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DEVELOPMENT OF A SMALL COMMUNITY THROUGH SPECIALIZED TOURISM. THE NAROL CASE *IN STATU NASCENDI*

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Abstract: In search for a path of development, some communities face internal factors deeply influencing the choice of development strategy. Such factor would be an environmental protection of the territory, as it may crucially limit industrial activity. Narol community, located in southeastern Poland, near the Ukrainian border (Podkarpackie Voivodeship), has landscape protection of several levels covering 100% of the territory, so the possible development could not consist on industrial investments. On the other hand the concerned region, Roztocze, is a recognized touristic area, but Narol was always rather out of its main tourists trails. Nevertheless its assets (nature reserves, landscape and monuments), would predestine Narol for a touristic destination. But, considering strong competition in the region, the distinguishing feature would be of importance. The municipality had recognized cultural tourism as a way Narol could adopt, and has started several activities aiming to transform Narol into a cultural centre of the region.

This paper presents the study case of Narol municipality's activities in the context of transferring neglected heritage into an activated agent of development – resulting in social and economic growth. Its' aim is to research (based on the Narol example) a place of local heritage assets in development process: if, and how they can be used to increase community's sustainable growth.

Keywords: Cultural tourism, local development, new function of monument

JEL codes: R58

Introduction – heritage as development agent

Nowadays, the heritage is already a recognized development agent. It can strengthen localities and stimulate their growth in two ways: being a part of local economy (tourism would probably be the most obvious example) and as the stimulus for endogenous factors of development, such as social capital of community. In modern

approach, social capital is crucial, as it determines active attitude of community towards their living environment, essential for a stable development (Helpa-Liszkowska 2013: 7). It supports inclusion of other endogenous factors in decision-making in regard of locality. Heritage creates and increases the sense of identity through the awareness of one's cultural values. This is directly connected with responsibility, social ties and engagement in local activities and problem solving (Broński 2006: 17) – in one word, soft factors of local development. Researches confirm that Polish society considers heritage to be important to local community (almost 80%), and to make inhabitants proud of their locality (almost 90%) (Kozioł & Einen 2016: 29).

Heritage influence on economy is also recognized, even if it is sometimes difficult to precisely measure this impact, as several economy branches benefit from heritage on several levels. Some branches are directly connected to heritage assets (conservation companies, museums), some are influenced also by other factors (tourism services). Nevertheless regions and countries attempt to measure heritage impact on economy, and obtain important results, showing the high level of heritage impact on jobs or revenues. French research analyzing data obtained from ticketed museums and historic sites shows, that generated revenues double the annual state budget for their restoration and maintenance. Employment connected to heritage reach the level of 500 000 jobs, including 30 000 direct ones. The economic impact is then obviously as important as social role of the heritage branch (Etude Nationale... 2009: 52).

The most visible impact on economy remain in tourism, often more or less connected to heritage. This branch is highly progressing, over 5% yearly since 2010 (Tourism Highlights 2016: 4). Forecast for Central and Eastern Europe shows that the number of international tourist arrivals will grow 4.4% every year until 2020 (*ibidem*: 14). This would show the heritage potential for the development of local economies.

In Poland, heritage impact on economy was also measured in some cases, even if an overview on the state level is still lacking. But some regions analysis reveal, that Poland do not differ from the big picture – heritage, as activated agent, visibly influences local economies, by inducing jobs and incomes growth. A good example would be Jelenia Góra Bassin with palaces renovated for new functions – hotels and restaurants. The region has very rich heritage assets, but the activity of these hotels boosted local rates of employment and money spending due to tourists arrivals (Murzyn-Kupisz 2012: 250–251).

Does Narol case corroborate the beneficial impact of heritage on community? The article takes a closer look at the social and economic situation in Narol community during the process of developing local strategy concentrated on cultural tourism. For this purpose, article use data obtained from participatory observation, personal interviews, and statistical data.

