehensively value the state of ecosystems, only marginally adheres to the trends in handling of cultural services, touching upon spiritual and religious values (chap. 17.2.3. MEA), aesthetic values (chap. 17.2.5. MEA) and recreation and ecotourism (chap. 17.2.6 & 19 MEA), but is unable to address the status of all the remaining services (MEA, 2005:43-44). Hence, it is not surprising that CES did not get a particularly prominent position in management and policy agendas as well. Although the rationale behind the ecosystem services concept were initially mainly pedagogic, as it aims to stress our dependence on the natural ecosystem, over time the concept became of interest in the policy arena, moving emphasis towards framework of cost-benefit analysis, monetization and commodification (Gómez-Baggethun *et al*, 2010:1209). Cultural ecosystem services, such as those listed in the MEA, namely cultural diversity, spiritual, religious, educational, aesthetic and cultural heritage values, knowledge system, inspiration, social relations, sense of place, recreation and ecotourism (2005:40), are highly problematic to be measured or assessed. For instance, Benayas *et al*. (2009:1122) analyzing 524 quantitative indicators of ecosystem services from 89 published scientific restoration assessments, did not find any study that would

explicitly adhere to cultural services. Due to their intangibility and incommensurability, CES – troublesome to calculate, measure or quantify – are poorly reflected in economic indicators. Thus, since environmental decisions are commonly put in the framework of cost-benefit analysis (Gómez-Baggethun *et al.*, 2009:1215), wherein CES cannot be captured, their integration into decision-making is often neglected (Hirons *et al.*, 2016:547).

Yet, I will agree here with Kumar & Kumar (2007:808), claiming that “common person’s perception of the ecosystem is quite different from what is conceptualized by conventional economists” and monetary valuation can never capture the “true” total value, which includes ecological and socio-cultural values (de Groot *et al.*, 2012:60). Cultural ecosystem services “are among the most highly recognized and directly perceived by people” (Hirons, 2016:546), “directly experienced and intuitively appreciated, often helping to raise public support for protecting ecosystems” (Daniel *et al.*, 2012:8812) and have the most direct link with human welfare and well-being (Hirons, 2016:546). Furthermore, once degraded, cultural services are unlikely to be replaced by technical or other means (MEA, 2005:6), which is not the case of other services. This should be of particular concern in countries with relatively higher economic development where people’s dependence on provisioning ecosystem services decreases (Guo *et al.*, 2010) while cultural services tend to be more valuable due to increased leisure time and improved living standards, making demand for enjoyable environments rise (Schirpke, 2016:78) – this phenomenon has been touched upon in the first chapter of this thesis. If so, decisions which could affect the ability of ecosystems to provide such services should not be neglected for the sake of simplifying the decision-making process. Hence, regardless of the abovementioned conceptual and methodological difficulties that cultural services undoubtedly pose, I find this concept well-suited for explaining the problem presented in this thesis.

On the other hand, keeping in mind the limitations of CES theory, it is necessary to stress here again the relevance of choosing appropriate research methods which endeavor to capture intricacies of how culture affects our livelihoods. Given the fact that CES are perceivably valued and experienced differently depending on one’s age, gender and background, the methods should focus on identifying those distinctiveness. I agree with Hernández-Morcillo *et al.* (2013:436) in that despite difficulties posed,

using qualitative information seems to be - in most of the cases - the only way to measure the individual's perceptions on CES. The same is suggested by Daniel *et al.*, who points out that more comprehensive approaches with both qualitative and quantitative methods being used can facilitate more accurate ecosystem protection policies (2012:8815). This, once again, validates my methodology choices analyzed in chapter 2.

3.3 Cultural ecosystem services relevant for the researched area

In an effort to narrow down a still broad category of CES, here I will concentrate on those cultural services which are most relevant for this thesis. It is important to mention, though, that various services provided by ecosystems are often overlapping and distinguishing one another, moreover can be somewhat artificial. Nevertheless, five services clearly play the most important role in the case of Enduro Trails in Bielsko – Biała, and only those will be described below.

3.3.1 Recreation and tourism services

Recreation and tourism is probably one of the most relevant cultural ecosystem services that can be recognized in the analyzed area. Clearly, Błonia, Kozia Góra and Cygański Las are places where both locals and tourists seek rest, relaxation and recreation, which results in the expansion of recreation and tourism planning in the area. With regards to observed changes and future trends, it should be pointed out that tourism provides both benefits and hazards, which are even more visible given the increasing demand for recreational use of landscapes (MEA, 2005:44). That is why the concept of “sustainable tourism”, which contributes to the well-being of local communities, enhances social equality, involves responsible actions both from tourists and the tourism industry, is appropriate in scale, requires lowest possible use of non-renewable resources, respects physical and social carrying capacities and is locally owned and operated – promoted and desired (de Groot *et al* 2009:470).

It is also worth mentioning that recreation and tourism services, being a source of income for many economies (WTTC, 2018), is in relative terms more frequently taken into consideration than any other CES. Still, everyday outdoor recreation in the nearby

green spaces is often neglected since it is much more challenging to be quantified in comparison to, for instance, overnight tourism (Daniel *et al.*, 2012:8814).

3.3.2 Aesthetic services

The second recognized CES are aesthetic services – which can be generally described as a demand for aesthetically pleasing natural landscapes. Great number of researches showed people's preferences for natural over built environment (ex. Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989), and a number of researches have demonstrated that contact with nature positively influenced human well-being, namely reducing stress, enhancing restoration and increasing health (ex. van den Berg *et al.*, 2007:143). A very recent report done by the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), widely shared by both the International and the European Mountain Biking Association, revived more than 200 academic studies focusing on dynamics of health, nature and wellbeing, listing yet again direct health and social benefits associated with human contact with nature (IEEP, 2016). It is, however, important to point out that aesthetic services are largely dependent on the environment's ecological condition, with preferences for scattering of trees, water, grass coverings and absence of threats (van de Berg *et al.*, 2005:468). Thus, due to decreasing access to a natural setting being a result of rapid urban expanse, aesthetic services are expected to decline. According to Staats *et al.* (2003:153), people's longing for nature is twice as pronounced when their level of fatigue and stress increases. Given the fact that urbanization and industrialization imply more stressful living conditions, it could be expected that people's preferences for natural environments will be even more severe, with longing for wilderness that no longer exists (van de Berg *et al.*, 2005:469). Keeping in mind a very specific location of Enduro Trails (chapter 2.2), based in Upper Silesia in a close neighborhood of large agglomerations, all the threats with regards to aesthetic services seem to be particularly relevant.

3.3.3 Cultural identity, heritage and cultural landscapes

Three cultural ecosystem services identified in the research area, these being sense of place, social relations and cultural heritage values, are very much connected in the way they characterize Enduro Trails surroundings. Sense of place services are related to the human's attachment to its environment, social relations adhere to societies or formal and informal groups build in relation to the nature we use (ex. biking, hiking or

sledding society), and cultural heritage values express relevance of the former and latter mentioned in our history and culture (Simth & Ram, 2016:115). In many research papers I came across with while reading about CES, those services, when often compared with cultural landscapes paradigm, suggested using CES and cultural landscapes theories jointly in order to enhance understanding of such services (ex. Schaich *et al*, 2010). I used this recommendation, and therefore I will here follow both theories without trying to disjoin them, which I believe is not necessary for this dissertation.

To start with, trivial as this statement may be, it is worth reminding that humans are not immune to the changes in our environments, thus – accordingly – building mountain biking trails in the researched area impacts other users of the woods and those who dwell nearby. The local governments decision on how to use the area, and who to give access to, influences landscapes we live in which are “a witness to and embodiment of a society, invariably lagging behind the more fleeting gauges of cultural norms” (Rishbeth, 2004:312). Indeed, if we are to think of a landscape as a space where conflicting interests meet, where people’s individual and collective memories are preserved (Lewicka, 2008:211) – then it is clear that cultural heritage values should also be considered within ecosystem management. Ecosystems and landscapes around us provide understanding of our place in its natural and cultural environment, because they are not only a result of biophysical factors that shaped them, but equally a result of our activities and the development of human societies (van de Berg *et al.*, 2005:461). I agree here with Tengberg *et al* that: “historic features within a landscape remind us of our collective and individual roots, providing a sense of continuity and understanding of our place in our natural environment. Heritage is thus conceptualized as landscape-related <<memories>> from past cultural ties, mainly expressed through characteristic within cultural landscapes” (2012:16).

Policy decisions on how we use environment around us are often choices of what to remember and what to forget: artefacts or attributes inherited from past generations may be maintained by present ones so as to be bestowed in favor of future generations (Czepczyński, 2009:54). Alternatively, same sites, or elements of landscape, may be discarded, replaced, or simply abandoned, thereby erasing traces of cultural activities from the past. What we choose to preserve shows where the value is placed. If so, such

decisions should always be made based on careful assessment – again – not the simplest assessment too often exclusively provided by financial indicators (which have been discussed in chapter 3.2).

With regards to expected changes relevant to those services, it is expected that public demand for cultural landscapes and associated services will rise. The reasons for that are the same as those related to tourism and recreational services, namely rising disposable income and more leisure time (van de Berg *et al.*, 2005:462).

3.4 Conclusion

The concept of ecosystem services is a popular tool used for planning, yet cultural ecosystem services are much more challenging to be practically used than the remaining three categories of such services. My goal in this chapter was to explain what cultural ecosystem services are, making the case as to why they should be used, regardless of difficulties that these poses. Additionally, I connected this theory with my case study in showing which CES is particularly relevant for my thesis as I briefly explained my decision. In the following chapters, this theory will be applied. In chapter 5, I will identify stakeholders. In chapter 6, my discussion will be based on synergies and trade-offs that should be taken into consideration when deciding how researched area (i.e. Cygański Las, Kozia Góra and Błonia) is to be managed.

4 Enduro Trails in Cygański Las

The purpose of this chapter is to present the history of the researched area in chronological order: I will begin with writing about the history of Cygański Las, Kozia Góra and Błonia in sub-chapter 4.1, by way of presenting how the space was used long before mountain bikers came in. I will examine both cultural and historical backgrounds of this neighborhood, arguing that it has a significant value in the local context, but no less when in comparison to that of the whole country.

In the chapter 4.2, I will move on to more recent events that have taken place in the Mikuszowice Śląskie, showing how the space was used throughout the recent decade, along with when and how mountain bikers became increasingly interested in adapting it for their needs, furthermore how funding for this newly developed interest was obtained.

Finally, in the sub-chapters 4.3 – 4.5, I will present the three stages of the Enduro Trails development. In those sub-chapters, special focus will be placed on participatory budgeting – which is a democratic procedure where citizens choose certain projects they wish to spend part of the city’s budget on. Projects are chosen through voting – and this is the way how Enduro Trails were funded, taking part in the participatory budgeting three times, these being in 2015, 2016 and 2017. All three campaigns promoting Enduro Trails brought forth reactions of those who were against building such infrastructure in the Cygański forest and the surrounding areas. Thus, those chapters will not only show the developments of the trails themselves, but also how this has become pivotal as conflict arises. The last subchapter – 4.6 – will refer to the most recent events that took place in the neighborhood of the Enduro Trails, as well as adhere to the future plans regarding development of this part of Bielsko – Biała.

My research, and most of the interviews, were conducted in summer 2016, when only 4 trails existed and the third voting process was about to commence. At that time, conflict around the trails was already visible, yet what happened later on made it quite clear that the voices against the trails are stronger than how they were previously perceived. For instance, those of the city officials with whom I talked with. Consequently, it was necessary to follow the development of the trails for a longer period of time, which naturally prolonged my research, however – hopefully – results in a more accurate description and analysis of what actually happened in Bielsko,

which changed significantly since 2016 when I visited the place for the first time. Thus, because of the accumulation of different events that took place simultaneously, and often contradictory arguments presented by both supporters and opposers of building Enduro mountain biking trails in the area, I find this chapter on one hand particularly challenging to write, still very helpful and clarifying as well. I hope that what I present here will be equally understandable for the reader, moreover I ask for the patience when going through the following sub-chapter (4.1). I am afraid that the history described there, which I find fascinating, may be slightly less interesting for those who are not personally concerned with the area. At the same time, I believe that such analysis of the documents and archives about Cygański Las, Kozia Góra and Błonia's history is necessary, given the CES theory which I decided to use for this thesis.

4.1 Was there life before bikes?

It is indeed quite significant that the very first document mentioning the city of Bielsko – Biała, or in fact the first evidence of city's settlement is the act of donation of Cygański Las, which was given to Bielsko's citizens by Mieszko I, Duke of Cieszyn (Krajewski, 2013:11). Up until now, a large, wooden commemorative plaque, put in place as a result of this donation, welcomes all those entering the forest and serves as a reminder of how deeply embedded it is in the local history.

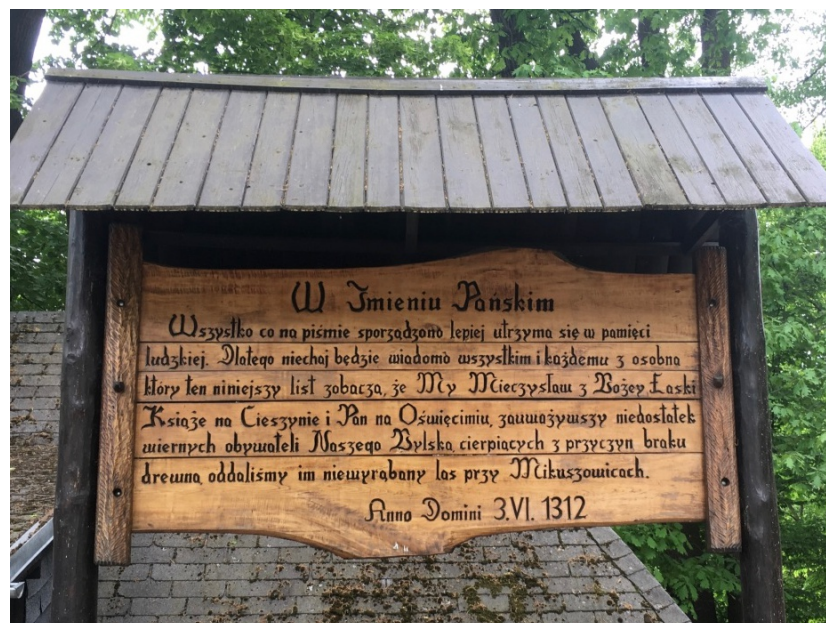


Figure 5 Plate commemorating the donation of Cygański Las to citizens of Bielsko in 1312 (source: researcher's photo)

The purpose of this gift was to provide Bielsko's citizens with a good source of timber which was needed due to fires devastating the city several times. Wood from the forest was crucial for city's prosperity, and the lumber mill (mentioned already in the documents from 1570), was continuously working up until 1985 (*ibid*, 2013:21). In addition, the forest provided significant revenue to the city's budget considering that the land was leased for sheep and cattle grazing. But aside from the substantial economic importance of the forest to Bielsko, Cygański Las played an ample role in city's cultural history.

The forest was a witness to a number of national and international wars: in XVII century Olszówka beck, located in its middle, was a border between Poland and the Austrian Empire and was a constant source of conflict between the two countries (*ibid*, 2013:15). Another important international conflict: Mikuszowice and Cygański Las failed to resist the Swedish Deluge (1655-1660) – which was a particularly extensive and destructive invasion of Sweden on the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (hence the word *deluge*) – when large part of forest and its surroundings were destroyed in a famous battle that took place on the March 8th 1656, and is now commemorated by a large cross located on Żywiecka street, where victims of this battle were buried (Truś, 2008:97).

However, Cygański Las was not only a witness to military struggles, due to its crucial location on the borders between the countries, valuable salt from Wieliczka Mine, along with tobacco and weapons have been smuggled through the Kołowrót Mountain (it is not coincidence that the German name of the mountain is *Salzberg*). Probably most entertaining part of Cygański Las history that I came across with related to skirmishes between highland robbers and local authorities trying to stop the habit of both smuggling goods and the robbing of Bielsko's citizens by outlaws hidden in the very forest. Although Mateusz Klimczak, the most accomplished of all the hoods, was captured in 1697, smuggling and robbing only stopped in the XVIII century. The highest mountain, nearest to the neighborhood of the area I researched, is called Klimczok (1117 m a.s.l.) in honor of a famous outlaw and his gang (Barański, 1995:65).

Another interesting part of the local history is connected with Counter-Reformation, when in 1654 forty-nine protestant churches were closed in the *Cieszyn Silesia*

(historical region of south-eastern Silesia to which Bielsko belonged). Owing to that, Lutherans begun to organize so-called Forest Churches (pol. *Leśne Kościoły*), wherein they used to pray and secretly celebrate masses. One of such places was located in Cygański Las, where Johannes's Stone (ger. *Johannes Stein* or pol. *Kamień Jana*) is located, nearby a tiny spring used during the devotional practices. It is a large sandstone altar, made in 1817, most likely built to commemorate the 300-year anniversary of Protestant Reformation. This altar was for many years neglected and abandoned, then renovated in the 1990s, but now it is once again forsaken (Below, Legnedź, 2009:2).



