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DILEMMAS ENCOUNTERED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN A DEGRADED TOWN. THE CASE OF CHEŁMSKO ŚLĄSKIE (SCHÖMBERG) IN LOWER SILESIA

Abstract: Using the example of a small Lower Silesian town, the authors verify a popular and widespread belief that tourism is a major development chance for many depressed settlements experiencing transformation problems in post-communist countries. Taking into consideration the specific case related context such as multicultural and peripheral character of the area, they discuss spatial, infrastructure-related, structural and mental barriers, underlining the dual character of most of them. The case of Chełmsko Śląskie confirms the thesis that considerable tourism values related to the town's built heritage or favourable geographical location are not alone sufficient to make the tourism function a pillar of the local economy. At the same time, external investors must be found, while intensive activities of local leaders and a change of attitude among the inhabitants are indispensable. Furthermore, the authors attempt to formulate proposals for overcoming the above mentioned barriers.

Keywords: barriers to tourism development, problem area, small towns, Lower Silesia, dissonant heritage

Introduction

The transformation period in postsocialist countries has raised questions as to the future of many small towns. In the changed political and economic context, the problem of new economic stimulus for most of them has thus to be addressed. Many researchers of small towns (Drobek 1999; Górz, Kurek 1999; Turnock 2000) suggest that their chances lie in attempting at diversifying functions, agrotourism and ecotourism, profiting from geographical location and recreating cultural identity. The tourism industry is often seen as the main, if not the only, possibility of revival of many problem areas (Cater 1987, Williams and Shaw 1991, Andrew 1997). As follows, the development of tourism appears as the main goal in many strategies formulated by local and regional authorities.

Even in places which have neither special tourism appeal nor well developed infrastructure or good accessibility, tourism is regarded as a remedy for all local problems. The aim of the authors is to confront this popular and widespread belief – present among both local authorities and the academics – with the reality of a small town in the Lower Silesia region of Poland.

The authors discuss the case of Chełmsko Śląskie (Schömberg until 1945), located in the southern part of Lower Silesia on the Polish-Czech border (Fig. 1). The case has been selected as exemplary for a number of reasons. Chełmsko Śl. and its environs possess significant potential tourism resources. They are however accompanied by equally pronounced barriers to development. The tourism traditions in the town date back to the mid-19th century, they were developed in the first half of the 20th century, then almost completely marginalized in the post war period. Since the beginning of the economic and political transformation in Poland after 1989, tourism has again been viewed as an important factor of local growth. Chełmsko Śl. is also very interesting from a social and cultural point of view. At the end of the Second World War, significant border shifts in Central Europe were followed by huge, forced migrations to and from certain areas. In Poland, as a part of the above process, ethnic Germans were forced to move out of Lower Silesia. They were replaced with ethnic Poles, many of whom were displaced from western parts of Ukraine and Belarus. These newcomers to Silesia, accustomed to a significantly different way of life and having an entirely different cultural capital, found it very hard to adapt to their new surroundings. Due to political reasons,



Fig. 1. Geographical location of Chełmsko Śląskie and main tourist attractions in its vicinity

the settlers were uncertain about the stability of the newly established national borders. Moreover, for ideological purposes they were taught by the ruling communist elite to display a careless if not hostile attitude towards the cultural heritage of the area's former inhabitants. Consequently Chełmsko Śl. illustrates broader processes of local development on the basis of heritage left behind by former inhabitants, hence the problem of adaptation of dissonant heritage (see for example Ashworth and Tunbridge 1996).

Drawing on a case study, the authors will attempt to address the following research questions:

- What factors influence the development of tourism in a peripheral problem area?
- To what extent can the strong potential tourism values become the base for a local economy?
- What are the most important barriers which hamper, if not prevent, the transformation of potential values into tourism product?