1. Historic context and local assets

In order to present Narol case it is essential to introduce its history. It is located in southeastern Poland, near the Ukrainian border, and populated by over 8000 people. This region was always a melting pot of latin and byzantine culture. Poles and Russians and Ukrainians had respectively two Christian religions (catholic and orthodox) two alphabets (latin and cyrilic), and two calendars (Julian and Gregorian). In addition there were also Jewish inhabitants present. Geopolitics in Twentieth Century had a high influence on the ethnic and cultural situation of the region, because as borderland, it suffered from tragic events. After the German and Soviet attack on Poland in 1939, part of this territory was took by Soviet Russia and transformed into the part of Soviet Republic of Ukraine. Along the border civilians of Polish origin were massacred in ethnic cleansing in organized raids. Orthodox of Ukrainian origin that still have lived within Polish borders during and after the World War II (WWII) were forced to leave their homes and transferred into eastern Russia¹.

Remained orthodox churches (*tserkvas*) and cemeteries remind these dramatic events. The conflict and massacres are still vivid in the inhabitants memory, as they affected almost every family. It causes reluctance to care about these monuments among the locals, so regional Orthodox heritage is often abandoned or neglected. Some Orthodox churches were used after the war as storages, some were took over by Catholic church, many of them are not used in any way since years. This situation concerns the whole border zone, and Narol do not differ from the big picture.

Narol commune is located in one of the most recognized touristic region in Poland, mostly known for the nature and landscape, but the commune itself was never a touristic destination. Due to the nature protection it is impossible to develop industry, so these years tourism became one of the most important direction of the local development strategy.

Among most important Narol commune monuments there are: palace of aristocratic Łoś [wóć] family, with adjacent park, paper mill, historic churches and *tserkvas*, old inn, old town hall, and also part of the Molotov line – a demarcation zone buffering by military bunkers territories occupied by Germans from the zone took over by Russians during the WWII (more about monuments assets in Strategia... 2006: 52–54). Nowadays the bunkers of Molotov line have a great touristic potential, but they are located on several municipalities territories, have different owners (National Forests Agency, State Treasury or private persons), and thus are subjected to several laws and regulations (for example nature protection zone). All these factors make the touristic potential of bunkers a difficult project to design.

Narol has also natural assets. It's a commune with high forest rate (29 per cent), about 45 per cent of its territory lays within Południoworoztoczański Landscape Park and Puszcza Solska Landscape Park. The rest of the territory is in the Roztoczański Area of Protected Landscape. There are also three nature reserves, and several

¹ Utracone Dziedzictwo Kresów [www.muzeumkresow.eu access on 20.01.2017].

pounds. Along with rolling hills of the terrain, it makes these lands appealing. Narol territory has also three tourist trails, bicycle trails and educational paths. It is also located near two recognized holiday villages, Susiec and Horyniec-Zdrój (health resort based on the biggest fango fields in Poland).

An important tourism development agent is the Eastern Cycle Trail *Green Velo*, as its' Podkarpacie section runs also through the Narol community. It is already well marked, has Bikers Service Areas (BSA), with secure bike racks, benches, tables, shelters, litter bins and information boards². Interesting sites (monuments and nature) are promoted through the *Green Velo* website.

But what detailed direction would be adapted by municipality, to activate the potential, to implement in practice what is usually stated as "tourism development"?

2. Towards specialized tourism

In an unexpected way, Narol could start activating its touristic potential through the heritage of the aristocratic family of Łoś present there. Narol was once the property of Łoś family. In late Eighteen Century count Felix Anthony Łoś built a great palace with park, where Narol Academy, first school of performance art on Polish territory, was established (with musical school, drama school and theatre). Over two hundred years after, the palace was destroyed during the WWII and remained in very poor condition until late Twentieth Century. Situation had changed, when world class harpsichord player and recognized music professor Władysław Kłosiewicz started the Pro Academia Narolense Foundation and bought the palace in order to renovate it and to create an international master classes art centre. The foundation had started by organizing cycle of concerts in the town church and outdoor, but in 2001 the abandoned and poorly preserved Orthodox church in Narol town was visited by musicians, who identified its excellent acoustics.