Figure 6 *Johannes Table* from 1817 (source: researcher's photo)



Figure 7 Additional commemorating plate close to the *Johannes Table*. Polish-English translation:
“...for the place where you stand is holy ground.” Exodus 3.5 ALTAR JOHANNES It is a place of
secret protestant masses [which took place in – author's note] 1654 – 1709
(source: researcher's photo)

1772 was a significant year for Poland and also for Mikuszowice, because it was in May of 1772 when the Austrian army crossed the Biała river (main river in Bielsko - Biała), and the First Patriation of Poland had begun. This means that the area of my research, did not belong to Poland until the end of World War I, when the country regained independence on the 11th of November 1918. That being said, there is a necessary remark that must be added here: the city of Bielsko – Biała is one of the few cities considered to be a *language island* (ger. *Sprachinsel*), and is referred to as a *Bielitz-Bialaer Sprachinsel*, thus it was a German language island. According to Mattheier (1994:334) a language island is a community which is surrounded by a majority of people that speak another language and belongs to a different ethnical group with whom the community itself does not necessary equates in terms of culture, politics or traditions. Since XIII century, when the city was colonized based on Magdeburg rights (ger. *Deutsches Städtewesen*), Germanic connotations have been visible in its history by means of reflection through, for example, the local traditions or folk costumes (UAM:2018). In addition, in 1921 after the World War I, despite formally being Polish and having Warsaw instead of Vienna as a capital, the city remained under strong Germanic influence with 61,9 % of its citizens speaking the German language or considering themselves Germans (GUS, 1925). Such figure is much lower than before World War I, when only 15% of the population was considered Polish (Barański, 1995:19). Still, given the fact that the country had just regained independence, this shows where Bielsko's citizens felt more akin to. This has only changed after the World War II, when most Germans left Poland (Krajewski, 2013:23), nevertheless German and Austrian heritage in Bielsko is still visible. This comment should make it much easier to understand why, on the following pages, German names of the places are being used, as well as why references to Austria or - later on - to Austro-Hungarian Empire are so common.

In the late 1600s and the beginning of 1700s, Bielsko slowly became the most important manufacturing and trade center in the area, particularly famous for its textile industry. In 1755, the city had a stable stagecoach connection with Vienna, partly because of its convenient location, and partly because of increasing exports of various goods to other parts of Austria. Yet, the actual industrial revolution came to Bielsko in the second half of XIX century, when the city became the third largest textile manufacturer in Austro-Hungarian Empire. This brought other industries to the city

which soon after began to be known as “the city of one hundred chimneys” (Kaczmarek, 2010:77). In 1855, a train connection with Vienna was opened which, on the one hand helped Bielsko to develop even further, on the other hand opened it culturally for the benefit of particularly rich Bielsko’s middle class and local elites. At the time, many impressive buildings, schools and villas were built in Bielsko, as a result of extensive investment of affluent citizens and factory owners. Therefore, Bielsko was back then considered to be the most modern of all the Polish cities, which additionally granted the highest living standards in the country (Barański, 1995:20).

Development of Bielsko described above is the major reason for which the characteristics of Cygański Las and Mikuszowice changed as well. This natural area became increasingly important for Bielsko’s citizens tired of the hustle and bustle of the heavily industrialized city. Those who could afford it, built impressive villas in *British cottage style* or based on *Wiener Cottage Verein* projects – both of which were particularly popular in Austrian recreational resorts (Janoszek, 2009:17). Others, used the area for touristic purposes, which led to the opening of many restaurants and hotels nearby Cygański Las. Hiking trips to the mountains were also popular: prince Ludwik Anhalt, who was a common guest in Bielsko, praised the view from the mountain shelter on the top of the Kozia Góra after his trip using “old, beaten path” through Klimczok and Szyndzielnia in 1822 (Barański, 1995:98), – his description suggests that hiking was already common in this area. In 1893, the tourist organization *Beskidenverein* was established and began to mark trails, build mountain shelters, and publish maps and guide books, in order to popularize tourism in the region (*ibid*, 1995:99). But even of more importance for Cygański Las was another organization: *Bielsko – Biala’s Beautification Association* (ger. *Bielitz - Bialaer Verschönerungs - Verein*), established in 1883, thanks to the efforts of Karol Ambroży and Bernard Bloch. Their idea was to change the characteristics of Cygański Las – from a forest into well-maintained park serving the purpose of leisure and recreational pursuits. Given the city’s elegant architecture and its rather metropolitan nature resembling the Austrian capital, Bielsko is sometimes referred to as a *Little Vienna* and thus it is not surprising the fact that Cygański Las was also modeled after The Vienna Woods (ger. *Wienerwald*) (Krajewski, 2013:25). The Association took care of building bridges over the becks and trails leading to the most scenic and interesting sites in the forest, such as springs, viewpoints or mountain peaks. Small architecture, such as gazebos, arbors,

benches and tables were prepared, and even camping sites, such as *Friedrichsruhe*. Many representative or popular alleys got their own names, such as: *Seufzer-Allee*, *Birken Allee*, *Ambroży-Alle* – this last one honors the abovementioned Karol Ambroży to whom Cygański Las owns so much. On the top of the Kozia Góra, *Steffansruhe* (wooden pavilion from which one could enjoy the view of the city) was placed to commemorate Karol Steffan, major of Bielsko – Biała and “enthusiastic propagator of tourism in our homeland mountains” (ibid, 2013:26-29).



Figure 8 *Steffansruhe* (postcard from 1917).



Figure 9 Bridges and trails in Cygański Forest (postcard from 1913)



Figure 10 Stone spring surrounding – most of the springs in Cygański Forest were protected that way (postcard from 1916)

Source (figures 8-10): Ćwikowska-Broda M., Ćwikowski W., (2008) *Bielsko-Biała i okolice - historia pocztówką pisana*, Bielsko-Biała 2008.

In order to make area more attractive, exotic trees were planted in Cygański Las. Species coming from North America (i.e. Douglas fir or Weymouth pine) or Asia (ex. rhododendrons and spiraeas) can be found in the forest, and many of those are now considered as natural monuments with a number of them being under legal protection (Balcerzak, 2009:25). In addition, Cygański Las, is part of the Silesian Beskids

Landscape Park and is partly included in the Natura 2000 network (PLH 240005), thus the management and enforcement of protection of this area is even stricter.

As one can imagine, such investments and care given to the forest result in an increasing popularity of this area. The best proof for this is the construction of the trolley line in 1895, taking both tourists and locals directly to the forest. Bielsko's central train station was the first stop of the line, and the depot was located in Cygański Las, where the last stop was located at. This made commuting to the forest much easier, especially for those traveling from the upper parts of Silesia, as Cygański Las was at times already a popular recreational among Bielsko's citizens. At the beginning, the *Bielitz Nordbahnhof – Zigeunerwald* line (which was the only tram line that Bielsko had for the next 50 years) departed every 20 minutes, but soon this appeared to be insufficient and more courses were added (Polak, 1998:12-31). The line was closed in the 1970s, when trolleys were replaced by buses.

As more and more tourists started visiting Mikuszowice, new facilities were added. Pools and baths were already in Cygański Las in the XIX century, with showers (ger. *Tusche*) on the way to Kozia Góra as marked on the map from 1861. Those who were keen to refreshing there could take a horse-drawn omnibus up on the mountain. Another pool was opened in 1884 by Bernard Bloch and Feldman family, and shut down in 1914, six years after it was replaced by a much larger pool complex *Bade- und Eislauf-Anlagen Zigeunerwald GmbH* (Krajewski, 2013:50). After decades of being shut down and re-opened, since 2011 the pool in Cygański Las works again. Tennis courts that were opened around the same time are in use as well. But the most popular activity in this part of Bielsko was hiking and strolling in this well-maintained park. A good proof of that are poems written by Maria Konopnicka – very famous Polish poet, who spent her summer in Cygański Las in 1896 and wrote a series of poems entitled *Pod Beskidami* (and. *Under the Beskids*), praising the beauty of this area (Konopnicka, 1915). Another proof of the mountain's outstanding popularity, in context of the whole country, is the fact that the second gondola lift in Poland (only after Kasprowy Wierch in Tatra mountains) was built in 1953 in Bielsko – Biała, taking tourists on the top of Szyndzielnia mountain. The gondola, after several renovations, is still used and is now expected to increase in popularity because of mountain bikers (see chapter 4.5).

Winter activities are an important part of Cygański Las history, and are also particularly significant for this thesis. Skiing was a popular activity in the mountains around the forest (*Wintersportclub* was established in 1909, and skiing trails are still in place), same as ski jumping (the first ski-jump was built in 1950 and reconstructed in 2004). But the real tourist magnet was a toboggan run opened in the late XIX century. A mountain shelter on the top of the Kozia Góra, which since 1909 was called a sledding shelter (ger. *Rodelhütte*), was the starting point of the run. Here, sledges could be rented and afterwards be left on the slide in the foothills of the Kozia Mountain in the Emmerhof restaurant (from where they were carried back to the top to the shelter).



Figure 11 Toboggan run at the beginning of XX century (source: Museum of Bielsko – Biała)

The run was constantly developed, particularly in the 1930s and 1950s, when it was 2300 m. long (back then the longest in Europe), and was considered to be quite fast and difficult, which is why, later on, it was mainly used by professional sliders. Still, many would come to observe trainings and competitions on the run: national championships were organized on there, and all the Polish sliders, such as Barbara Piecha or Jerzy Wojnar (both of whom were world champions and Olympians), used to practice in Cygański Las. In 1960s the run had to be shorten to 1100 meters, due to requirements of the International Luge Federation, therefore only lower part of the

mountain was used. Since then, the run had been slowly languishing and was finally closed in 1991 (Zawadzki, 2005).



Figure 12 Sledding competition in Cygański Las in 1960s (source: Kenig P., (2009) *Z Historii Cygańskiego Lasu* p. 13 [in:] “Cygański Las, Park Kulturowy” Bielsko – Biała, 2009)

Apart from very scarcely organized trips with guides who tell about the history of the run, the place is abandoned, and Bielsko’s Association for Development and Promotion of Sledding (pol. *Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju i Promocji Saneczkarstwa w Bielsku – Białej*) is under liquidation since 2005 (association’s National Court Register number: 0000232725).



Figure 13 Toboggan run in 2018 (source: researcher's photo)

Years after World War II, not only many of the devastated-during-the-war villas and other elements of small architecture were not rebuilt, but also the process of further degradation of this area continued purposely. Reasons for that are partly connected with something I tried to prove earlier, which is the strong connection of this area with German heritage and culture – which was aimed to be forgotten after the tragedy of war. During the communist time (1945 - 1989), Bielsko – Biała, significantly changed its characteristics, going through, so typical for that time, process of modernization according to the socialist city planning (Polak, 2000:33). Cygański Las suffered the same fate, back then named People’s Park (pol. *Park Ludowy*), with only Błonia being somewhat maintained as they were used for public festivals and mass events (Kenig, 2009:13). In the 1970s and 1980s, some elements of small architecture were added there, but apart from that, no additional information about the place can be found.

The very end of this sub-chapter can be partly based on my own memories connected to Cygański Las. The primary school I used to attend in late 1990s and early 2000s was in Fischer’s villa from the late XIX century, located on the verge of the forest. Although the school building was in excellent condition, the other, much bigger villa Bajka (which in English means *Fairytale*, and I would argue that it must have been an accurate description of it), right next to the school was ruined. We used to have pottery classes in one of the rooms there, but because of many reasons, including parent’s concerns about the place, the classes there were stopped. We were not allowed to go further to the villa’s park (designed in 1906 by Vienna’s architecture Gustav Molenda), as in some old cabins located there, homeless people and drug addicts used to shelter. The villa is now abandoned and entering the area is strictly prohibited. Because of quite specific pedagogical system in my school (which was a Waldorf school), we used to go to the forest almost every day. I remember that I liked it a lot, especially since the forest had a lot of ruins and sites which, as a child, I found mysterious. In winter, we used to sledge from the top of the ski jump, which was already closed, but not yet deconstructed. We used the old sledding run as well, which was usually followed by distress of our teachers, who did not allow us to go there as it was unsafe. Błonia, however, was our favorite spot, as new playgrounds, pitches and a skatepark were just opened, and old and creepy constructions were removed. Few years later, the place was fairly popular among kids and teenagers, and I remember going there quite often, despite living far away from this area.

My memories are somehow confirmed by the books and articles I have read, most of them wistfully describing Cygański Las' history, often ending with similar remarks: “the toboggan run is now being devastated, and sadly, it is people that mainly contribute to its degradation” (Krajewski, 2013:46), “unfortunately, Silesian Beskid is one of the most ecologically endangered part of polish mountains” (Barański, 1995:26), “unfortunately, as the years passed, most of previous investments [ski jump and amphitheater on Błonia – author’s note] were demolished” (Kenig, 2009:13), “unfortunately, Cygański Forest is now very much unkept” (Polak, 2000:147). It seems appropriate to let those quotes be the ending of my historical chapter as well...

4.2 Before the Enduro Trails were established

The previous chapter left us at the end of first decade of 2000s, when the golden times of the Cygański forest were long gone and the place (apart from some investments on Błonia), was rather abandoned. It is hard to say exactly when it came back to life, but clearly, presence of mountain bikers (enduro bikers in particular) played an important role.

Bicycling is the most popular sport activity in Poland: 66% of Poles declares cycling as an activity they pursue in their free time (GUS, 2012:2), and Beskids Mountains surrounding Bielsko – Biała have long been a popular place to go biking. Good proof of that is the Beskids' Family Cycling Rally (pol. *Beskidzki Rodzinny Rajd Rowerowy*), happening in Bielsko – Biała two times every year since 1996, always gathering around 3 000 people cycling together on different trails (Bielsko's Cycling Association, 2018). However, as it was explained in chapter 1.1, there is a big difference between trail-riding or cross-country cycling and enduro and DH biking, the last two being much faster, aggressive, ridden mainly down the hill, using narrow trails called singletracks. Thus, enduro and DH bikers either use hiking trails (mainly those trails, that are more demanding than wide gravel roads) or trails dedicated to enduro mtb. If such are unavailable, in some places, including Bielsko – Biała, they are being built by mountain bikers themselves, without anyone's approval. According to people who are in charge of Enduro Trails in Bielsko, these are the reasons standing behind building Enduro Trails in Bielsko – Biała:

“It has started because we lacked any legal mountain biking trails. There have always been a lot of mountain bikers here, I mean, now we are much

more, but we've always been a lot. So, we've been building trails, for many years, not entirely legal trails, partly agreeing and partly not agreeing it with anyone. It was also this green trail here on Kozia Góra which has always been shared between both bikers and trekkers, so there were lots of collisions here on this trail... it was a bit, well... people were angry that we used to bike on those trails quite fast, we were angry because there is no place for us to bike..."

ET Manager 1

That is why, according to Enduro Trails managers, in April 2013, Beskids's Association for Sport, Tourism and Environmental Protection 2B Eco Riders (pol. *Beskidzkie Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju Sportu, Turystyki i Ochrony Środowiska 2B Eco Riders*) was established, with the purpose of building new, and the legalization of already existing, enduro mountain biking trails (association's National Court Register number: 0000459191). The chairperson of this Association is now almost entirely responsible for the Enduro Trails project. This has been also confirmed by the city's authorities:

„Well, yes, our goal is to legalize as many trails as possible, especially those that are already well-established in the forest, and they are nice, like for example Stary Zielony. It is many people's favorite trail, so it should be legal. Same as another one, the red one on Kozia Góra, it's popular so it should be legal.”

Official 2

That version of the beginnings of the Enduro Trails in Bielsko is, however, challenged by Mikuszowice Śląskie Neighborhood Council members, who referred to the competitions that were organized on the Kozia Góra. According to them, the beginning of the trails is connected with illegal competitions that were organized on the mountain, for the purpose of which the trails were led without much consideration, nor anyone's permission.

“I don't know how exactly this happened, I think it was about 3 years ago when on Kozia Góra, there was a company that organized a competition, but nobody really knew about that. City Council, most likely the Department of Sport and Physical Culture, let them organize it without really consulting it with anyone. And I asked a forest ranger back then, who was terrified of what was happening there, because suddenly, through the middle of the forest – and there is plenty of huckleberries there – someone led the trails right through all the huckleberries for the purpose of 1 or 2 days of competition. [...] And then next year, or two years after [...] they started building those trails, which they used after for the competitions, and it all happened on Kozia Góra, but it all

happened illegally and they were riding through the berries. And now we have trails there.”

Council Member 1

When asked about the competitions, Enduro Trails responded, saying that:

“Yes, so we made a trail competition, with limited number of people taking part in those competitions here on Kozia Góra and Szyndzielnia, so we saw that it all worked well, so the whole problem was how to organize it and how to make it legally. Because up until then, all the competitions here were illegal, on the tourist hiking trails, it was either entirely illegal or just a little bit legal, but above all, it was happening on the hiking trails”.

ET Manager 1

This suggests that indeed the competitions organized in this area, regardless of their informal or later more formal character, may have been an important event that popularized enduro mountain biking in the area, or at least brought a number of cyclist to the trails that were used during the races. On the other hand, the sport must have been practiced there already, since there were people willing to organize and take part in such races. It seems to be impossible to reconstruct exact origins of the Enduro Trails, and most likely the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Undoubtedly, however, there was a community in Bielsko, keen to further developing this sport.

In 2013, few members of the 2B Eco Riders Association took part in the *IMBA Trail Building School* (which is a course organized regularly in different parts of Europe by *IMBA Trail Solutions* where trail building techniques and trail maintenance are being taught), and after coming back from the course, with IMBA trail building certificates and greater knowledge, they decided to build legal trails in Bielsko. In order to do so, the Association started collecting signs under a petition to the city, asking for city’s support in favor of this investment.

“In a period of one month we had more than 1 000 signatures, only here, from local people. And then we ended up with a few thousand signatures, which showed us that there are a lot of people interested in what we were promoting. And it was both pedestrians and bikers that signed it, because both of them agreed that it would be better to replace shared-use trails with single-used trails. So, I went with this to the city council but they told me that, starting form next year, there will be participatory budgeting in Bielsko, so I should probably wait and apply next year.”.