The authors have drawn conclusions following extensive literature and field research. To make an objective and deep analysis of the present situation in the town and its development chances, interviews were conducted with most local leaders (public authorities, NGOs, school principals, parish priests, local entrepreneurs) and a questionnaire survey was used as an additional research method (n=200 questionnaires). Moreover, important primary sources were analysed (local council decrees, the master plan, local development strategies, promotional materials) in the town, its administrative district and in the larger regional context. Furthermore, the image of Chełmsko created by both historical and contemporary tourist guides was examined. The main body of research was conducted in the first quarter of 2002.

The structure of the article is as follows. Section two introduces the town through a short description of its past, especially its fortunes after 1945. The next section focuses on the identification and analysis of its potential competitive advantages and barriers to tourism development. The final section presents some conclusions.

1. Changing fortunes of a small town

Chełmsko Śl., a settlement of 2,300 inhabitants, is presently the largest village of the so-called Kamiennogórska Basin (see Fig. 1). Despite being downgraded to the legal status of a "village" in 1945, from the historical, morphological and functional point of view it may still be regarded as a small urban centre¹. Having received a city charter in the 13th century, the town developed and grew under the rule of Cistercians. The mostly baroque urban tissue of the town is the product of the construction boom that

¹ According to Polish law only these settlements which were granted a city charter have the legal status of a town. In the course of history many small towns have lost their legal urban status, at times for purely political reasons. While they are officially considered villages, very often they still display typical urban qualities. It is also important to note that although many of them strive to reclaim their "town" status, from a purely economic and practical point of view it pays off to reclaim the rights only if the town will at the same time become the administrative centre of the commune (the seat of the local council – *gmina*).

followed a period of decline in the times of the Thirty Years War. In the second half of the 17th century a new baroque parish church of good architectural quality, a new town hall and most houses with typical arcades surrounding the main square were built. At this time Chełmsko also became an important pre-industrial centre of linen production and trade. The wars over domination in Silesia between Prussia and Austria in 1740-63 and the subsequent changes in the technology of linen production brought the end to Chełmsko's prosperity. Since the end of the 18th century the town experienced a period of economic decline and demographic stagnation. It has nonetheless remained a local service centre for the agricultural hinterland, basing its existence on small weaving workshops, handicraft and a growing number of tourists and summer visitors. At the end of the 19th century a railway connected Chełmsko with the nearby famous Cistercian Abbey of Krzeszów (Grüssau), and electrical and water supplies were installed (Stoob and Johanek 1995). In the mid war period Chełmsko was a picturesque vacation resort with a few hotels, restaurants and a small museum. Dishes of the local cuisine were also a significant tourist attraction. An early 20th century tourist guidebook offered the following description of Chełmsko:

Schömberg is one of the oldest towns in the area of Landeshut. It is a reflection of a real medieval town. In its centre, there is an almost square market, delicately sloping towards the north, surrounded by magnificent, deep green lindens. The northern and to the large extent also the southern row of houses display typical, medieval arcades. The centre of the market is decorated with a fountain over a delicately murmuring underground spring and a prominent statue of St John of Nepomuk under a green roof of leaves of four majestic chestnuts (...) tranquillity and quietness of the times past are present even today in the calm Schömberg valley.

(Landeshut und der Osten des Riesengebirges, 1906)

Since 1945, following the geopolitical changes, the town no longer functioned within the former German political, economic and cultural structures. As mentioned above, it had lost its legal urban status. It was not even given the status of a centre of the basic administrative unit but instead became a part of the commune based in the neighbouring town of Lubawka (Liebau). Following the introduction of the socialist system focusing mainly on large industrial plants, and displaying a hostile attitude towards private entrepreneurship and ownership, Chełmsko similarly to many small towns in Lower Silesia, had lost its former economic base. Alongside with it a completely different model of tourism was promoted: organised tourist groups, mainly workers of big industrial plants in state owned tourism facilities, without much choice as to the quality and kind of leisure activities provided. Furthermore, the former links with important tourism generating areas such as Berlin, Leipzig and Dresden were completely broken.

The above processes were also reflected in the material tissue of the town. Without proper maintenance being both the result of ideological rejection of German heritage, poor state administration and at times the careless attitude of the users, many of the historic burgher houses had fallen into disrepair. Until the 1980s practically no new buildings were erected in Chełmsko, if any repair and conservation was done, it was mostly ordered and financed by the state which was the owner of almost all property in the town.