Narol municipality, cooperating with the foundation in cultural activities, decided to acquire the ownership of the building, that was a property of the District of Lubaczów at the time. The idea was to transform the *tserkva* into a cultural centre. First concerts took place in the ruined building, but in 2006, the commune became a formal owner of the *tserkva*, and was able to apply for the European Regional Development Fund in order to restore it. The project goal was the protection of the building, its mural paintings and the adaptation of the *tserkva* for the new function – the Concert and Exhibition Centre of the Narol Community. On the other hand, the renovation of the *tserkva* for the new function was not an isolated action. It was one of the tasks planned in the Narol strategy within the priority of *Culture and Cultural heritage* (Strategia... 2006: 67). As such, it was planned also to reinforce the infrastructure for cultural events, for more effective municipality promotion. Later on, the development of cultural, mostly musical events as a distinctive feature for Narol, was adopted as a crucial part of the Narol brand development strategy.

² *Green Velo*, czyli zaproszenie do podróży [www.greenvelo.pl access on 26.01.2017].

Targeted group of tourists was actively interested in music (Strategia marki... 2010: 18–21).

The renovation works had started in 2008, and in 2011 inauguration took place. The interiors were preserved in a way to show the history of the building: only the chorus paintings were completely renovated, other parts of walls show the scale of destruction (the roofing is visible, the paintings protected against further deterioration, but with losses and modern vandal graffiti preserved). The exterior walls were renovated, the air conditioning for paintings preservation, new floor, movable scene, and multimedia equipment were installed.

The Concert and Exhibition Centre is managed by the Municipal Cultural Centre (municipal organizational entity), that organizes cultural activities, some being now on a higher than local level. The most recognized is Narol.Arte Festival, present in the calendars of classic/folk/jazz music enthusiasts since 2008, gathering recognized artists from around the world and about one thousand guests every year³. Not only music is present during the main events. Other performance arts (theatres, dance groups), and also painters, sculpture artists or photographers are being invited. Before the Centre had started its activities, only a small group of music lovers participated in these events. Moreover, multiple local events take place there: about 10 cultural events yearly (some being performed by local youth amateur groups run by Municipal Cultural Centre), attracting from 50 to 250 guests each⁴. The activating impact on inhabitants is obvious. Locals have easier access to higher culture and they benefit from cultural activities for children and youth.

During the renovation, respectively in 2010, Narol municipality started the project of tourism economy development through revitalization of the town centre. The main market place, the old church, the town hall and their surroundings were completely renovated. The works within the market place zone consisted on renovation of the town hall, installation of new benches, bicycle racks, bins, flagpoles, information boards, fountain and other small architecture constructions. The streets were repaired, parking space provided free of charge, greenery was planted, surveillance cameras installed. The Eighteenth/Nineteenth-Century church and its surroundings were renovated. The ruined school from Eighteenth/Nineteenth Century was restored and surrounded by greenery, and also got a new function of public multimedia library. These activities are planned strictly for inhabitants needs – new path for Narol and the revitalization are not only for the tourism purposes, the goal is to improve the quality of life in the community.

The municipality had also started the cooperation with neighboring community of Zwierzyniec (a recognized tourist destination) in a Local Activity Group, concentrated among others on the tourist development, common tourist services and offers promotion. Tourist guide is available online⁵, along with presentation of hiking, biking or cultural trails. Both communities planned and implemented two projects (since 2009 to 2013),

³ Data acquired from the Municipal Cultural Centre in Narol, non published.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Turystyczne bramy Roztocza. Narol – Zwierzyniec. Przewodnik turystyczny [<http://www.bramy-roztocza.pl/static/download/przewodnik03.pdf>, access on 23.01.2017].

based on the strategy of the long term cooperation in order to create a common tourist products, common investments (for example development of tourist trails), and common promotion (Strategia długoterminowej współpracy... 2010: 87–93).