ET Manager 2

This was confirmed by the official form the Department of Municipal Engineering:

“There was huge support from the biker’s community in our city, and this is actually their accomplishment because the city used the idea of the youth, and the Association [...] When we had the participatory budgeting in Bielsko, because we talked about it one year before the budgeting [...], then our elders from the city council said: <<try the budget, if you won’t make it, it means it’s less popular than you assume>>.”.

Official 1

In 2015 Bielsko - Biała begun using participatory budgeting (PB). As briefly mentioned before, PB is a process thanks to which citizens of a given city (or smaller administrative divisions), can decide how to allocate part of the public budget that is to their disposal. It is not obligatory for Polish cities to use PB, but they have a right to do so, based on article 5a, passage 2 and article 18 passage 1 of March 8th, 1990 on Commune self-government (Journal of Laws, 1990). In Bielsko – Biała, since 2015, the budget is set every year, and it is divided into 2 parts: one part is reserved for the projects that are relevant for the whole city (ex. in 2017 it was 1 500 000 PLN), and another part for the neighborhood projects (ex. in 2017 it was 2 250 000 PLN, which gives 75 000 PLN to every neighborhood).

Each city-wide project cannot be more expensive than 500 000³ PLN (but there is no minimum value of the projects specified in the regulations), which guarantees that at least 3 projects should be accomplished, thereby addressing needs of larger groups of citizens. City-wide projects should be relevant for dwellers of more than 1 neighborhood or be located on territory belonging to more than 1 neighborhood. The projects can be proposed by the Bielsko citizens, and the application form must be signed by at least 15 of them. Projects are later verified by adequate departments of the city council which checks if all the legal requirements are met. Approved projects are then promoted and voted on by all those who live in Bielsko - Biała and are above the age of 16. After voting, the projects are ranked based on the number of votes, and those projects which got the highest scores are pursued until there is no more money left. In addition, all the projects that won must be finished and given to the citizens before the end of the year following the voting (BIP, 2016).

³ 1 PLN equals to approximately 0.23 EUR so the project cannot be more expensive than ≈ 115,000 EUR (based on NBP – Polish National Bank exchange rates on the 10th of May of 2018)

It should be marked here, that this type of policy-making is widely commended, as it enhances governance and democracy, empowers citizens and the quality of their well-being (Touchton & Wampler, 2014:1443). According to The World Bank this tool offers citizens the opportunity to learn about the governance, debate and influence allocation of resources, thus being educated, empowered and engaged (The World Bank, 2007:1). Therefore, using this way of promoting and funding the Enduro Trails project seems to be a well thought out decision whereby the actual demand for such trails could be verified.

4.3 Enduro Trails – stage 1

In 2014, Enduro Trails took part in the participatory budgeting in Bielsko – Biala for the first time. It was a city-wide project entitled Recreational Mountain Biking Trails in Bielsko – Biala, stage 1 - Kozia Góra (pol. *Górskie, rekreacyjne ścieżki rowerowe w Bielsku-Białej - etap pierwszy Kompleks Kozia Góra*), and the aim of it was to build safe recreational trails which would not collide with hiking trails. The cost of this project was estimated to be around 450,000 PLN. During its 8 days of voting, Enduro Trails got 1,159 votes in total, and it was the second most popular project after new parking sports in several parts of the city, which received 1,221 votes. In total 7,783 people voted, meaning that Enduro Trails got around 14% of all the votes (Obywatelski BB, 2015).

As a result of this participatory budgeting, 11 city-wide projects were conducted, including Enduro Trails – stage 1, which consists of 4 trails (Enduro Trails):

Stefanka – an easy trail (green trail), 860 m long. It starts close to the old amphitheater and finishes on Modra street. Considered to be a kid’s trail, as it is very short and easy, furthermore getting there takes only 8 minutes (in comparison to other trails which are located on the top of the mountain and require riding up-hill for about 40 minutes);

Twister – an intermediate trail (blue trail), 4400 m long. It begins at the top of Kozia Góra and finishes at the same place as Stefanka. It’s a type of a *flow trail*, which simply means that it can be used and appreciated by both beginners and advanced cyclists. There are no obstacles that beginners would not be able to overcome, as flow trails are very smooth (in terms of their surface). They

are, however, full of turns (called *bands*) and small hills (called *pumps*), which would be jumped over by more advanced bikers but can be slowly ridden by those less advanced. Speed control is therefore crucial, as a particularly upper part of twister (called ABC line) is quite steep, thus more challenging for beginners. Still, this trail attracts the largest group of users, as advanced cyclists can enjoy some jumps while beginners are not scared off by technical features which they could not overcome. With that being said, even on this trail special equipment and appropriate bike is needed (front suspension is a must), and from what I have observed, most users had full-suspension bikes, full-faced helmets and very often additional protective gear.



Figure 14 Twister - example of *flow* trail (source: Enduro Trails)

Stary Zielony – difficult trail (red trail), 2200 m long. It begins close to the mountain shelter on the top of Kozia Góra and finishes near Błonia. Stary Zielony is a *technical trail*, which means, that unlike flow trails, obstacles such as rocks and roots should be expected. In addition to natural features, man-made features are also there, mainly jumps, *gaps* (jumps with a hole in the middle), and some wooden bridges. This means that it highly inadvisable to use such a trail without sufficient skill level, protective gear and suitable bicycle.



Figure 15 Satory Zielony - example of a *technical trail* (source: Enduro Trails)

DH+ – very difficult trail (black trail), 2000 m long, which begins on the top of Kozia Góra, right next to Twister, and finishes on Modra street. Same as Satory Zielony, DH+ is a technical trail, but with even higher inclination (hence greater speed) and more difficult and frequent obstacles that one can expect.

All the built trails were marked, and informational signs are placed at the trail's entrances, informing about their difficulty, length, incline, reminding about protective gear (helmets are obligatory), as well as including the map with the trail profile and terms of its use. Almost all the trails at some point cross with hiking trails, but wooden constructions, which force mountain bikers to significantly reduce their speed, are in place as well. In addition to that, on technical trails, special sign warnings about upcoming jump or particularly difficult section were also prepared.

Although the purpose of building Enduro Trails was, among others, to address some of the issues between mountain bikers and hikers/pedestrians using the same trails, it did not entirely work out this way and some new challenges emerged. To begin with, all the 4 trails described above are designed as one-way trails, and it is only allowed to use them while riding down the mountain. This means, that all the mountain bikers had to use existing hiking trails, in order to get to the new-biking-trail-starting-points. As a result of that, a number of mountain bikers ride up the hill using *yellow hiking trail*⁴, which is relatively less steep and very wide. Nonetheless, because it is also the

⁴ Polish hiking trails are marked using 5 different colors (red, black, yellow, green and blue), but the colors are not related with the difficulty of the trails. The only purpose of the colors is to make it easier for the tourists to follow the trail they have chosen, or distinguish one from another (PTTK, 2012:12).

widest and easiest trail, it is also commonly used by older people, as well as families with young children or trolleys.



Figure 16 Example of the trail crossing with wooden guardrails and signs informing about the danger (source: researcher's photo)



Figure 17 Yellow trail which leads on the top of Kozia Góra (source: researcher's photo)

As a result, such trail got very crowded, especially during the weekends when even more tourists were visiting Bielsko – Biała. Although I personally did not experience any unpleasant behavior, neither as a hiker nor as a biker, almost all of my interviewees (bikers, hikers, authorities and Enduro Trails managers) mentioned that issue, describing it as problematic and unpleasant:

“Look at her. I love her, she’s my wife, but what she sometimes does here with her bike... She could move a little to the right, she does not

have to speed. It's not ok, she could be more considerate. But, she's my wife..."

Biker 7

"Yes, the lack of up uphill trail is an issue, and I do agree with this"

ET Manager 1

In addition to the lack of uphill trail, more problems emerged soon after opening the Enduro complex, and complaints about them repeated throughout many of my interviews.

Probably the most frequent complains I heard were related to the lack of necessary infrastructure around the trails, with the lack of parking spots being considered as especially problematic. Due to the popularity of Enduro Trails (which in 2016 was still a unique place in Poland, in addition to being free of charge, which is quite unusual for such places), numbers of tourists from more distant parts of Poland, as well as from Czech Republic, began to visit Cygański Las. As mentioned before, it could be observed that multiple cars with "foreign" registration plates appeared in the area, especially during the weekends. It is worth reminding that the PB project of Enduro Trails included only the 4 mountain biking trails, and no additional infrastructure, and as a result, all the visitors started looking for a place to park their cars somewhere close to the forest, and soon enough the area began struggling with lack of parking spots and traffic.

"I don't live here, but I have one client from here, I do accounting for her. She's a normal, reasonable person, when you talk with her, she's normal. But when she starts talking about those tourists here, and the cars coming, she goes crazy. She calls municipal police and everything, just to get rid of the cars. She's normal, doing business, handling people all the time, but with those cars she gets mental. So, there must be something going on"

Hiker 6

"There are many private roads here, those small which lead to the villas [...]. So, I'm calling the municipal police saying <<there's a car blocking the way>>, and they tell me, we can't do anything because it's a private road. So, I'm saying <<yes, my private road, so that I can go to my house>>. So, they are like <<yes, but it's private, so we can't do anything about it>>. So, I'm asking: who will do something about it? Everybody is so happy, that tourists are coming, but I cannot get home!"

Hiker 10

“There are many complains about it because previously, only during concerts or events on Błonia, we had that many people there. Now it is all the time, even the places that were always available, that nobody would ever park there, are now taken. [...] But also, bikers, they all want to park as close to the forest as possible, if they could, they would drive up the hills, and this is really not cool now. It’s still very a tiny mountain, with those 4 trails, that’s just a lot... We don’t really promote the place now because there’re already too many people, we have to wait a little.”

Official 2

Those who came to Enduro Trails by bike, mainly teenagers from other parts of Bielsko – Biala, would use the alleys in Cygański Las in order to go come back home (as it is the most natural and convenient way). Although riding within this zone of the forest is prohibited, during my observations, never had I ever seen a biker walking the bike there. In addition to that, it was quite common for the bikers to ride through the alleys with the same speed as on the actual bike trails:

“There are tons of mountain bikers in the forest right now, many of them want to go to Błonia or to centrum, and the nicest way is through Błonia and then through the forest. So, they take this main path in the forest, and keep going with the same speed as on the trails, which is very, very dangerous.”

Official 1

The same happened on Błonia: bikers going to the BB Bike Bar, returning or renting bikes or going to the pump track, very scarcely alighted their bicycles despite being surrounded by playgrounds full of quite unpredictable young children. During my observations on Błonia, as well as based on interviews with two women looking after their kids on Błonia, the problem indeed seemed to be quite severe.

Finally, the very last problem identified, to the large extend adheres to the reasons why Enduro Trails were built in the first place. Bielsko’s trails attracted significant number of new users to area, in fact having 3 official/legal trails to offer (as Stefanka is a children’s trail). As a result, while visiting the place, I have soon realized that although everybody uses Enduro Trails, more frequent visitors and local users still ride on the illegal trails, as well as build some new shortcuts and passes on the old trails. The city officials were also aware of that issue:

“We hope that the more legal trails we have, that are safe, marked and prepared according to the IMBA standards, the more bikers will actually switch into those legal trails. But there will still be people, because there

are people who like to have it in a *hard-core way*, that refuse to ride where all the others ride, and they will keep riding on the illegal trails. But perhaps, it will be less than it is now, and that would be something, that would be a success for us as well.”

Official 1



Figure 18 Illegal mtb trail in Cygański Las, located next to Ambroży Alley. Additional features (such as jump marked on the picture above), are being added in many places in the forest (source: researcher’s photo)

Five out of 10 of my informants legitimized those concerns through admitting using illegal trails often, yet not as much as the legal ones. All of those interviewees were from either Bielsko or its close neighborhood. One of my informants was personally responsible for building large number of trails on Magurka – another mountain nearby, and told me a lot about his experiences in that matter:

“We don’t even want to make it legal, this is not the point. The main idea is to have fun. [...] They build those trails, because they have a need to bike, and there are not enough trails yet. [...] The wheels are in the motion, and it will be impossible to stop us now. Bans? Bans don’t work, bans work the other way around, there will be even more trails if they try to stop us.”

Biker 8

One of my interviewees with whom I biked the other day asked me if I wanted to see where the *real mountain bikers* ride. My answer was yes, which can be decried, yet it gave me the better picture of the topic I am here describing.



Figure 19 Illegal bike lines in Cygański Las (source: researcher's photo)

Having IMBA's trails building certificate myself, I would not quite agree that in fact the place to which I was taken was even a trail, due to its poor construction and clearly visible erosion – as all of those should be avoided by careful design and adequate building techniques (IMBA, 2007:94-106). This could be worrisome, especially given the unique flora and exotic species that can be found in Cygański Las. In addition to that, having done the research about the place, and being more aware about its history, I recognized that the so-called by the locals' *skill verifying wall* (almost 90° wall made out of stones and soil, from the top of which some ride and some jump down on the ground), is actually the remainings of the old Karl Ambroży memorial (chapter 4.1), which was destroyed right after or during the World War II.



Figure 20 Ambroży Memorial, destroyed in 1945. (source: Mährisch-Schlesisches Heimatmuseum in Klosterneburg, Austria)



Figure 21 Skill verifying wall located at the same spot, as Ambroży Memorial used to be (source: researcher's photo)

This depicts a rather gloomy side of the popular trails, and for the same reasons, explains why people most closely relate to the forest. The Mikuszowice Śląskie Neighborhood Council administrating this area wrote an open letter to the citizens of Bielsko – Biala, asking them not to vote for the second stage of the projects in participatory budgeting for the year 2016. As it can be read from the letter, the Council, despite initial enthusiasm towards the project, expressed their disappointment with its implementation, raising up the following issues:

- the trails initially promoted as “recreational”, appeared to be only for a selected group of mountain bikers which is interested in extreme sports (the Council pointed out, that expensive bikes and gear are needed to use the trails, and such are inaccessible for the majority);
- the trails are crossing with hiking trails, and as a result will be a reason for conflicts between the two groups;
- large number of trails will have a negative impact on the nature around them;
- certain part of the old toboggan run has been destroyed by mountain bikers, as the bike paths lead through the run (the Council pointed out the long history of the run and its significance for the city, finding mountain bikers behavior nonchalant and disrespectful);
- the Council voiced their concerns about too many trails being planned in the area, which poses the risk of dominating the forest by only one category of users.

Due to that, the Council asked to stop further development of the trails until appropriate consultations with all the user groups and careful research has been conducted (Rada Osiedla Mikuszowice Śląskie, 2015). The letter was heavily commented in the social media and press, with voices both criticizing and agreeing with the claims it made.

2B Eco Riders Association, as a body who applied for budgeting both in 2015 and 2016, formally replied to the letter, addressed the following counterargument:

- various difficulty levels of the trails make them available for differ groups of users, including small children, who try their chances at Stefanka trail;
- large number of tourists visiting the area brings benefits to the local population and businesses around the area, which (trails surroundings) are economically flourishing;
- all the crossing points with the hiking trails are secured, and carefully marked;
- agreeing with the statement that the old toboggan run is an important part of Bielsko’s heritage, Enduro Trails pointed out that is has long been devastated, and unkept, which is a loss that should not have happened. Nevertheless, as the trails are crossing the run in only one place, it is not the mountain bikers to be blamed for that damage;
- finally, 2B Eco Riders expressed their hope that Bielsko – Biala soon not only will become the Polish capital of mountain biking, but also well known to the world.

Ending their letter, 2B Eco Riders asked citizens of Bielsko Biala for their support during the participatory budgeting in 2016 and votes for Enduro Trails – stage II (2B Eco Riders, 2015).

It is important to mention here that although the open letter to the citizens written by the Neighborhood Council, and the response to that letter written by 2B Eco Riders Association is a clear proof of disagreement between the two sides, it seems that what the Association was saying and what the Council was saying to the large extend reflect opinions of enduro mountain bikers on one side, and trekkers and pedestrians on the other. During my interviews, many research participants referred to the same problems described above regarding crowded trails, lack of parking spots, or safety issues, when bikers are speeding on the hiking trails, Błonia and in Cygański Las, while mountain bikers were focusing on the accessibility of the trails to all and financial benefits for the city.

“This is just stupid talk. I’ve seen little kids riding on Twister, I guess they have never visited the trails or something. Everyone has fun here, everyone is benefiting.”

Biker 10

4.4 Enduro Trails – stage 2

In 2015, 2B Eco Riders Association proposed the second stage of Enduro Trails, this time including 5 new downhill trails: on Kozia Gora, Szyndzielnia, Kołowrót, in Cygański Las (1 of which solving the problems of cyclists using forest's alleys where riding is not permitted), and the very awaited uphill trail (which would take the cyclists off the yellow trail leading to the top of Kozia Gora). The project was entitled "Recreational Mountain Biking Trails – stage 2", and according to the plan, trails were supposed to vary from green to black (according to their difficulty levels). During the 9 days of voting, Enduro Trails stage 2 got 2 501 votes out of the 14 350 votes in total, which constitutes 17,43%. Thanks to that, the project won the first position in the ranking (the following project, football pitch, got 2230 votes) and thus, was granted the funding of 500 000 PLN (Obywatelski BB, 2016).