After 1989 with the reintroduction of market economy the industrial functions were contested. Under state socialism two large industrial branch plants were the main employers in Chełmsko: Gambit Asbestos Plant and Watra textile factory. The first of them had survived owing to the complete change of technology and severe workforce cuts. The second was not able to adjust to changes in the demand for textile goods and had to close down. As follows, the beginning of the third millennium is a particularly difficult period in the town's history: dilapidated urban structure and building stock, a high unemployment rate (30% in 2002), and an overall bad economic situation in the region. At the same time, the end of the 1990s brought about a number of valuable local initiatives, which – if fully implemented – may bring about many positive results.

In contrast to the townscape of many other urban centres in Poland, spoiled with standardised modernist architecture of the 1960s and 1970s, the lack of major changes in urban tissue since World War II may become a real competitive advantage for the town. In this case the English saying “poverty is the best conservator” seems to be relevant. Despite the complete population change, as well as degradation and partial destruction of its historic architecture, Chełmsko retained its unique *genius loci*, the atmosphere of an ideal and charming small town (Fig. 2).

2. Development of tourism in Chełmsko: opportunities and barriers

Looking at Chełmsko in terms of a tourism product, it is important to underline that historic heritage constitutes its most important potential. The unique pre-industrial monument – the group of 17th century weavers' cottages referred to as *The Twelve Apostles* – is the best-known tourist site in Chełmsko. The urban structure of the town itself is particularly attractive to tourists, especially its centre with a typical Silesian market square surrounded by arcaded burgher houses and the baroque parish church dominating in the picturesque townscape. These potential attractions cannot however be regarded as equal to a tourism product. As follows, the next problem addressed is the question of their commodification.

2.1 Ambiguous role of the geographical location

Geographical location of Chełmsko may in many respects be considered favourable for tourism development. There are a number of well known tourist attractions within the radius of a few kilometres from the town, such as the Abbey in Krzeszów (a growing pilgrimage centre and an exceptional example of baroque sacral art) and the Adrspach – Teplice Rocks (unique sandstone rock forms on the Czech side of the border). Furthermore, the landscape offers good conditions for mountain cycling, as well as for downhill and cross-country skiing. From a wider regional perspective, the Sudety Mountains are among areas characterised by strong tourist attractions and the oldest traditions of tourism industry in the present day territory of Poland.

However, the very same location signifies important barriers, of both local and regional nature. The town is peripherally located on a small strip of land adjacent to the Polish-Czech border. The public transport in the area is insufficient. Since the town