3. Social and economic impact

All these activities influenced in two ways on the society of the Narol community: in social change and in economic growth by activation of the development process.

Social change is visible through the approach of inhabitants towards the unwanted heritage. For the first time since many years, the Narol *tserkva* was not only recognized by the community, but also got the important role in everyday life. Its value since now is not only the reminder of sad memories, but it is a place where people meet and participate together in several cultural activities taking place every year. Concert and Exhibition Centre welcomes seven regular cultural events a year, some of rather local character with about 50 participants, some on the international level, with even around 1000 participants⁶. This happens in a small town, far from airport or highway. Inhabitants started to remark that even the hard part of their history remains still theirs. And that heritage can also affect other parts of community life. The town was renovated, the municipality started a very visible policy on touristic development, the tourists come and – through high culture – affect the community. Tourists coming to Narol are characteristic as having a specified goal – music. They do not stay for long, participate in events, sleep over night and eat and that's about all. But community now realizes, that they would come back (for example next year for the next festivals) and new propositions could attract more of their attention – and increase the economy⁷.

Also, the number of people interested in a monument visit highly increased. Before the renovation, the *tserkva* was visited by just few persons a year and one had to know that the key to the site can be only obtained in a town hall (additionally the town hall employee had to be able to accompany an interested tourist). After the restoration of the site and its promotion implementation, people started to hear about the *tserkva* existence. Ten organized groups of twenty five to forty persons, about twenty smaller groups of five to ten persons and about forty visits of individual tourists may seem not much, but this is an enormous change for the site⁸. The *tserkva* renovation project had also some measurable impacts. Six workplaces were created, promotion campaigns reached to about 175,000 people, about 200 tourists used the reservation and cultural information systems⁹.

Another and a very tangible result of Narol development activities is economic growth visible in statistics. One can observe it by the serious change in registered nights

⁶ Data acquired from the Municipal Cultural Centre in Narol, non-published.

⁷ Personal interview with the Director of the Municipal Cultural Centre revealed the change of inhabitants approach towards the *tserkva*.

⁸ Data acquired from the Municipal Cultural Centre in Narol, non-published.

⁹ Data acquired from the Narol authorities, non-published reports.

spent level. It was constantly but not enormously growing from 2004, when hotels and B&B in Narol had 556 registered accommodations for 211 persons to 2009 with 2877 accommodations for 793 persons (what is being linked among others with concerts and master classes run by the Pro Academia Narolense Foundation)¹⁰. But it changed after the Concert and exhibition Centre inauguration. Number of accommodations served in 2013 is 4563 for 811 persons and this is an enormous change for Narol¹¹.

When comparing the municipality revenues, the growth is also observed. In 2008, the commune income was PLN 202 307 000, and in 2013 – PLN 309 394 000 (Cierpień-Wolan 2009: 273; Cierpień-Wolan 2013: 281). This is an important increase, and even if it cannot be linked exclusively to the tourism development projects, the registered considerable growth of tourists number seems an agent of such increase.

In 2008, expenditure for the culture and cultural heritage protection was on the level of PLN 411,000, when in 2013 it was about PLN 6,700,100 (Cierpień-Wolan 2009: 297; Cierpień-Wolan 2013: 300). Connected with projects cofunding, these amounts show a great difference in the authorities approach to the expenditures for the cultural heritage, now being understood as profitable investments.

4. Still to do – recommendation for Narol

What Narol lacks, and what also provokes leakage is the tourism infrastructure – there are not many hotels or B&B nor many bars or restaurants, the roads are in great part in rather bad condition. Food providing services might also be an important feature for Narol brand. Roztocze has a distinctive traditional cuisine, also recognized as ecological and slowfood (lack of industry and nature protection), so local products are worth being introduced into the market.