It was after the results of the second voting, but before the new trails were built, when I visited this area for the first time and conducted many of my interviews. While Neighborhood Council's members were grievously disappointed with the results of the voting, mountain bikers were enthusiastically looking into the future (this, to some extent, explains character of the quotes I am using in this thesis).

"We won't really repeat what we said, because nobody really listened to us anyways, nobody really asked us or consult anything with us... Young people just want to have fun, so that's it."

Council Member 2

"I think that the case is closed now, they only wanted to make it big, just like that. I think, that it's just been a bunch of old grandpas who never really seen those trails. [...] I think that even because of that, because it was like a funny incident with this letter, even more people voted for us. Because surely it was funny that old grandpas asked not to vote. We wrote an official letter to them, explaining what the trails are about, and then they blew over, so for us the case is closed."

Official 1

In summer 2016, it was already known, that part of the trails located on Szyndzielnia Mountain would not be built, as this land does not formally belong to the city of Bielsko – Biala, and additional agreements with State Forests (pol. *Lasy Państwowe*), responsible for the place, were not signed on time. This meant that the problem with parking spots, which was supposed to be partly solved by using the large parking

available under the Szyndzielnia mountain, will not be addressed this time. The money that was supposed to be used for that purpose (trails on Szyndzielnia), was instead spent on the other trails, and afterwards all 7 new trails were opened (5 in Cygański Las and Kozia Góra and 2 closer to Szyndzielnia, where the permissions were granted). These are the following:

Daglezjowy – an uphill trail leading on the Kozia Góra. The trail is 4600 m long, with 6,5 % inclination.

Cyganka – green trail built in Cygański Las, within the zone wherein mountain biking on the alleys is not permitted. It is 1650 m long, with 4% inclination.

Cygan, Gądola, Dębowiec – 3 red trails (difficult level), with the length of 2600 m, 2000 m and 2200 m respectively. Only Cygan is on Kozia Góra, and the two remaining are closer to Szyndzielnia. All of these are technical single-tracks, which means their difficulty level, as well as barriers for the newcomers, are identical as the Stary Zielony trail's.

Kamieniołom and **Dziabar** –black trails (expert level). Kamieniołom (located on Kozia Góra) is 1800 m long, and Dziabar (located closer to Szyndzielnia) is 1300 m long. The remarks regarding difficulty of DH+ trails apply to the two as well.

I have visited the area again in summer 2017 (when all the above-mentioned trails were built) and looked at how the situation had changed in a year's time. The issue of riding through Cygański Forest was addressed by the Cyganka trail which, although technically speaking is a green trail, it is used by all the users who want to bike back to the centrum of Bielsko – Biała. The Daglezjowy uphill trail surely solved part of the problems related with crowded and dangerous drive to the top of the mountain. Nevertheless, because the trail is much longer and quite flat, I noticed that many bikers use alternative routes (including yellow trail), as it takes too much time to ride up using Daglezjowy. Other bikers, however, pointed out that the trail is very beautiful (surrounded by particularly big trees), so they prefer to take it when they have time to relax.

Cygan and Kamieniołom are the two illegal trails, which I saw in summer 2016. In comparison to a year ago, one could observe huge improvements in terms of their construction and design: there were no puddles or wet areas, the trail line was clear, and the vegetation around the trail was visibly in much better shape. I have also noticed that some of the old illegal paths which used to be in Cygański Las looked as if they were much less used now. It is worth mentioning here that both my visits to the site took place in summer when the weather was very hot (both years), so it could not have been because of the lack of rain that the trails were in much better condition.

Adhering to one of the concerns that Council Members expressed, almost all the new trails (except Cyganka), are either difficult or very difficult. Hence, their remark that Enduro Trail are available only for limited group of users now becomes even more valid. The crowd on the trails was not significantly bigger than a year before, as the new trails on Kozia Gora mentioned above were used already, only that now these have become legal and more sustainable. Still, an increasing number of trails, with – at the same time – a still unaddressed issue of lack of necessary infrastructure, could not help in minimizing the still-present and obvious conflict.

4.5 Enduro Trails - stage 3

In 2016 2B Eco Riders Association took part in the participatory budgeting for the third time. This time, the project entitled “Mountain Bike Trails – Enduro Trails Bielsko Biala” proposed building only the trail that would connect Kozia Gora with Szyndzielnia, which finally was not built in 2016 due to the legal issues (late agreements with State Forests). It was again a city-wide project, expected to cost 500 000 PLN (the highest possible amount one can apply for).

The voting lasted for 7 days, during which “Enduro Trails stage 3” got 1922 votes out of 26 600 votes in total (7,23 %), and thus was ranked on the 5th position (the first one, amphitheater in Lipnik got 6 412 votes), this time not qualifying for the funding. This was quite surprising for the 2B Eco Riders Association, who, while our discussion, blamed the campaign promoting the other projects, which – according to the Association’s chairman – was conducted against some rules. Although this was impossible to verify, looking at the number of votes alone, it is visible that around 579 less votes were given to the trails in comparison with the year 2016 – while

percentagewise the drop is even more significant (from 17% of votes in 2016 to 7% of votes in 2017) (Obywatelski BB, 2017). The results surprised not only the bikers, but also city officials:

“They got the highest number of votes in all the PB, much, much more in comparison with any other projects since the first voting. And I am certain, that this third stage will also pass, and that we will keep building”.

Official 1

Despite the results of the PB in 2016, the city of Bielsko – Biala, decided to support the project with sufficient funding, and that decision was announced through Facebook (on Enduro Trails page), on the 25th of February 2017. On their page, Enduro Trails acknowledged Bielsko’s authorities for their support for the project, pointing out that the city is very satisfied with the current events around Błonia, as this tourist attraction brings people from all over Poland and abroad to the city.

„The main reason why we let those trails be build is that we finally have really good touristic product for which there are people coming. And it’s no longer shopping malls, as it used to be. The old city of Bielsko itself wasn’t what attracted tourist, but shopping. There is finally something we can promote [...] number of tourists are coming from Slovakia and Czech Republic because it is closer for them to come here, than to their own resorts [...] and when we organize competitions here, or during the weekend, there are no places available in the hotels around. And this also means something.”

Official 2

Due to the additional funding, it was possible to start building this last trail in the Enduro Trails complex, and it is expected to be open on the 12th of May, 2018 (Fritz, 2018). This more-than-6km-long-flow trail, will connect Szyndzielnia with Kozia Góra and is designed as an intermediate trail, but since it is a flow trail, it is highly likely that (same as Twister) it will be used by more advanced users as well, which means that perhaps some of the bikers from Kozia Gora (regardless of their skill level) will also switch to Szyndzielnia. Moreover, Szyndzielnia is the mountain on which gondolas are located. Therefore, seeing good business opportunity, the company administrating the gondolas now promotes special discounts for mountain bikers, making lifts more accessible. Thus, it is possible that some of the bikers will be interested in using the large parking spots under the Szyndzielnia mountain and then taking the gondola up, and that could potentially solve some problems that

Mikuszowice Śląskie are struggling with (i.e. excessive crowd and lack of parking spots).

In addition to the development of all the official trails that are included in the Enduro Trails complex, the competitions (which were so important for the beginning of the trails), continued during the years 2015 – 2016. The competitions attract number of people not only from Poland, but now other parts of Europe, and since January 2018, competitions organized in Mikuszowice are qualifiers for the Enduro World Series 2018 as EWS Qualifier Series Event (EWS, 2018), which is probably the best proof of their popularity. The trails created for the purpose, and even greater number of visitors coming to watch or take place in the races, clearly contributed to the general perception of the Enduro Trails complex as well, as they are organized by the same group of people. Both Neighborhood Council and my research participants referred to this during the interviews, for example saying:

“What is the point of ruining new kilometers of forest for the sake of 2 days’ worth of competition. There must be a limit on what we allow and on what we don’t. Who is going to be next? In Russia, they have tank races. Of course, they are legal, but so what? Are we going to organize everything that people fancy, just because there will be money out of that? Let the tanks come, I’d enjoy it.”

Hiker 1

The scope of this thesis did not allow me to focus more in-depth on the trails created for the competitions, either have I seen any of the races. It is impossible for me then, to assess where the new competition trails are located, and how the competitions are conducted. Still, since it was mentioned by 4 of the interviewees, despite the fact that there was no question about the competitions in my interview guide, it means that it could be, potentially a factor heightening the conflict:

“They opened those trails in autumn, but there were again competitions happening next summer. And not on those trail, they created a number of new trails again, used the marking tape all over the place, so that no one could go there, and left it like that. And, of course those new trails remained as well, and I was even walking there yesterday, and there were people using those.”

Hiker 5

Again, I have decided to leave this topic for further research, as it requires separate, and in-depth research, which cannot be conducted together with the topic I have decided to explore in this dissertation.

But disapproval for the trails was not only verbal, it is also expressed in the interviews by either the Council or in the internet. In March 2017, some of the wooden elements of the trails (guard rails), were cut using a chain saw. Only 1 of my interviewees reported seeing such obstacles and other objects left purposely on the mountain biking trails, but I found several information in the social media warning bikers about such situations. This suggests that despite continuing development of the Enduro Trails project, the conflict around the trails remains and requires addressing.



Figure 22 Cut wooden barriers on Enduro Trails (source: Enduro Trails)

2B Eco Riders Association as – despite having plans for further development of the trails in, for example, Wapienica (another neighborhood of Bielsko) – did not take part in participatory budgeting in the year 2017, asking citizens for their support for another project, which aims at fighting with high air pollution in the city.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided information on how Cygański Las and its surroundings were used and developed throughout time, up until 2018 when enduro mountain biking clearly played and still plays an important role in the area. The chapter provides also a chronological description of evolution of the Enduro Trails and the conflict around the such. Both the historical role and the most present role played within the participatory budgeting is highly important in the upcoming chapters of this thesis, particularly chapter 6. The purpose of this chapter was not only to specifically analyze the conflict, but to summarize all the data available and people's reactions to the trail development.

In order to make it clearer for the reader, I decided to sum up some relevant data in the following tables. The table below shows how popularity of the trails has changed over the years, based on the votes in favor of the Enduro Trails in the participatory budgeting events, during the three stages of the project.

Table 1 Enduro Trails' PB results for the years 2015 – 2017

Year	Votes received	Total votes	Percent of total votes	Position	Result
2015	1 159	7 783	14,89 %	2 nd	Qualified
2016	2 501	14 350	17,43 %	1 st	Qualified
2017	1 922	26 600	7,23 %	5 th	Unqualified

Clearly, more and more citizen decided to take part in the voting process, which is a very positive sign suggesting that the voting decisions reflect preferences of a larger group of citizens. Since Enduro Trails took part in the PB only 3 times, it is hard to see any trends in ET's popularity. Yet, it is clear, that in 2017 less people voted for the project both in raw number of votes and percentagewise. Although more people took part in the third voting in general, which could explain the drop from 17% to 7% of the votes given to the Enduro Trails. 600 less votes (in raw numbers) means that the number of supporters of this project indeed decreased.

In the next table, I have gathered all the trails that are part of the Enduro Trails complex, giving the information about their difficulty level, length, incline, location, type⁵, and opening year:

Table 2 List of the trails in Enduro Trails complex

Name	Difficulty	Length	Incline	Location	Type	Opening year
Stefanka	Easy	860 m	4,9 %	Kozia Góra	Flow	October 2016
Cyganka	Easy	1650 m	4 %	Cygański Las	Flow	Spring 2017
Twister	Intermediate	4400 m	6,2 %	Kozia Góra	Flow	October 2016
Rock'n'Rolla	Intermediate	6500 m	unknown	From Szyndzielnia to Kozia Góra	Flow	May 2018
Stary Zielony	Difficult	2200 m	11,8 %	Kozia Góra	Technical	October 2016
Cygan	Difficult	2600 m	11,8 %	Kozia Góra	Technical	Spring 2017
Gondola	Difficult	2000 m	12 %	Szyndzielnia	Technical	Spring 2017
Dębowiec	Difficult	2200 m	12,5 %	Dębowiec	Technical	Spring 2017
DH+	Very difficult	2000 m	13,5 %	Kozia Góra	Technical	October 2016
Kamieniolom	Very difficult	1800 m	13,8 %	Kozia Góra	Technical	Spring 2017
Dziabar	Very difficult	1300 m	16,1 %	Szyndzielnia	Technical	Spring 2017
Daglezjowy	Uphill	4000 m	n/a	Kozia Góra	n/a	Spring 2017

⁵ the differences between flow trail and technical trail are described in the chapter 4.3

5 User groups and CES

The previous chapter described the development of Enduro Trails in Cygański Las. As it could be seen, perception of this investment was not equally welcomed by all the users of the forest. Although mountain bikers were enthusiastically looking at the new trails being added, people living close to this area struggled with the lack of parking spots and crowd, which is somewhat a novelty after many years of Cygański Las' abandonment. Also, trekkers and pedestrians, traditionally coming to the area from other parts of Bielsko-Biała, must now share the trails and accept that not all of the area is at their sole disposal.

In the previous parts of this thesis, I have been using the word conflict in order to describe the relationship between mountain bikers and other users of the area. Clearly, the disagreement between the two groups can be seen irrespective of the fact that both city officials and Enduro Trails managers argue that the investment is only beneficial for the general public.

Coming back to the theory I have chosen for this thesis, based on the fact that the users are central actors in managing the relationships between different cultural ecosystem services, "as it is their values, materialized demands and leverage in decision that result in ecosystem use and consequent impact on ES" (Turkelboom et al., 2017:568), it then seems only logical to analyze what exactly are the needs (or services) the two groups would like to obtain from the Cygański forest, moreover why and how are these competing. In addition, it is equally important to analyze what is there a power-struggle between the two competing groups: is one more influential than the other?

Hence, in the next two subchapters (5.1 and 5.2), I will focus on enduro mountain bikers, hikers and local dwellers: firstly, by providing a general description of each group and then trying to answer the next questions for each of the following groups: Who exactly are they? What do they have in common with one another? What are the differences between those users? After that, I will describe the cultural ecosystem services which seem to be the most relevant for the group while trying to establish their motivations for visiting this area. This will be primarily done based on my field work in Bielsko-Biała, but also supported by other available research on that topic and some general statistics.

5.1 Ęduro mountain bikers

One of the papers I came across while preparing myself for writing this thesis compared “normal cyclists” with “mountain biker cyclists” (Janowsky & Becker, 2002:257). Here, I am going a step further, claiming that the activity I am describing – enduro mtb – (also therefore enduro riders) is even a smaller and more specific category of bicycling which requires separate characterization. Perhaps, if we were to use a similar description as Janowsky and Becker, the group could be described as “less normal than mountain biking cyclists”: enduro riders use heavier and more durable bikes, with much longer travel forks (which means that riding through tough terrain is smoother as suspension will gobble up terrain’s roughness) and geometry which makes it easier for the bicyclist to ride on very steep surfaces (the front wheel is usually moved forward, reason for which the bike seems to be longer and thus it is more difficult to flip over handle bars) – all of that is meant to help the rider to cycle in very challenging conditions. As the sport became more popular, bicycles producers, such as Giant, Cannondale, and Kellys, Specialized and many more created a separate bike type, namely enduro bikes, for users who seek quite extreme experiences. One can easily see that such bikes look differently, but also are - generally speaking - more expensive than regular mountain bikes: while Giant’s trail bikes’ such as *Fathom* or *Stance* cost from \$1175 or \$1530 respectively, the cheapest enduro bike *Reign* costs \$2500 while the price for the better model of this same bike can go as high as \$8365 (Giant). In addition, protective gear for enduro biking is also necessary, and this can sometimes be as expensive as the bike itself. That is why, even among mountain bikers, enduro bikers are perceived as a separate group, and the Polish word “ęduro” written in the title of this chapter is an interesting proof of that.

“Ę” is one of the letters in polish alphabet that must be used in a written language, but when it comes to pronunciation, although the correct way is to pronounce it as “ę” (ɛ̃), it is often simplified or skipped, and pronounced as regular vowel “e” or “em” (ɛ or ɛm) – which is a much less elegant way and sometimes can be a proof of someone’s poor education or simple negligence⁶. On the contrary, when pronounced

⁶ For example: polish president Lech Wałęsa is famous for once saying: “nie chcę, ale muszę” (Eng. *I don't want to, but I have to*), which he had pronounced as “nie chcem, ale muszem” – that is: the incorrect way. This saying has now entered the popular language, but those who criticized the president said it was a sign of his low level of education (Wałęsa graduated from vocational school and worked as an electrician and car mechanic).

very expressly, it also would not be reflecting well on a person, as it is (in most cases) a swaggering manner. Thus, there is a saying in the Polish language indicating that a person can be considered to be very “ę” “ą”, which is a pejorative way of saying that a person tries to show that he or she is better than, or tries to impress, others, too much. “Ęduro mountain biking” is then a way of saying, that this group of bikers is rather affluent and somewhat disparaging, in comparison to other mountain bikers.



Figure 23 Ęduro style: an article from BikeBoard magazine (7/22, July 2016), about appropriate apparel for enduro races “*in order to be enduro, you have to have your own, offbeat style*”

As I wrote in the background chapter – enduro mtb is a new discipline, and there is no research available adhering specifically to those mountain bikers. I can imagine that it will change soon, as a result of enduro’s rapid development and popularity. Nevertheless, as for now, to describe enduro mountain bikers I will use the data available which refers to mountain bikers in general. With the help of my own findings and interviews, I hope that the general picture of this groups will be still possible to depict. It should be kept in mind however, that the perception of this particular group of enduro mountain bikers is a little different – point which I tried to show during this introduction.