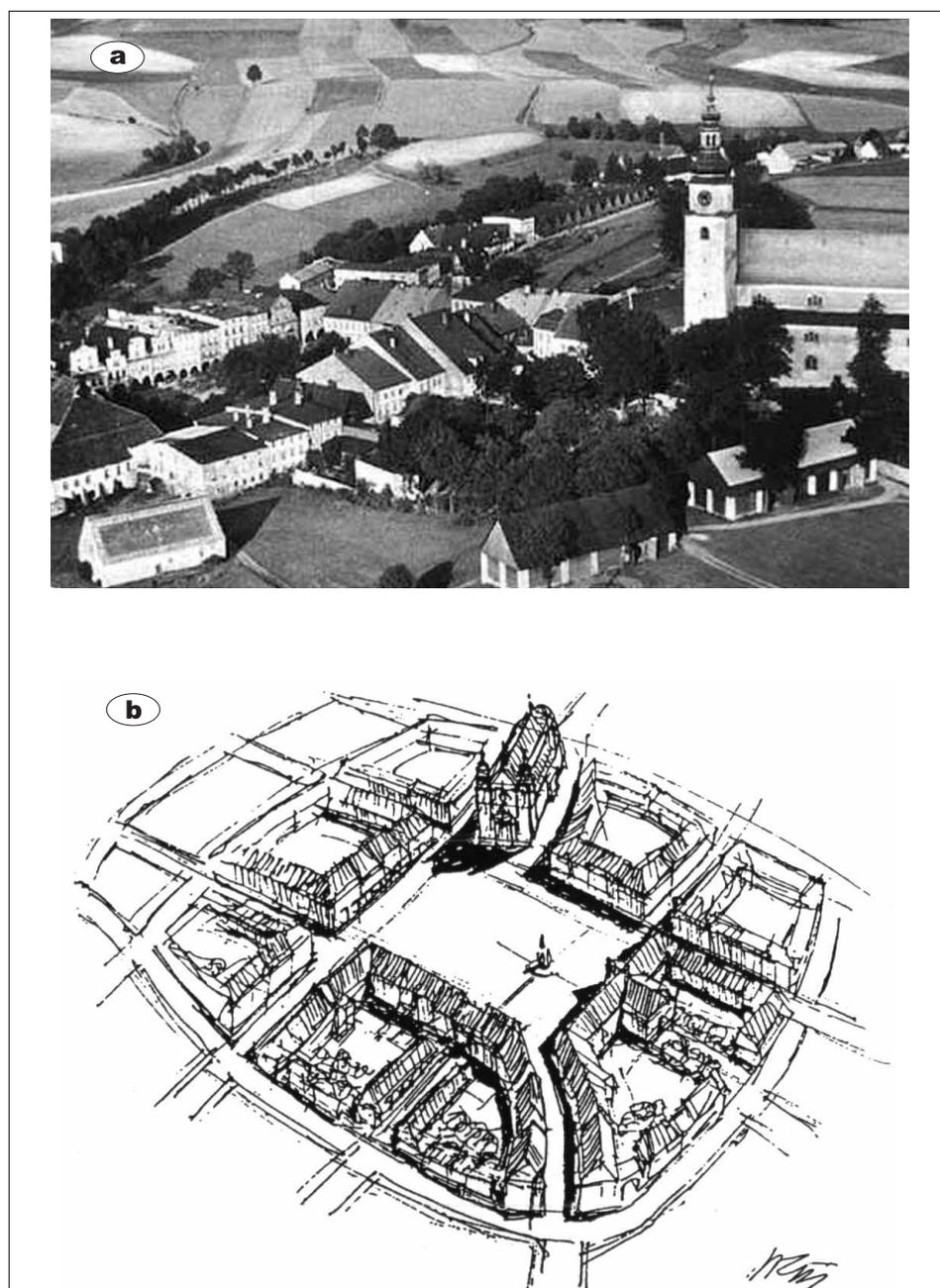


Fig. 2. Chełmsko Śląskie (postcard from 1930s) (a) and non-existing, ideal little town (b)

Source: Cęckiewicz (1994)

is not promoted in any way in the nearby Krzeszów, tourists visiting the Abbey are not encouraged to make an unplanned detour to Chełmsko. By changing this state of affairs, the proximity of Krzeszów could easily become a strong point and an advantage, especially that the architecturally interesting church in Chełmsko is historically linked to Krzeszów, its fittings include a religious painting well known for miracles and there has been a tradition of ascribing medical qualities to the spring in the market place. Furthermore, the border location of the town can become an advantage with new small border crossings being opened nearby.

Regional barriers are harder to overcome. Chełmsko's location seems remote vis-à-vis major tourism generating cities and areas in Poland. Only the Wrocław (Breslau) metropolitan area is close. On the sub-regional scale the town has to compete with well-established tourism centres, especially in the Karkonosze Range (Riesengebirge) of the Sudety Mountains such as Karpacz (Krummhübel) and Szklarska Poręba (Schreibenaue). Their position as tourist centres is undisputed and hard to contest. As follows, the small town has to search for ways to differentiate itself in the tourism market and find its own unique product and style of promotion which would be sufficient to attract a number of tourists large enough to become the main rationale of the local economy. Finding a niche in the tourism market should involve defining the market segment of potential customers. Backpackers and enthusiasts already know Chełmsko very well, it is however unlikely they will ever generate much profits. It is therefore necessary to encourage longer overnight stays by middle-class tourists. Chełmsko has in this respect the chance to take advantage of a steadily growing demand for ecotourism and cultural tourism (Dodd and van Hemel 1999). In that case, significant investment is needed in accommodation and other tourism facilities.