Narol participates in production of only one product inscribed on the Ministry List of Traditional Products – the honey from Lubaczów (Podkarpackie is the voivodeship with the highest number of products on the list, but the neighborhood of Narol is obviously underrepresented, despite the potential). *Galicja*, the traditional water manufacturer based in Narol is a member of the cluster *Podkarpackie Smaki* (Tastes of Podkarpackie), promoting and developing the local cuisine. And that's about it. Traditional cold meats, farinaceous foods, oils, jams, pickles, or cordials and liquors are present there, but it is hard to buy or taste them in restaurants (at some point these products and meals are available for agrotourism guests). Some activities promoting these products can be seen during yearly events: Narol May Picnic (with the liquor tournament) and Imperial Royal Galicja Fair with culinary competition, when producers and associations like Rural Housewives Association,

¹⁰ Data acquired from Local Data Bank website [<http://stat.gov.pl/bdlen> access on 8.01.2015].

¹¹ The choice of the years to compare (2009 and 2013) is based on the crucial points in time of the cultural tourism development in Narol – 2009 was the second year of the Narol.Arte Festival; 2013 – two years after the inauguration of the Concert and Exhibition Centre in *tserkva* – first year may be not representative, as from one point of view it's not so known yet, and from another – such event usually has a huge political support; from both sides the numbers may not be representative, so the author decided to show data of later year.

present and sell traditional food (Dominik 2016: 67). But this is not enough, and considering small scale of such production, municipality should consider support for appropriate entrepreneurship and certification.

Cuisine and local products role in tourism is constantly increasing, and it is not really important, what kind of tourism is in question. Every tourist eat and drink, but also more and more of them consider tasting typical, local food and buying local products as important aspects of travelling (*Apetyt...* 2013: 3). We are now observing this attitude change, so there are still many potentials to develop (and investments to be made). New tourist products and services would limit the leakage and attract more of tourists attention. As Narol concentrates on the cultural tourism, this need is even bigger, as cultural tourists are rather a demanding group (Buczkowska 2014: 45–50).

Example of such potential to activate is the Molotov line bunkers. The military heritage, especially linked with WWII, attracts many tourists in another Polish regions – and not only interested in military monuments, but also in bats observing. Such examples, like Międzyrzecz Fortified Region, Wolf's Lair or Mamerki shelters show, that an important local entrepreneurship can develop around sites like this. The first mentioned site is visited by about 40 thousands tourists yearly¹².

Summary

The case of Narol commune is interesting from several points of view. It is rather safe to state, that the development direction of Narol community toward specialized, music tourism, is strictly link to the abandoned *tserkva*, located in the Narol town, and it's being spotted as having potential by musicians co-operating with Pro Academia Narolense Foundation. Its renovation for the new function and cultural events famous worldwide (even if in the limited circles of classic, jazz or folk music fans and professional musicians participating in workshops and concerts), was game-changing for the municipality. The decision to take over the *tserkva*'s ownership, and to search funds for renovation enabled the municipality to create a public space attracting tourists but first of all integrating inhabitants.

Considering the high increase of tourists, incomes and implemented activities in just few years, the Narol case is really an interesting one, showing how specialized tourism can be effective for a small community off the usual tourist trails and mainstream. It also shows, that proper and detailed assessment of local assets is crucial. Some characteristics of these assets could be hidden (*exemplum* great acoustics in the Orthodox church), and present a key factor for the direction municipality might adopt for local development.

Nevertheless, small municipalities should concentrate not only on developing heritage related products, but also on other propositions for tourists. Connecting trigger asset (here: Concert and Exhibition Centre in an unique historic monument, with at least one internationally attractive festival) with other attractions and

¹² Raport – turystyka militarna [http://www.wiadomosciturystyczne.pl/artykuly/artykul/501,0,47,0,raport__turystyka_militarna.html access on 23.01.2017].

necessary services, is of importance. What small communities need is to convince tourists to stay longer and spend money. But for this purpose, a tourist need proposition for time spending. Again, meticulous and constant implementation of strategy provisions and chosen priorities by local authorities may take years, but it may be effective.

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