5.1.1 Group description

Although mountain bikers would claim that the world’s first bicycles were mountain bikes because very few roads were paved back in the XIX century (Hasenauer, 2007:10), the sport in its current form is relatively new. International Mountain Biking Association was formed in 1988, and European chapters of IMBA are only now established. In 2015, IMBA Europe conducted the first European Mountain Bike Survey (IMBA, 2015), which was an online survey consisting of 68 questions and was

answered by 6057 responders, 94% of whom were male and the remaining 6% were female. Up to that date, it is the largest survey focusing specifically on mountain biking and the bikers. Being aware of all the possible flaws of such a survey, as well as not having access to its full results, I will use it as an auxiliary source of information when describing this group of users. There are however, certain general tendencies that can be depicted from this survey which, together with other articles that are to my disposal along with my own findings, should make it possible to draw some conclusions.

One could say that mountain bikers are generally quite young: almost all mountain bikers to whom I talked with were in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, which is very similar to the IMBA's results where 31% of the survey participants were 26-35 years old, and 32% were 36-45 years old. Only one person to whom I talked with was female (yet, 6% of the IMBA's survey's participants were women). Similar observations are confirmed by Needham *et al.*, who analyzed summer visitors and their experiences in Whistler (Canada) where one of the world's most famous bike parks is located: while in bike parks the male-female ratio was 80:20, the same ratio for hikers was 51:49⁷. Bike park users were also younger than hikers, with the average age of 25,8 years in comparison to 33,1⁸ years for hikers (Needham *et al.*, 2004:236).

In terms of education and income level, one could also say that mountain bikers are reactively affluent and many of them have diplomas of higher education. Only one of my interviewees neither had a higher level of education nor was enrolled as a student at the university, and 66% of IMBA's survey respondents had higher academic or vocational education. I did not ask my research participants directly about their income, as this question is hardly ever asked in Poland and would definitely not make my interviewing any easier. I did, however, ask them about the price of the bikers they were using: while three youngest bikers, all of which were students, said they spent around 5 000 PLN on their bikes, the rest of the bikers valued their bikes at around 8 000 PLN, with two bikers saying that the price was around 12 000 PLN. Given the fact that the average monthly gross wages and salaries in 2017 in Poland amounted to 4272 PLN (GUS, 2018:17), this indeed seems to be quite a significant amount. although lower than the European level which. according to the IMBA's statistics. is -

⁷ The average result based on data from 4 different sites, where hiking is the primary activity.

⁸ As above.

€ 2546⁹ for a bike, plus additional € 534¹⁰ per year for clothes, protection, and bike parts). This seems, however, quite realistic as every one of my speakers used full-suspension enduro bikes which are relatively more expensive.

Concerning adventure tourism, it is commonly classified according to the type of activity and there is a distinction often made between “hard” and “soft” adventure activities (ex. UNWTO, 2014:12). Although classifying which activity belongs to which group can cause vigorous debate, hiking and cycling are usually treated as soft adventure activities (*ibid*, 2014:12), whereas mountain biking is considered to be a hard adventure activity as it poses a high level of risk to the user, is both physically and mentally demanding, requires technical competence and is usually done in remote and unfamiliar terrain (Taylor, 2010:260). Based on the study conducted by Travel Industry of America, hard adventure activities, in comparison to the soft adventure activities, are more likely to be pursued by men (60% vs. 51%), particularly young (18-24 years: 24% vs. 18%), college educated (82% vs. 73%) and with higher household incomes of \$ 75 000 or more (25% vs 19%) (Beedie & Hudson, 2003:632).

Especially the last article by Beedie and Hudson to which I referred above, comparing hard and soft adventure activities, so – although not directly – comparing mountain bikers with hikers and trekkers, sheds some light on the two analyzed groups, suggesting that mountain bikers could indeed be, generally speaking, younger, better educated, more affluent and mainly male, or as described by Hudson (2003:208), “white, educated, and middle-class”.

Noticeably, such characteristics of this group will influence the way they can and are willing to spend their free time, as “what people choose to do in their leisure time has much to do with how they see themselves as individuals and as members of groups”, (Beedie & Hudson, 2003:636). On the other hand, it could be also said that the activities we choose to pursue are important in shaping our own identities. This brings us to the next subchapter.

According to the article by Turkelboom *et al.*, it is possible to distinguish three stakeholder positions in relation to ecosystem services trade-offs:

⁹ Around 11 000 PLN (based on NBP – Polish National Bank exchange rates on the 10th May 2018)

¹⁰ Around 2 300 PLN (based on NBP – Polish National Bank exchange rates on the 10th May 2018)

- *influential users*: have more influence over the decisions made;
- *non-influential users*: like influential users, these face the consequences of the decision making, yet have much smaller impact on the decision-making process itself, and lastly;
- *context setters*: have significant influence on decision making but do not experience its consequences or trade-offs (Turlkelboom, 2018:256).

I will argue here that out of the two groups, these being mountain bikers and hikers, it is the former that is much more influential, and I base this assumption on the description of both group provided above. Being better educated, younger and wealthier, it is mountain bikers that have higher chances of adequately using the tools at hand so as to secure project funding by way of successfully proposing a trails center project through participatory budgeting, and afterwards by promoting such. Thus, I will argue that the services that mountain bikers are eager for (description in subchapters 5.1.2) have also higher chances of being provided.

5.1.2 CES and mountain bikers

One of my favorites quotes that I came across with while writing this thesis is that humans nowadays, “become more playful in their sense of identity” (ibid, 2003:639), and I think it describes very well what mountain bikers are doing with their bikes. After all, it is jumping, being beaten out on the rocks or being pushed by centrifugal force on the verge of the breaking band is what mountain bikers seek and enjoy:

“For me there is no greater joy: I just run my bike, speed on the bands, being exhausted and as happy as ever. My legs hurt me, my hands hurt me, and I have tears in my eyes from the wind and speed, and there is nothing else on my mind, but the trail I ride.”

Biker 1

Excitement and fun are “antidote to all the mundane duties of adulthood” (Roberts, 1995:36), and this is what many of my interviewees are expecting to get from biking.

“There are two older men I know, and they come here almost every day in the morning during week days, because you know, it’s not as crowded. They are retired, both of them. I don’t know where this idea came from, I think they’ve been on a trip to Germany or something, but they decided to both buy themselves electric mountain bikes. So, they have enough

battery to climb up on Kozia Gora like three times, and then they use Twister to ride down the hill. I speak with them quite often, and it's just amazing, they said they never expected to have so much fun ever again in their lives. [...] They are both in their 60s and they just ride and ride on this Twister and keep smiling, it's just such a great picture to look at, you know.”

Biker 9

In that sense, it is clear that recreational services are one of the most important CES for the mountain bikers, and interesting, well-maintained trails are a way to provide this recreation. Mountain biking is for those users a way to relax, and get away from the daily tasks, or as Dodson put it (1996:317) it is “a sense of freedom [...] associated with riding – freedom from the hassles and stress of everyday life as you become absorbed in the ride”. Many of the bikers I spoke with pointed out that Enduro Trails, in comparison to other places they ride on, made them feel welcomed, as the infrastructure is legal and no one would suddenly stop them or give them a fine. Having single-use trails dedicated solely to mountain bikers is surely eliminating this stress. It is quite important that, according to multiple research, one of the greatest characteristics of a good trail center is the lack of potential conflict with other users (Taylor, 2010:270). It is not only trekkers that do not appreciate biker's company on the trails, but it is equally important for the bikers, to have – ideally – single-use trails, where conflicts with other users are less common or even eliminated (IMBA). With that being said, it was also pointed out by many that the somewhat limited number of trails pushes bikers to look for new places to ride. The need to provide a range of sustainable, but also contrasting, types of trails (ex. flow as well as technical trails), has been recognized by many managers of the natural areas, same as necessity to provide trails that allow progression through increasing levels of difficulty (Newsome *et al.*, 2016:2). Although all of the mountain bikers I spoke with preferred legal over illegal trails, especially those who live in Bielsko-Biala or its surrounding neighborhood, and use Enduro Trails often, admitted to using illegal trails so as to relieve the boredom:

“Like common, how many times can you ride the same old Twister? It's amazing, surely, but I use it as a warm-up now. And after some time, it's not such a challenge, you just have to keep overcoming new obstacles. I love it still, but it's just a need some variety.”

Biker 7

It seems then, that to meet mountain bikers' needs, in terms of recreational services, number, quality and variety of propinquitous trails, that both entertain and challenge riders is significant.

Less important however, are aesthetic services, which was quite a surprising discovery for me, as I expected those to be highly important for mountain bikers. Only 4 of my interviewees referred to the beauty of the forest as a source of comfort, others focusing rather on thrills and emotions that bike trails can provide. Many, however, would spend some time on the top of Kozia Góra looking at the view of the city, albeit only a few would talk about aesthetic experiences as their motivation for riding. One of my interviewees talked about his experiences when riding uphill on the Daglezjowy trail:

“When I have a time, I would use Daglezjowy, because it's just very beautiful there, among those huge trees. Even though it's an uphill trail, I relax there, it's so peaceful. They made it very beautiful, that trail, but again, I don't have time to use it too often. Like, it's 4 kilometers after all, it takes like an hour...”

Biker 7

In Needham *et al.*, study of the Whistler area to which I referred earlier on, similar observations can be found, as “Bike Park visitors rated the recreation opportunities offered as the most important reason for visiting, and they rated the scenery as less important than the visitors at the other sites did” (2004:238). This is, however, in contrast with IMBA's survey, which states that the primary reason to ride, for European mountain bikers, is firstly to enjoy nature, then after to escape from everyday life. Furthermore, the subsequent three motivations are: excitement, improving skills and socializing – having fun (IMBA, 2015). Skår *et al.* measured motivations for mountain biking in Norway and, according to their research, the first four motives among Norwegian bikers were relating to physical exercise and personal health, while the ensuing four were connected with being in nature, getting new energy and getting away from the stress, hustle and bustle (Skår *et al.*, 2008:40). Those results seem to be closer to my observations than the IMBA's report, as it seems that for mountain bikers in Bielsko-Biala, aesthetic services derived from being out in the natural environment are less important than the activity itself being pursued in the surroundings.

Most of the bikers I spoke to rode in larger groups or together with their friends, and 6 of them belonged to either formal or informal mountain biking clubs, teams or

associations. Riding together with others was clearly important for mountain bikers, and as one of my interviewees said:

“It does not count if no one saw it, or it’s not recorded. I’m joking, but, of course, I do bike alone sometimes, but then I wish my friend had seen me finally ridding through the roots on Stary Zielony or crashing pathetically where no one should ever crush. It’s more fun that way, and then we can talk about it, or he can help me out in case of something.”

Biker 5

Almost all of my interviewees (and all of those who were from Bielsko), referred to Błonia as a place where they enjoy spending time after the rides, with BB Bike Bar having a special position for the riders. The place was visibly crowded as soon as it was getting darker, and mountain bikers used to gather there, sharing their experiences from the rides. Many of them knew themselves by their names, and – as I was told by BB Bike Bars employees – they very often ride together, not only in Bielsko, but also traveling to other places or taking part in competitions. My observations in that matter are in accordance with other research done on this topic: mountain biking is considered to be a sociable activity and “riding with others can foster a sense of belonging in a peer group and help to define one’s personal identity” (Taylor, 2010:265). Interestingly enough, this observation is also legitimized by two of the hikers with whom I spoke:

“I come here often, because there are so many friends of mine biking here. So, they hang out here, and we come after they are done with biking, and it’s nice too because we can just chill on the grass. They are here almost every day, so we come here as well.”

Hiker 5

“I think I would like to try this as well [mountain biking – author’s note], because there’re two of my good friends biking here often. So, they wanted to sell me their old bikes, and I really want to try that, although I am not sure if I can afford it. But they sold another bike to another friend, and now they are all riding together during the weekends, so I would like that too. I think I will just borrow the bike first and see how it goes, maybe it’s too difficult for me...”

Hiker 9

On the contrary, for Norwegian mountain bikers, social relations were not that important: “being with others who like doing the same things” or “being with friends” were valued quite low, same as “competing with others”, “getting attention and

appreciation or being with family” (*ibid*, 2008:41). In comparison to my observations in Bielsko-Biala, for mountain bikers there such relations were far more important, but it as well could be a result of the fact that in case of Enduro Trails, it is a small community in a very specific location that has been analyzed, while Norway Skår *et al.*, analyzed motivations of mountain bikers in general – as they obtained answers from 2 different sources: a quantitative field survey and internet survey. 5 mountain bikers I talked to were from Bielsko’s area and another 5 from more distant parts of Poland. Only 2 of them were riding alone that day: one who came from Kraków alone and the second who wanted to relax and exercise early in the morning before going to work.

It is therefore quite clear that the community was built around Enduro Trails, and in that sense the place provides another cultural ecosystem service which is related with identity and social relations established as a result of building the trails.

Lastly, since my second research question was focusing on mountain bikers’ and hikers’ relation to the history of Cygański Las, as well as artefacts that can be found in the forest and local heritage, I tried to ask my interviewees about any knowledge they may have in that matter. I mainly focused on the old toboggan run, as (unlike other monuments that are unmarked and forgotten), it is a very large construction in relatively good shape, and impossible to miss since it crosses with Stary Zielony mtb trail.

According to Murphy *et al.*, (2000:44), one of the primary people’s motivation to visit a place is to consume the atmosphere provided by the destination. Here, I would like to argue that having such relicts, or rich history of the forest, can create certain unique atmosphere which can be either displayed and emphasized, or on the contrary hidden or left untouched.

Almost all of the bikers I talked to knew about this run, and only 1 mountain biker, (who came to Bielsko from abroad in order to visit his distant family) was not aware of the run’s existence. Nonetheless, once I asked about it he got quite excited to see it. Two students from the north of Poland wanted to see the place too, and – as they told me – planned to walk there and examine it more in-depth once they get too tired from biking. They were, however, complaining about the lack of any information about the

place being provided and were a little concerned whether if they would manage any. Two of my interviewees talked about the trail grudgingly, referring to it as an obstacle to building new trails, and expressing their disapproval for the Neighborhood Council's letter:

“No one is using this run. No one. So why there is such a drama with it, why are they writing letters about it? It's just a ruin now, and it will only get worse, no point in keeping it. And we could have fun.”

Biker 8

The rest, however, regretted that the trail is in such condition, with some suggesting adapting it for biker's needs and using it as a trail's attraction:

“It would be so great to use it, it would be like an interesting feature, same as they have in Czech Republic in Rychleby. I mean, you don't have such huge rocks as they have there. So that would be like an attraction. Because now it's just sorry to look at, it's just devastated. Do you even know why we cannot use it? There should be at least some sort of information plate saying that this place used to make sliders happy, now it could give us joy too.”

Biker 5

Some of the bikers from Bielsko referred to the run's history, and most of them knew about the fatal accidents that took place there. None of them, however knew more about the forest, or about other landmarks that can be found in Cygański Las. Still, apart from the two bikers who considered those relicts as an obstacle for building trails, other mountain bikers were clearly interested in the run. According to Beedie and Hudson (2003:632), hard adventure tourists – including mountain bikers – tend to focus on one activity per trip, while soft adventure tourists (i.e. hikers), are to some extent more likely to choose a variety of activities (32% vs. 28%). This means that lesser interest of mountain bikers in deeper exploration of the area would be something to expect. Furthermore, according to the same article, hard adventure tourists have limited time, and they “try to squeeze as much experience into as short a time as possible” (*ibid*, 634). This would not only explain why reaching bikers for the interviews appeared to be so challenging, but also why less attention could be given to the trails' surroundings. Thus, the desire of most to explore that area, regardless of their limited time and different focus, is of even a greater importance.

5.2 Hikers and Cygański Las dwellers

In comparison with enduro mountain bikers who seem to be a quite specific and homogenous group, the other group that I am describing in this subchapter is much more diversified and thus challenging to characterize. This, although ever so little, explains why I use so many different expressions when adhering to those who stand on the other side of the barricade and are less content with the mountain biking trails: trekkers, hikers, pedestrians or Cygański Las dwellers – those are all the local users of the forest and its surroundings. I have decided to primarily use the word *hikers*¹¹ to entitle the group, as it best describes the main activity that I have observed there: *trekking*¹² seems to be rather too intense given the size and the character of those mountains, and *strolling*¹³ is probably not the best expression either as some trails can be, after all, more demanding.

Owing to the diversity of this group, unlike with bikers, in this case finding suitable data (similar to, for example IMBA's survey), was impossible. Hence, I have chosen several different papers, which I believe are most relevant to the case I am explaining. A number of papers I have chosen focus on urban forests, and those I find very useful as Cygański Las comes precisely under that definition. Still, it seems that in case of hikers, due to the limited amount of other resources, my own research has even greater importance. On the other hand, because of the fact that the group is so diversified (as it is hikers as well as Błonia users and local dwellers), it would be probably wiser to conduct a larger number of interviews with this group of users in order to get a better overall picture of the group. I believe that not doing so and conducting solely 10 interviews (same number as I conducted with bikers), could be represented as an overall weakness of this research which I have not foreseen while designing it. Nevertheless, I hope that the data I gathered will still be sufficient enough to answer the research questions I have posed.

¹¹– **Hiking** – “the activity of going for long walks, especially across country” (*ibid*, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/hike> last access: 23rd May 2018)

¹² **Trekking** – “to go on a long arduous journey, typically on foot” (The Oxford English Dictionary Online <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/trek>, last access: 23rd May 2018)

¹³ **Strolling** – “walking in a leisurely way” (*ibid*, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/stroll> last access: 23rd May 2018)

5.2.1 Group description

Probably, the easiest way to describe hikers would be to use the very same research that I used for mountain bikers in comparing hard and soft adventure activities. Based on Beedie and Hudson's study, by analogy, I could say that hikers in comparison with mountain bikers tend to be older, there are more female trekkers than female bikers, their level of education is usually lower than bikers', and this group is, in general, is less affluent. This description would correspond to Cygański Las situation. Indeed: while the youngest hikers I talked to were 23 (there were two girls studying together in Bielsko), the oldest was 72, and 5 people were over 50 years old. There were 6 women I interviewed and 4 men, also 4 of my interviewees did not have a higher education diploma. The question about their incomes – again – was not asked, for the very same reasons as with bikers. Yet in hikers' case there was no other second-best question that could have been asked in order to estimate their wealth. Finally, except for three parents with children (one waiting for the rest of the family), and two girls walking together, all the other hikers (6), were alone.

When describing my research site in chapter 2.2, I focused on three different places where I conducted such: Kozia Góra, Cygański Las and Błonia. I also mentioned that despite the fact that Kozia Góra is a mountain, the whole area, especially Cygański Las which blends with the Kozia mountain, is an urban forest. The fact that Cygański Las is an urban forest not only determines its legal status (i.e. giving the city of Bielsko-Biała more freedom in any sort of planning aspects within the forest), but also influences the way the forest is used. According to Arnberger (2006:141), the inner-urban forests are subjected to a much higher use density and they are characterized by more workday use. Although the characteristics of the urban forests can be very different, there are certain common grounds that all urban forests share. For instance, Arnberger *et al.*, when comparing urban forest in Vienna and Sapporo (2010:219) one finds out that most of the visitors who visit frequently were alone or in pairs of two, additionally the problem of overcrowding during weekends was equally often reported in both places. The average age of the visitors (based on both places), was 53 years old, 44% of the visitors were female, 26% of them had higher education diplomas and around 31% of them were pensioners. All those findings are very similar to mine in terms of gender ratio, age as well as occupation.

The number of other studies compared local versus tourist visitors in recreation areas. Since most of the hikers were coming from Cygański Las' close neighborhood, in contrast to mountain bikers who came both from Bielsko, other cities nearby as well as distant parts of Poland, such studies could also be used in order to describe the two groups. According to Spencer (2013:2), local visitors tend to use the area every day, being there for extended amounts of time albeit spending much less money during their visits as opposed to those who do not live in the vicinity of the area. The literature review he provided in his article shows that proximate visitors are in general younger, have lower income, spent less time on-site – although more frequent – and on average come in larger groups. Two of those observations (younger users coming in larger groups), are in contradiction with my findings as well as other papers that I found relevant for my case. While in terms of age, this difference can be explained by the fact that enduro mountain bikers are a very specific group, most likely hard to compare with a more general group of “tourist visitors” analyzed in the study. Also, it is worth pointing out that Spencer also found certain inconsistencies that emerged pertained to age, referring to Anderson *et al.*, (2011:918), who suggests that proximate visitors are on average older to distant visitors. When it comes to the larger groups of local visitors, which clearly contrasts my findings, such will be explained by the character of Cygański Las, which is a place where hikers seek in order to relax, be alone, look for silence, cut off from the hustle of a city, and thus – come alone. This hypothesis is based on my interviews with trekkers, as well as research on urban forests specifically, which were not the main focus of Spencer's paper. All his other observations are, however, similar to mine: frequency, length of the visits, and motivations of hikers are similar with Cygański Las users.

Finally, referring to the activities that were pursued by trekkers: three oldest interviewees were mainly walking and observing people, three people came to Cygański Las with their children or families (to first hike on Kozia Góra and then rest on Błonia), and one mother with her child who spent the whole day on Błonia waiting for the rest of her family since they were biking. Two users came to the forest with their dogs, while the young women came there to meet there with other friends who bicycled on Enduro Trails and meanwhile were simply walking to pass the time. According to Konijnendijk (2000:91), there are significant differences in recreation use between urban and backcountry forests, and urban forests suffer from more intense

and multiple recreation use and day-use oriented activities (Arnberger, 2006:135), which is clearly seen in Bielsko-Biala. It is also confirmed by Arnberger's study that, according to him, because of the high number of surrounding residential areas close to such forests, dog walkers and joggers appear in much higher shares and there are number of people pursuing other everyday activities (2006:141).

Finishing this group's profile, based on the same Turkelboom *et al.* article I will argue that hikers and Cygański Las dwellers are the less influential users (2018:568). This is also visible in the descriptions that both mountain bikers and hikers used to talk about one another. Some of my research participants, namely hikers, while talking about mountain bikers used the words "youth", "kids", "teens", often in the sentences such as: "we must let youth sow its wild oats", "we must let kids play, we're too old to have any saying here any longer", which was rather a sad way of them admitting that their influence is quite limited despite having slightly different wishes regarding development of this area. On the other hand, 3 mountain bikers described hikers and other users of the forest in a contrary manner using expressions such as "grandpas", "forest grandpas" and "mohery"¹⁴, while two of my interviewees said: "there is no way that mohery will stop them" and that "grandpas can effervesce, but there is nothing they can really do". Therefore, it seems that both sides are well-aware of their respective positions in the power struggle they find themselves in.

"They have no influence over that. No influence. It is individuals that want to oppose the ideas of the new generation. This is the trend now, and they have no means to stop it."

Biker 8

5.2.2 CES and hikers

Moving to the cultural ecosystem services that hikers seek, likewise for mountain bikers, recreational services seem to have the greatest importance. It is, however, the way that hikers seek recreation that makes all the difference. As research by Janowsky & Becker (2003:257) indicates, hikers and walkers look for trails that are along

¹⁴ "moher", is a pejorative expression used to describe older ladies who often wear characteristic berets made of mohair. This expression was commonly used to describe older people who voted for conservative party Law and Justice, who in turn won the Polish parliamentary elections in 2015. Thus, it is a commonly known expression used in Poland to describe older people reluctant to changes and reforms that are supported by younger generations.

meadows, vantage points, away from cars and roads, with regard to scenery and where sufficient resting benches are provided.

“I enjoy this place because there are a lot of benches in the shadows. While days are hot like now, I just sit here and read because there is a fresh air and in my flat, you cannot stand it. But here is quiet and nice. [...] Or I walk on Stefanka¹⁵, drink there when I’m in the mood. I have it all here.”

Hiker 1

According to Spencer, such (proximate) visitors are more geared towards enjoying the outdoors, “placing greater importance on experiencing nature and quietude, escaping life’s demands, pondering personal values, exercising, and being on one’s own” (2013:3).

“Where would I go? There are parks, there is Słowacki Park, but it’s nothing like here with the cars running on both sides. Because here I can feel I am actually in the nature, I am actually alone, as if no one is coming. I take the <<1>>¹⁶, and here I am.”

Hiker 10

When the motivation to visit such areas is to release stress, for example escaping from the city’s hustle, people prefer relatively lower levels of social contact (Arnberger et al., 2010:215). Same preferences could be observed for those, who came to Cygański Las with their dogs:

“I know I should not, but this is the only place near the city where I can actually take my dog off the leash. I mean, I don’t do it here, and I don’t do it during weekends or when it is very crowded, but sometimes I can do it.”

Hiker 7

My second interviewee who came to the forest with dog, was a little bit more adverse regarding the crowd, particularly because of biker’s presence:

“I come here every weekend, but now I think I’ll stop. I just cannot keep controlling Bob [dog’s name - author’s note] all the time I walk. There are people coming, from the left, from the right, and those on bicycles, you know, with those bikes, they don’t even have bells, they just ride and

¹⁵ Another name for Kozia Góra, which refers to the the *Steffansruhe* (wooden pavilion from which one could enjoy the view of the city), was placed in order to commemorate Karol Steffan (see chapter 4.1)

¹⁶ Bus line going to Cygański Las is a line no 1

don't mind us at all. It's too much with pulling him all the time [the dog - author's note]. We will have to find another place”

Hiker 8

This observation is confirmed by Janowsky & Becker, and according to their study conducted in the urban forest of Stuttgart, (2003:258), both hikers and walkers with dogs reported significantly higher conflict than the same users without animals.

On the other hand, two of my interviewees mentioned that they are visiting the area so as to observe other people, which could suggest that presence of others can be somewhat expected and appreciated by some hikers too:

“I sit here and watch the youth. We had life here before, there was a restaurant [pointing at the building next to us - author's note] and we used to come here and dance. And now there are young people coming and enjoying themselves. I like watching the youth, I like that they are coming here and laughing.”

Hiker 1

Thus, it could be said that a level of high-use enhances the recreation quality for those who enjoy watching people (ibid, 2010:224). Had the place been abandoned, it would have been less much attractive for such users. Overall, however, the crowd on the trails is negatively perceived by hikers, most of whom seek solitude and peaceful relaxation.

In comparison to mountain bikers, aesthetic values are highly important for trekkers. Tyrväinen *et al.*, researched the perception of aesthetic values in urban forest management in Finland. According to the study, such forests are evaluated in specific manner, as residents living in close proximity to the area consider management of “their” forest different than visitors passing by and prefer such without traces of human activity (2003:136).

“No, I don't like it, I wasn't like that before. We used to come here with my father and sisters, many years ago, and it was Sunday trips that we did, and it took us whole day, from the bottom to get to the top of Kozia Góra, because it was just so much to look at. But now the old trails are devastated, you can see branches here and there, broken and bike trails almost everywhere.”

Hiker 6

“I come here sometimes, or I run here as well. It is pretty easy to run here, it’s not that steep, and then you get the view over the whole city, once you are on the top. This is just my place to run.”

Hiker 9

In Needham’s *et al.* study on summer visitors’ experiences in the Whistler mountain area, to which I referred in previous subchapter (5.1.2), research respondents were asked about the factors for visiting the mountain. Same question was asked in 5 different locations, 4 of which were predominantly used by hikers while the last one was a mountain bike park, hence mountain bikers were the respondents. The percentage of those who classified aesthetic values and experiencing the alpine are and scenery as a “very important” or “extremely important” reason for their visit were: 88%, 89%, 97% and 88% for hikers, and only 45% for mountain bikers. This shows clearly that such values are of greater importance for one of the two groups (2004:238).

As mentioned above, many trekkers, especially those in older age were in the forest alone. This can be connected with the objectives that they have when coming to Cygański Las, to which I referred above. The other part of the study site – Błonia – had completely different characteristics than the forest. In this area, people were socializing and apart from bikers gathering around BB Bike Bar and Enduro Trails bike rental point, a number of mothers with children spent their time in the surroundings of a large playground. I spoke with two of them and, interestingly enough, none of them would have been at Błonia if it had not been for trails. One came there after her son and his older brother finished their bicycling lesson, and the second one was waiting for her husband and older children biking at Enduro Trails. My conversation with the second one, brings me to the final CES I would like to describe, namely heritage and cultural landscapes services:

“We’re just waiting here. I wish there were trails that I could use with my younger one as well, I’m looking forward to it, once he gets a little bit older and we can do something here. Because now, there is nothing else in here. I know that there used to be some attractions in this forest, but it is all forgotten now so how am I supposed to go there with this little one? At least they started doing something, and there are trails here”

Hiker 3

As my objective was to know how much value and importance the sites located in Cygański Las, as well its rich history, had for this group of users, I asked them about

their knowledge about it or any reflections they may have. Apart from two girls (the youngest of my interviewees), all of the hikers and dwellers knew about the toboggan run, and the oldest interviewees presented a quite detailed knowledge about what used to be in the forest which should not be too surprising given the popularity of that place in the past. There was, nonetheless, a sense of remorse when they were talking about the conditions in which some of the sites in the forest are now.

“It was a place where we all would come and watch the competitions and trainings; the whole city would be here. And the villas here and the restaurants, that was a very lively place. They demolished the Hauptig villa now and the run is forgotten as well.”

Hiker 2

Some of my interviewees referred to the accident that took place on the toboggan run, suggesting that it is disrespectful that there is no information provided about such a place. None of the speakers I talked to were personally connected with the run and I did not manage to contact the old members of the luge association, as my visit to Bielsko was too short to arrange it. It was, however, described in the local press that the trips to the run were organized by the local luge community, and a surprisingly large number of people decided to attend those. In the article, the trip organizer expressed his concern about this forgotten part of city's history, saying that (Krawczyk, 2010):

“it breaks my heart to see this object looking like that. I would like this place to get a second life. [...] How can it be like that? After all, it is a part of our history, of the heritage of our city!”

Olszówka Society (association's National Court Register number: 0000040868), which was established in 2007 as a response to demolishing Hauptig villa (also mentioned by one of my speakers), is another organization which sees the potential as well in this part of Bielsko-Biała, moreover works for its better protection and recognition by local authorities. The Society organized regularly guided tours in the area (up until now, since 2009, around 60 trips were organized), as well as publishes informational material about Cygański Las and its surroundings. Since it is people living in Mikuszowice who are responsible for the Society and such operates *pro bono* – voluntarily – it should serve as good evidence that there is an interest of hikers as well

as nearby dwellers in taking care of whatever is left after the “golden years” of this forest.

To conclude, it could be said then that recreational services for hikers mean something different than for the bikers, the former being more interested in relaxation, experiencing nature and quietude. Consequently, aesthetic values seem to play a more important role for hikers, and larger number of these seem to prefer spending time alone rather than in company. Finally, heritage values and services related to cultural identity are highly important for hikers in Bielsko-Biala, who recognize value of the history of this place and are willing to explore it further.

5.3 Conclusion

The chapter described the characterization of two main user groups, these being the enduro mountain bikers and hikers. Herein, their age, gender, education and economic status was analyzed. The purpose of such evaluation was to measure the potential impact the groups could have throughout the decision-making process.

Subsequently, focus was geared towards the cultural ecosystem services which are most relevant for members of those two groups of users.

Although information provided in this chapter was mainly based on my own findings in Bielsko-Biala, they are supported by additional scientific papers and statistics that I managed to find. This, on the one hand adds credibility to this work’s findings, moreover successfully positions such among other contextually similar discoveries. On the other hand, given the fact that all those papers are based on the findings gathered in many different locations (ex. Whistler in Canada, Stuttgart in Germany, Sapporo in Japan, Vienna in Austria etc.), I am fully aware of certain limitations which such comparison may create. Same as for my case, in all those places local context and conditions play an important role, yet this has not been analyzed in this thesis. Hence, as much as I believe that providing such background based on other scientific papers is valuable, I consider the information I personally gathered of much greater importance.

In addition to that, only Taylor’s article examining people’s participation in mountain biking was based on qualitative research, while all the other papers that I have

employed so as to further develop this work, are results of quantitative studies. Both of those methodological approaches should, ideally, lead to the same results, yet – again – given the fact how significant is context, and taking into account my constructivist standing, I must here also remark that how the data was gathered is not irrelevant. If so, comparing my qualitative research with quantitative research papers can only, indubitably, be questioned.

Another limitation of my research is the fact that the two analyzed groups are not necessarily separate. In other words, a mountain biker can be a hiker, jogger, and a mother of two spending time with her children on Błonia. There was no case of any interviewees who would usually label themselves, as “mountain bikers” as opposed to “non-mountain bikers”, and I believe that this division was quite clear and helped me create such two categories. Having said that, 3 of my research participants, whom I treated here as bikers, mentioned that they do go for walks as well, nevertheless that is not the main activity they pursue in Cygański Forest. Albeit it was not the case in my research that any of the participants would be equally engage in both hiking and mountain biking, such situation is certainly possible which shows a possible weakness working against the categorization I have been using throughout this dissertation.

6 Discussion: from conflict to synergies

The final chapter of this thesis focuses on discussion of my findings, adhering to the research questions posted in the first chapter. My hope is that the case I tried to build in my previous chapters is by now quite intelligible, which – I assume – is the best indicator of the quality of my earlier writing. If not, this is presumably the last place where any clarifications are still appropriate. Nevertheless, I am now employing the theory I have chosen (and described in chapter 3), which is commonly used for planning and management of landscapes. The purpose of ecosystem services theory is to capture what are the needs of different land-users in order to make more informed decisions, all the while taking into considerations possible tradeoffs that almost always occur, as it is hardly ever the case that needs of all the users can be equally fulfilled. Such tradeoffs, if not dealt with appropriately, can lead to conflicts (Gómez-Baggethun et al., 2010:1215). In chapter 4, I have presented the case of Enduro Trails in Bielsko-Biała, putting this project in a certain cultural and historical setting, and reporting the conflict that arose together with building the trails. After that, in chapter 5, I tried to analyze what are the groups that are conflicted, identifying enduro mountain bikers on one side, and hikers and Mikuszowice dwellers on the other. This chapter provides not only the description on the groups themselves, but also needs and cultural ecosystem services which seem to have the greatest importance for those users. This description is primarily based on my case study in Bielsko-Biała, which has been conducted in summer 2016 and 2017, and my methodological choices regarding collecting the data are elaborated in chapter 2. The only remaining part is discussing my findings, and this will be done subsequently.

I will begin with pointing out that the services important for the two analyzed user groups are not equally respected, which – in my option – is the main source of conflict in the area. Therefore, I will now focus on responsibilities with regards to public planning in the area, discussing how the decisions about Cygański Las development have been made and what are their positive and negative aspects. Finally, I will try to think of alternative choices that could have been made, concentrating mainly on building partnerships between the two groups, additionally analyzing if the sites

(toboggan run in particular), monuments and rich history of that place, which seems to be recognized by both groups of users, could bring them together.

6.1 Conflict and the services

Multiple articles about ecosystem services point out that “despite the popularity and desirability of so-called <<win-win solutions>> in spatial planning, they seem to be rare in the real-world situations” (Turkelboom *et al.*, 2018:267). It is often challenging to cope with various requirements, values, and needs when organizing public space. No golden rules are available, as it is almost always the case that planning must be context-specific, focused on the local realities and involving knowledge of people using the area. On the other hand, deciding how the space is used may potentially have significant consequences, affecting the human well-being (Daily *et al.*, 2009:23). When not done carefully enough, it can lead to tensions and conflicts – such as those visible in Bielsko-Biała: complaints of the citizens living nearby the trails are not uncommon (it has been visible during my interviews, as well as seen through and through the internet debate which has only been touched upon in this thesis), and lead to the official statement of the Mikuszowice Śląskie Neighborhood Council asking to stop the investment. Finally, despite not being given citizens’ support in the participatory budgeting in 2017, the stage III of building Enduro Trails was carried out as the last trail “Rock’n’Rolla” opened on the 12th of May of 2018. As this took place, several incidents concerning the destruction of Enduro Trail’s infrastructure were reported, both by users (warning others on the various mtb forums and in social media) and Enduro Trails managers themselves.

In the following subchapters (6.1.1 – 6.1.4), I will try to analyze what are the factors that contributed to the situation in Bielsko, at the same time adhering to the available research on ES theory.

6.1.1 (No) participation in planning

One part of my preparation for this thesis took significant amount of my time and seemed (at that point) to be very tedious yet quite an unreasonable task: transcribing. All of my interviews were recorded, and I thought that by listening to them, I could, even at a very early stage, develop impressions of participants’ feelings, note some of the quotes that I found relevant, therefore I concluded that transcribing is redundant.

Yet, it was by multiple close readings of my transcribed interviews that that I critically looked at the responses and conveyed key themes, or themes that were repeated several times by different participants. Thanks to that, I could later see that one issue was raised distinctively often by both hikers (mentioned by 5 of them), but foremost by the Mikuszowice Śląskie Neighborhood Council. During the 1,5 h meeting with the members of the Council, lack of consultations and their participation in the decision-making process was touched 13 times.

According to article 5, section 2 of Law of 8 March 1990 on Commune self-government (Journal of Laws, 1990), communes have right (but are not obliged) to create auxiliary units, such as neighborhoods in the cities. The idea standing behind creating such units is to enhance the principle of subsidiarity, emancipation and empowerment of local communities and their citizens, increase the legitimation of the local decision-making and to increase effectiveness of such decisions made together with the citizens inhabiting the area (Maczak, 2010:3). Thus, it is quite surprising that the city did not decide to include Neighborhood Council of Mikuszowice Śląskie, a unit established mainly for such purposes in the decision-making process. Necessity, as well as benefits from including such actors are stressed not only in the commentaries to the Law itself, but also in a variety of publications on ecosystem services approach and their importance in public planning. According to Tangberg et al., “policy formulations should empower local people to participate in managing natural resources as part of a cultural landscape, integrating local knowledge and institutions” (2012:14). Same is repeated by Chan et al., “we recommend an approach of iteratively involving local experts and then other stakeholders” (2012:746).

Of course, extensive environmental and cultural assessments, as well as consultations, tend to be costly and time consuming. Nevertheless, in the Bielsko-Biała example, the body closest to the trails – the Neighborhood Council consisting of the representatives of this area – is already in place:

“I was talking with the vice president, and I’m telling him, you come here twice a month, or like once a week, right? And we live here every day, and observe what is happening. So, our perspective or this our forest is much different...”

Council Member 3

Some authors would claim that the perspective is not only different, as mentioned by the member, but also more accurate. It might be reasonable to suggest that the expectations and preferences of active users should be given more weight in the participatory planning processes because their residents usually have much experience with the local forests, as regards to their pleasantness and functionality (Tyrväinen, 2003:147). Therefore, integrating resident's views by simply facilitating their voices to be heard could potentially reduce their resistance towards investment happening in "their forest" (expression commonly used by hikers during interviews).

The letter to the citizens, regardless of the validity of some of the arguments that were raised by its authors, although answered by Enduro Trails managers, was not taken into account. According to my research, there were no consultation with the Neighborhood Council representing Cygański Las dwellers, neither with Olszówka Society, and no follow-up measurements were taken after it was published.

Such approach is usually heavily criticized, as it excludes local people from accessing resources or participating in decision making (Hirons *et al.*, 2016:552). Chan *et al.*, goes a step further suggesting that a "good research practice goes beyond the standards of informed consent to respect the diversity and variability in local context and culture [...] good research practice requires a multiparty partnership with local institutions and organization" (Chan *et al.*, 2012:748), which is clearly not the case in Bielsko-Biała.

6.1.2 Troublesome location

Large part of this thesis was devoted to Cygański Las, showing how this urban forest developed throughout the years, as well as how popular it has been among tourists from Bielsko, and more distant parts of Silesia. Best proof of that was probably public transportation which opened from the train central station, taking visitors directly to the forest. Although years after Cygański Las' "golden era" (see chapter 4.1), the place was far less popular, still, its location as well as characteristics are quite unique. In addition to that, this urban forest, regardless of its lesser popularity and abandonment in the past decades, remains to be located nearby large agglomerations, being the opening point to the larger mountains with a number of hiking trails starting in Cygański Las (see chapter 2.2).



Figure 24 Starting hiking trails in Cygański Las signs at the entrance to the forest (source: researcher’s photo)

This problem has been noticed even by those who support and promote the investment. In a series of articles by BikeBoard, one of the two most popular Poland magazines about bicycling, the author praises Enduro Trails in Bielsko-Biala and anticipate that the place will soon become “the capital of mountain biking in the country” (Kędracki, 2017:65). The author observes that in comparison with Rychleby¹⁷, there are millions of people living around Bielsko and as a result the city is now facing a very serious challenge of receiving such a crowd. “It is not only a matter of parking spots, which is an issue that the city should dwell on, but also we have to remember that there should be more trails, as such density of bikers is, in a long run, difficult and not very safe” (ibid, 62). Same, had been mentioned by the Neighborhood Council:

“It is easy to see that those trails disturb and interfere in a certain order that we had on this mountain, and this is something that no one is taking into consideration. The idea was inspired by the similar bike park that is in Czech Republic [...] and from what I know, that one was built in a tiny village, like they had nothing there, and obviously they benefited greatly from such an investment. But here, the trails are located in the urban forest on an urban mountain, close to huge agglomeration. It is not a god-

¹⁷ Rychleby is a small town in Czech Republic where similar mountain biking trails complex were built. Because it is relatively close to polish border and Bielsko-Biala, many bikers who now use Enduro Trails, used to go to Rychelby. This is why Bielsko-Biala is often compared with this place.

forsaken place, here people actually live, and used this area for many, many years”

Council Member 1

This, however, was not recognized by the city, admitting that Rychleby was their inspiration:

„Rychleby is a place that we are pattern ourselves on. It is a fantastic place, really. I mean, on the other hand it is a village. It is really such a small village, that I would never consider living there myself [...] And there are few thousand people living there, but tens of thousands are coming to visit the trails.”

Official 1

As a result, crowding and full parking spots became a hinder, not only to the citizens living closest to the trails, but also to the city itself and one of the city official with whom I talked admitted that at this point (which was in summer 2016) the city could not promote Enduro Trails, as it was too busy in the area already.

Bielsko-Biala is not an isolated case, where tourist attraction outgrows the capacities on its location, as well as its managers. In similar situations, some suggest considering “delineating within large recreation areas <<quite zones>> [...], where local visitors will be more likely to obtain the experiences they seek” (Spencer, 2012:13). In Bielsko’s example, Błonia, as well as lower part of Cygański Las, could be such places, as theoretically bicycling in this area is prohibited (apart from the newly-opened Cyganka green trail, threading through the forest to the bus stop, where Cygański Las ends). This, however was not executed, neither by the city officials, nor trails management responsible for proper signage.

One of the bikers with whom I spoke referred to this lack of consideration or mindfulness of mountain bikers, as well as those who are responsible for Błonia area. He pointed out that mountain bikers tend to cycle on the tiny Błonia’s pathways, which is unpleasant and dangerous, as many small children play there as well. He blamed administration of the area by saying that there is no proper warning informing bikers that they should get off their bikes. Since some other research participants mentioned this topic earlier, I noticed that there was indeed a sign, so I said to my interviewee that actually there is a sign and informed him about its location. And his response to that was quite telling:

“Have you ever been to Whistler? They keep comparing this place to Whistler, wanting to make it a <<Polish Whistler>> or <<Bielsko’s Whistler>>, ha ha. I haven’t been there, but my friend was, and he told me about a guy who tried to cycle in the village. So, he said, that there is a sign there “do not cycle”, but there was a one who dared to do that. I’m even afraid he was Polish, he was one of their group. And then people stopped him, imminently stopped him, and asking if he is mental or something. And it was bikers who stopped him! Because how can you expect people to like you, how can you expect people to approve what you are doing, when you, yourself are the first one to break all the rules? This sign there, you say? Could it have been any smaller? I mean, common, they put it there, because they had to put it there, not because they actually care... And they should, because it backfires us all. It’s just silly.”

Biker 10

I got the opportunity to visit Whistler (Canada) last summer and keeping in mind what my interviewee told be just a week before, I paid attention to biker’s etiquette in the pedestrians’ zone. He was right, although it happened that people would bike it the places where they were not allowed to, such situations were quite scarce. I also took a picture of the signage in Whistler and in Bielsko. It is important to point out though, that now (spring 2018) additional signs are added:



Figure 25 *No bicycling allowed* sign in Whistler, summer 2017 and in Bielsko, summer 2017 (source: researcher’s photo)



Figure 26 *No bicycling allowed* sign, Bielsko 2018 (source: researcher’s photo)

6.1.3 Trails for all?

One of the arguments raised by both Enduro Trails managers and city officials was that the trails are open for everyone, free of charge, and thus everyone can benefit from using them. It is true, that such a big trail infrastructure is regularly maintained and available to the general public is indeed unique. Nevertheless, I cannot fully agree with this argument, for the following reasons:

How can you *not* want to go mountain biking?

During my interviews with hikers, one member of that group was considering to try mountain biking (*Hiker 9*), while the others were not interested in pursuing this activity. It is quite important to recognize that “one of the most powerful aspects of an ES approach is that it focuses decision making and research specifically on what people care about” (Chan et al., 2012:745). It is therefore necessary to recognize what are the actual needs, services and values which people are seeking, and that ultimately requires intimate knowledge with the place being studied, and precisely this makes valuation of CES that difficult.

Services exist only in relation to human values, which means that if mountain biking is not a form of recreation that people seek, it will consequently not contribute to their wellbeing. It was also explained by Hirons et al., who put it this way: “CES arguably depend on social construct to a greater degree, as wellbeing has both subjective and objective components. For example, someone may be subjectively satisfied with their own level of education, while they are objectively illiterate.” (2016:552). With respect to Enduro Trails, while subjectively Twister trail is: “a trail that is just loved by everyone. It’s like a roller-coaster, but for adults. You ride and you smile.” (Biker 4), is it, more objectively, still an extreme sport and expecting general public to be interested in such disciplines may seem quite naïve.

“Still, our concern is the same, that it is an urban mountain, and should be shared by all the citizens, not just one selected group of users. Because it is a selected group of users, not everybody wants to go mountain biking. Young people want to have some fun – and there is nothing wrong in that, but we must keep in mind that this was supposed to be an area available for all.”

Council Member 3

Financial considerations

Still, even among those who are actually interested in trying mountain biking, such as my abovementioned interviewee – *Hiker 9* –, the very same person mentioned that she is also concerned if she will manage financially. All the remarks about the equipment used by mountain bikers are relevant here as well. Enduro mountain biking is an expensive sport, with a relatively high price for bicycle, this being just the beginning of a foretaste of upcoming expenditures. In addition to that, it has been also observed by Eassom that mountain biking is viewed as a high equipment-oriented activity (2003:191), with some users having “sophisticated cycling equipment, but their bikes may exceed their real needs” (Skår et al., 2008:37). Thus, it may seem that her concerns about the pressure and need to keep up with her friends could be legitimate.

Difficulty level

Finally, there was one more issue that was raised by many of my interviewees (both bikers and hikers), as well as Neighborhood Council:

“Many people were misinformed. You can easily check it, it was supposed to be *recreational* mountain biking trails. So many people thought that they will be able to go biking together with their families and enjoy the forest. And only after it occurred to be trails for just one, selected group of people: extreme mountain bikers”

Council Member 1

The argument that the trails are too difficult for the average user was raised multiple times. While discussing this issue with Enduro Trails managers and city officials, they often pointed out that even very small children in the age of 4 successfully use the trails. And that is indeed true: while conducting my fieldwork, I was offered to assist a mountain biking instructor while he was giving a lesson to group of children, and the youngest one was, in fact, 4,5 years old, but the rest was around 8-10 years old. The kids were taken to the lower part of Twister (which is easier than the upper part), as their instructor said that Stefanka is too short and flat. That one-hour of training was possibly the cutest part of my research and served as a good opportunity to talk with a person who had long experience with teaching people how to bike, and thus understands the challenges and struggles of novice bikers. He was visibly excited seeing the children making progress in terms of their skills, yet he admitted that most of those kids practice regularly with their parents, who bike in Bielsko. My interviewee was very enthusiastic about the trails in Bielsko, however, having the experience from

giving bicycling lessons all over the world he was skeptical regarding further development of this area, mainly because of its small size. He pointed out that although two of the trails¹⁸ (Stary Zielony and DH+), are far too difficult for beginners, everyone should be able to bike on the remaining two: the blue and the green one. Three of the mountain bikers with whom I spoke did not agree with that opinion, saying that Twister can be a challenging trail. Interestingly enough, all of those bikers were not from Bielsko. All of those who were from Bielsko claimed that trails, maybe apart from DH+ and Kamieniołom, are of rather low difficulty. Especially with regards to Twister, all of them said that it is easy enough for everyone. On the other hand, there was an interesting situation that took my attention and that showed certain ambiguities in perception of the difficulty of Twister. Two of my speakers, who live in very close proximity to the trails and bike there very often, were discussing introducing their common friend to mountain biking. When another person suggested to start with Twister, they response was quite rapid “Are you kidding us, he will kill himself, you aren’t taking him on Twister like that. No”. Of course, reasons for such reaction could be multiple, nevertheless, according to my knowledge it was not the case that the biker-to-be, was not fit enough, as earlier in the conversation they mentioned participating in demanding obstacle races together, parsing his skills. Again, it could have been many other reasons why one of them argued that this novice biker should not be taken to Twister, still, had the trail been as easy as some claimed, there should be no greater threats considered.

Putting Twister’s difficulty aside, this trail is one of many that opened in Bielsko. In total, there are more than 32 km of bicycling trails (excluding Daglezjowy uphill trail), and their length and level of difficulty is summed up in the table below:

Table 3 Trails’ difficulty and length

Difficulty level	Number of trails	Total length	Percent of all the trails
Easy	2	2510 m	9,12 %
Intermediate	2	10900 m	39,62 %
Difficult	4	9000 m	32,72 %
Very difficult	3	5100 m	18,54 %

¹⁸ The interview took place in 2016, when only 4 first trails were open.

As it can be seen from the table, when it comes to the length of the trails most of them are designed for intermediate users (39%), and around 9% of the trail are dedicated to beginning bikers. 50% of the trails are technical trails: either difficult (32%) or very difficult (18%), with all the consequences of that mentioned in chapter 4.3. In terms of numbers of the trails given to the bikers' disposal, most of them are difficult (4) or very difficult (3), while there are 2 intermediate and 2 easy trails. One of the two easiest trails is, however, used by all the bikers as it is the only trail leading through Cygański Las.

Looking at such numbers only, and having in mind remarks about blue trails difficulty, I find arguments about trails high difficulty legitimate.

6.2 Or all for trails?

Based on the arguments presented above, I will argue then that the investment that took place in Bielsko-Biala favors one group of users over the other, which was neglected during the decision-making process. This, in my opinion, eventually led to the conflict described in previous chapters. According to my research, hikers and local people come to the forest focusing on stress-related recreation goals, with visible preference for solitude and natural surroundings, and it is users with such preferences that find crowding much more bothersome than the other users (Arnberger & Haider, 2005:126). By building 12 trails for mountain bikers, the crowd becomes significantly higher. In addition to that, not enforcing bicycling bans in pedestrian areas, resulted in even bigger tensions. This is in contrast with Arnberger's recommendation to take direct or indirect measures "to address specific user groups should there be a need to reduce user conflicts or crowding perceptions, illegitimate behaviors" (ibid, 127). Further, he also suggests what can be done to minimize such situations by stressing the importance of information given to the forest users and taking "measures to reduce bicycling speed and the presence of forest rangers during peak periods could indirectly reduce conflict" (Arnberger, 2006:143).

The city did not identify key relationships among the players, additionally did not put adequate emphasis on their power relation. Mountain bikers, who seem to be a more influential group, were given privilege in deciding how this public area will be used. This is clearly visible especially in the third stage of building Enduro Trails, where

despite not being supported by citizens, the investment was still conducted. One can then question then the point of using participatory budgeting in the first place. Risk of not conducting participatory budgeting in the right manner was stressed by World Bank “participatory budgeting comes with significant risks; participatory processes can be captured by interest groups. Such processes can mask the undemocratic, exclusive, or elite nature of public decision making, giving the appearance of broader participation and inclusive governance while using public funds to advance the interests of powerful elites.” (2007:2). This, however, is not fully the case of Bielsko, where the city disregarded citizens’ voice in decision-making. It is especially problematic that the legal body – Neighborhood Council – was also omitted in the process since it’s status is codified by institutional and legal arrangements.

Thinking about possible reasons for city’s decisions, I will once again come back to the ES theory. As it has been said, cultural ecosystem services are, in general very difficult to value in monetary terms, and thus they are often rendered invisible in public planning and management. Yet, out of all the cultural ecosystem services, recreation and tourism services are possibly the easiest to put a value on - putting it in a simplified manner: the more tourists are coming, the more profits it will bring. Creating a good tourist attraction then, can be tempting:

“The first reason [for opening the trails – author’s note] is that those trails are highly expected, because the mountain we have here are just perfect for such investments. [...] So, the second argument is safety of bikers and hikers. First – creating a tourist attraction. Second – safety. And there are additional reasons, of course, like nature protection, promoting healthy lifestyle and so on...”

City Official 2

Given the fact that tourist visitors, in comparison with local visitors, tend to spend more money in the places they are visiting, moreover keeping also in mind that enduro mountain bikers are a quite affluent group, such temptation is even bigger. Mountain bikers are also aware of that:

“So what if we have mud all over, when we come to the kiosk, shop or restaurant, we just order without even asking for a price. We buy bananas, enery drinks, sausages, we need to wash and repair our bikes, the we need to rest. It’s much, much more, and now cities see that as well.”

Biker 6

But so are the other users:

“It’s not how you do those things, you know. This is not normal – not everybody wants to, not everybody has to [bike – author’s note]. There must be a proper planning done, consideration put into it, and not like, there is one group that will be promoted, because they promote the city nicely, so that is why they build it, at the expense of all the others”

Hiker 7

The fact that the setting of Enduro Trails is not usual, given the forest’s rich history and role in local culture, is clearly not making planning or building such infrastructure any easier. Hence, I will argue that proper research and valuation are, in such case, of even greater importance. This shows the need for interdisciplinarity research in order to better comprehend the role ecosystems serve; identifying and embracing the fact that “irrespective of the choice of methodology, individual’s identification with nature, capriciously changing preferences and dynamic learning, formation and bolstering of ecological identity, play a very important role” (Kumar & Kumar, 2008:818). Following such preferences and dynamics is crucial in Cygański Las complex settings.

It would have looked different in other places, but in such forest? [...] This has been a recreational area for everyone, from the beginning of the world, since 1312, and they say even earlier. It should not have been done like that.”

Council Member 1

Focusing on direct benefits, especially financial benefits, is notwithstanding much easier, yet criticized by many. Chan & Satterfield judge such approach particularly strictly, writing that “collectively we must decide what values we allow to be influenced by which forces. The current laissez-faire approach permits advertisers to manipulate values at will for the sake of economic growth” (Chan *et al.*, 2012:351).

6.2.1 Tax the rich, feed the poor, tell the biker bike no more?

One could be very radical in evaluating the Enduro Trails project. It could be argued that the investment favors wealthy mountain bikers at the expense of other user groups, which is in every respect wrong therefore should be stopped. Devoting a significant amount of public land and shushing all those against for the sake of economic benefits that this can bring to the city sounds like capitalism at its worst. Such judgment would

be, in my opinion, too harsh, as the intentions of the city officials were not merely economical ones, additionally benefits from opening the trails are naturally visible.

Coping with illegal trails

One of the intentions that the city had was to manage illegal trails which were used extensively by mountain bikers in the area. Illegal trail construction poses significant environmental and cultural impacts (Pickering *et al.*, 2010:60). Self-taught trail builders, lacking knowledge about both trail-building techniques as well as overlooking importance of protecting historically, culturally and environmentally important sites can cause significant damage (CALM, 2007:41). Often the fall line is chosen incorrectly, running up or down steep slopes which leads to erosion. It is equally often that such trails traverse through wet areas and sensitive or rare vegetation resulting in many traditional users, such as hikers, considering mountain bikers as a threat to the environment (White *et al.*, 2006:24). Thence, the city's idea to provide trails which are built according to strict IMBA's standards is, by all means, a reasonable action. Since the bikers have already been using the area, and the sport is becoming only more popular, hence the number of users will only increase, it would be naïve to think that the problem will solve itself. In addition, as pointed out by Beedie & Hudson "as the participant gains experience, perception of risk decreases and perception of competence increase" (2003:630). This means, that providing a larger number of more difficult or challenging trails could be a wise decision after all, as if not given thrilling enough trails, mountain bikers may create them on their own. This has been pointed out by Goeft & Alder: "providing some trails with jumps, steep sections and obstacles can lessen the impact of people creating them informally elsewhere (2001:193)". If so, the argument that trails are too difficult for average users is not that relevant – as those who are willing to mountain bike will do it regardless of trails difficulty, and those who want to pursue this activity will benefit greatly from being given larger variety of trails (same as will environment and local sites which are now under threat due to illegal trails and lines built all over the place without any considerations). Moreover, perhaps opening the final trail – Rock'n'Rolla, which starts on Szyndzielnia, where number of parking spots is available, could be the only choice to off-load Mikuszowice area, and that could eventually ease the pressure and solve the problem which people living there have been struggling with.

Bringing Cygański Las back to life

One, large chapter of this thesis elaborates on the history of Cygański Las. In this chapter I tried to prove that this area had significant importance for local and more distant visitors and was extensively used for various recreational pursuits. That chapter ends with remarks over the area's abandonment and negligence. Many of the sites located in the forest were ruined, for multiple reasons. One of such reasons is connected with Bielsko's history: the city for centuries being somewhat connected in terms of culture and language more with Austria or Germany, rather than Poland, after the II WW found itself in rather uncomfortable position. Hence, some of the sites were purposely destroyed (ex. Ambroży's memorial) in an effort to get past this history. As Czepczyński states: "The glorious or tragic past, represented by significant objects and symbols, plays an important political and social role. [...] The shape of the historical landscape reflects the choices of decision-makers and local inhabitants. The less favorite legacies and moments of local history that are not chosen by local population are often forgotten, ignored or quite simply unsignified" (2008:57). Since the forest had much less to offer, and was left unkept, its popularity decreased accordingly.

By building Enduro Trails, Cygański Las came back to life. It was visible that a community was built around the trails, with not only mountain bikers, but also other users coming to Błonia simply to spend their time there. And that is of great benefit, statement which is supported by many of my interviewees:

"Good that the youth has a place to go. It's much better that they are here instead of drinking or smoking God knows where. Here at least they are out. At least not in front of the screens. It's good."

Hiker 10

In addition to that, although too much crowd is negatively perceived by hikers, had the place been abundant that would also not increase its attractiveness for such users as "some levels of social stimulation seem to enhance the recreation quality" (Arnberger *et al.*, 2010:223).

6.3 In the search for partnerships

As explained in previous chapters, the two user groups seek recreational and tourist services in different ways, which are, to some extent antagonistic. Aesthetic services and highly important for hikers, yet relatively less important for bikers, and social

needs are higher for bikers than for hikers. Cultural and heritage services are (although perceived in different ways) almost equally interesting for both of those groups. Dwellers of Cygański Las were commonly referring to various sites in the forest, and some bikers considered it as a fun feature.

In this thesis I stress the importance of greater recognition of such culturally significant places, arguing that it could be much better incorporated in the planning and management process, which – in my opinion – would be beneficial for both groups. This has been also stressed in various international conventions, such as the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage from 1972, which indicates that: “noting that the cultural heritage and the natural heritage are increasingly threatened with destruction, not only by the traditional causes of decay, but also by changing social and economic conditions” (UNESCO, 1972: preamble). This highlights the importance of identification and nomination of (among other) sites, understood as works of man or the combined works of nature and man (*ibid*, Article 1). Same is stressed in the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which reveals an increased recognition and the importance of intangible heritage, ensuring greater respect for such heritage communities, groups and individuals concerned (UNESCO, 2003: article 1). Finally, the European Landscape Convention established by Council of Europe in 2000 also promotes integration of landscapes (cultural, environmental, social, economic) using a participatory approach and by stressing the need to “to establish procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities, and other parties with an interest in the definition and implementation of the landscape policies” (Council of Europe, 2000: article 5). All those conventions aim at supporting protective legal frameworks and conservation efforts.

Sites located in Cygański Las, especially toboggan run which was a point of dispute between the two groups, should be, according to all those conventions, considered as a historically important site. Regardless of Bielsko’s past, such sites clearly “remind us of our collective and individual roots, providing a sense of continuity and understanding of our place in our natural and cultural environment” and this according to Tengberg *et al.*, means that they should be an important factor to consider within ecosystem management (2012:16). Daniel *et al.*, suggests that for effective policy and

decision making, first such important features should be identified, afterwards careful assessment should illustrate how changes in these features would affect the users (2012:8814).

But what seems to have the greatest importance for my case study, and answering the second research question posed in the thesis is the fact that “in some cases the cultural landscape, as well as the products derived from it, may represent the whole region and act as important trademark for touristic offers and product marketing (*ibid*, 2012:8814).

Cygański Las used to extol Bielsko for centuries, and in the memories of many of my interviewees that city’s past is still not forgotten. Enduro Trails are now one of the city’s biggest attraction, and it is the trails that make people to come to that place. Nevertheless, other sites, and not only trails, are still in the forest and could have been used for the benefit of many. Instead of deflecting accusations of intruding the run’s territory and destroying part of it, partnerships with the sledding community could have been established in order to promote the settlement of trails in such a unique location. Since lack of communication, cooperation and consultations with other relevant actors in the area was mentioned many times during my interviews, it seems that inviting them into the decision-making process could potentially reduce some of the tensions. Trails could have been promoted together with other sites and that would have not only increased their chances of maintaining preservation, but furthermore could potentially become a trademark of the whole area, according to the Daniel *et al.* suggestion. This has also been notable during my interviews when both hikers and mountain bikers considered the place interesting and worth visiting. Building such partnerships is also strongly recommended by IMBA: “Build a Partnership” is step number 1 in IMBA’s guidelines for designing trails as “great trails often result from a blend of ideas” (IMBA, 2007:49). The Association created so-called *potential positive control points* – which are the places that should be included on the trail as they can be interesting for users and thus should be enhanced. On the contrary, *potential negative control points* should be avoided since it is prohibited, dangerous or for any other reason not recommended to bike near them. According to IMBA, “historic, cultural and archeological sites” are both positive and negative control points, and it is up to the trail management team to decide what the final result will be (*ibid*, 2007:51).

As for now, in Bielsko there is not much positive outcome derived from using sites, which the forest is so full of.

6.3.1 Good intentions pave many trails

It does not mean that the trail management did not try. As I was told by ET manager, they endeavored to establish a partnership with sledding community, and planned to create informational brochures. This have not yet happened, although we talked about it in winter 2016. Some other efforts took place though: two of the trails – Daglezjowy and Kamieniółom – are named because of the settings wherein they are located. *Daglezja* is a Polish name for Douglas fir – tree native to North America and planted in Cygański Las centuries ago when the forest was modeled on the Vienna Woods (see chapter 4.1). Although some bikers referred to the Daglezjowy trail as scenic, the intentions of the name’s author have not been understood:

“He has vivid imagination, one has to admit. Do you know how the new uphill trail is going to be named? Daglezjowy. What is even daglezjowy? It sounds so romantic, perhaps he is just a romantic soul...”

Biker 7



Figure 27 Daglezjowy trail (source: researcher's photo)

Kamieniółom means in Polish quarry, and according to my knowledge, there used to be a quarry where the trail is located, yet there are no remains of that place any longer. Thus, it is quite surprising to choose this place and this location for the trail name given the many other sites one can find in the Cygański Las. None of the trails referrers to

the toboggan run, neither to the caves in which the outlaws used to hide nor to the secret churches that used to be in the forest.

6.4 Conclusion

As pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, only a few decisions result in truly win-win situations. This does not mean, though, that striving for more winners than losers should not be the goal. And if there are trade-offs, I believe that at least, those who experience them deserve the opportunity to accept them as reasonable and well explained, which not necessarily is the case in Bielsko, and this – in my option – led to the conflict around the trails.

“We will get used to it as well, because what else can we do. Some problems will be fixed, and this will be our new every-day reality, all is going to be fine... life moves on...”

Hiker 6

Answering my first research question: “What are the main sources of conflicts and tensions between mountain bikers and other trails users in Bielsko-Biala?”, I would say that it is somewhat conflicting the services that they seek. This, itself, is quite natural, but handling the situation and making sure that “trade-offs that they face are not hidden and are ideally tolerable for as many stakeholders as possible” (Chan, 2012:754), is rather hard to find in Bielsko.

Referring to my second research question: “What is the role of culture, heritage and local history in both creating and mitigating such conflicts?”, I must stress again the importance of the landscape in which the Enduro Trails are located. Had it been a less culturally significant forest, with not a such vivid history and lesser significance for the users, the conflict, presumably, would be less impactful. On the other hand, these same sites used in a different manner, and with respect for people personally attached to such, could bring benefits (including financial ones, which the city is keen to) to much larger number of users.

7 Conclusion

It is year 2038 and we are entering Cygański Forest using the old Ambroży Alley. The old mountain biking trails are still visible in the forest, and the famous Twister rolls smoothly on the Kozia Gora hills. Here and there old jumps can still be found, but this impressive net of 32 km of trails, which at some point made Bielsko-Biała the Polish capital of mountain biking, are now unfortunately abandoned and unmaintained.

Such description of the Enduro Trails 20 years from now would not necessarily be surprising. Enduro mountain biking is a relatively new sport, now finding its place in the woods, but other trends, sports and fashions can quickly sweep away those users, for the sake of others potentially bringing even more profits to the city. That would obviously be rerated by mountain bikers, but on the other hand would put them in such similar position as to the one hikers and local dwellers presently face. The only way, so it seems, to avoid such situation is to incorporate more careful planning that represents the interests and values of larger groups, and thus greatly improves the validity and legitimacy of decision-making. It is, after all, our choices about “what to remember and what to forget, often in the light of potential threat and in the relation to future generations” (Tengberg et al., 2012:15). It could be that the toboggan run is to be forgotten now, but that may as well be for mountain biking trails in a few years’ time.

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Appendix – research participants

Biker 1 – two students from the north of Poland, who came to Bielsko for a few days, only because of the Enduro Trails.

Biker 2 – man in his 50s, visiting family in Bielsko, who took bike with him so as to try Enduro Trails about which he heard from the Internet.

Biker 3 – mountain biker from Krakow, visiting the place during the weekend. He comes to Bielsko quite often, because the trails are free of charge and close to his place.

Biker 4 – young student from Zabrze, visiting the trails during his summer vacations, just for one day.

Biker 5 – young man from Warszawa, whose parents live in Bielsko. When visiting them, he often goes mountain biking with old friends from Bielsko.

Biker 6 – policewoman and active cyclists, living very close to the forest and visiting trails almost every day. Often traveling abroad to attend mountain biking camps.

Biker 7 – teacher in one of the Bielsko's high schools. He lives very close to the trails and visits them mainly during weekends, together with his wife who is an active cyclist.

Biker 8 – businessman living close to Bielsko, and often visiting local trails. Personally involved in building most famous illegal mtb trails nearby Bielsko.

Biker 9 – biking and skiing instructor from Bielsko, frequently visiting bike parks all over the world.

Biker 10 – businessman and musician, who recently opened small bar close to the trails and started mountain biking due to the proximity of the Enduro Trails.

Hiker 1 – retired teacher from one of the Bielsko's schools, strolling in Cygański Las.

Hiker 2 – retired seaman, who used to live in Bielsko as a child, and came back few years ago. He likes observing people relaxing on Błonia or passing him in the forest.

Hiker 3 – mother with two children, who came to visit her family in Bielsko. She spends her time on Błonia, where kids can play.

Hiker 4 – mother with one children, waiting for her husband who is cycling with the older child at Enduro Trails.

Hiker 5 – two young girls from Bielsko, who visit the area quite often, as their fellow students ride on the Enduro Trails.

Hiker 6 – accountant from the neighborhood of Bielsko, came to the area with his child to stroll in the forest and play on Błonia

Hiker 7 – psychologist walking on Kozia Gora with his dog, he comes to visit this area almost every day.

Hiker 8 – pharmacist with her dog, hiking every weekend when the weather is good enough.

Hiker 9 – student from Bielsko, who hikes during the summer together with her friends. She is tempted to start mountain biking too, as many of her friends do that.

Hiker 10 – older lady who meets with her friends in Cygański Las and often hike on Kozia Gora.

Appendix – research timeline

2013	Idea of building the trails
November 2014	First participatory budgeting (Enduro Trails stage 1) – ET qualified for funding (2 nd position)
October 2015	Opening of the 4 first trails: Stefanka, Twister, Stary Zielony and DH+
November 2015	Open letter to the Bielsko’s citizens asking not to vote for the 2 nd stage of Enduro Trails, followed by the response of Enduro Trails
November 2015	Second participatory budgeting (Enduro Trails stage 2) – ET qualified for funding (1 st position)
Summer 2016	My first visit to Enduro Trails (when 4 trails were available)
October 2016	Third participatory budgeting (Enduro Trails stage 3) – ET did not qualify for funding (5 th position)
Spring 2017	Opening of the next 7 trails: Daglezjowy, Cyganka, Gondola, Dębowiec, Cygan, Kamieniołom, Dziabar
Summer 2017	My second visit to Enduro Trails (when 11 trails were available)
February 2017	Granted funding for the 3 rd stage of Enduro Trails
May 2018	Opening of the flow trail connecting Kozia Gora with Szyndzielnia