2.2. Tourism facilities

Before the Second World War Chełmsko was a well established tourist destination offering accommodation in two hotels, two guesthouses and a youth hostel as well as a few restaurants, a sport stadium, a sledge course and a ski-jump in the nearby town of Lubawka. Since then the traditions of tourism have been almost entirely forgotten. The building stock was nationalised and used for other functions. This stemmed partly from the fact that tourism in a socialist state tended to be viewed as an inexpensive form of leisure for the working class provided by definition by the State rather than a source of income for local communities.

As follows, presently the existing infrastructure in Chełmsko does not correspond in quality and quantity to the declared wish to attract a larger number of tourists. Only recently the first hotel was opened in the outskirts of Chełmsko, the initiative of a private, non-locally based investor. In addition, there are a few bed and breakfast establishments and tourist farms. An almost complete lack of other facilities necessary to prolong the tourists' stay in Chełmsko is the key problem. Despite the quite large number of day-trippers in the summer, visitors do not really have the possibility to spend any money in the centre of the town. Souvenirs are only sold by two establishments which are not regularly open. The historic parish church is closed most of the time, while the poor state of repair of the staircase leading up the church tower makes

it impossible to use it as an attractive viewpoint. Moreover, only recently there have been some initiatives to improve the ambience of the market square. Attractive street furniture such as new lampposts and benches have been installed, new greenery and paths designed. There are no catering establishments in the centre such as a cafe or a restaurant, no public toilets nor any parking. As a result, most tourists stop in Chełmsko for just a few minutes necessary to make a snap shot of the famous weavers' cottages and leave the town without seeing its other attractions. Insufficient tourism infrastructure is thus the major barrier to further development of tourism function.

2.3. Historic monuments: a valuable resource or a costly burden

Chełmsko is one of the most interesting urban complexes in Lower Silesia, unfortunately at the same time famous for being most neglected and dilapidated. As described in a contemporary tourist guide:

If Chełmsko was not so terribly run-down, it would be lovely. Presently it gives an impression of a town being about to fall apart. If only given a chance it would show its beauty and rich history hidden underneath dampness, falling-off plaster and broken windows.

(Skata 2000)

The town's built heritage is thus a big challenge in terms of obtaining funds for its conservation. The total revitalisation costs of the market square and the rows of houses adjacent to it are estimated at USD 4 million - a sum well above the total annual budget of the entire commune. As follows, public authorities are only to a limited extent able to provide funds for restoring historic buildings. Despite of the possible scenario according to which a part of the historic stock may be bought by non-locally based investors, it is beyond any doubt that present inhabitants and users should be the main force of revitalisation. Here however a serious attitude problem arises. The majority of inhabitants have quite different views on the best mechanisms of historic monument protection. The respondents of the questionnaire do notice the degradation of the historic tissue and do list it alongside high unemployment rates as the main problem the town has to face. Nevertheless, they do not see this problem as an issue which should be solved by individuals or groups of inhabitants but as a competence and obligation of outside institutions - the state, the commune, the monument conservator. Such passive demeanour is a legacy of real socialism. The above attitude towards material heritage in the Western and Northern Territories² was made even stronger by the feeling of cultural dissonance being a part of a wider phenomenon of adaptation of the cultural heritage of former inhabitants by the newcomers (Tab. 1). The common feeling of strangeness and lack of identification with heritage and landscape shaped by a different people as well as the fear of geo-political instability for many years prevented its proper appreciation. Only now, years after the war, the present residents have started to look upon the heritage of this area as something which is their own, thus worthy of care, preservation and renovation as well as a reason for pride.

² The term "Western and Northern Territories" was coined to describe the former German territory up to the river Oder. It was given to Poland as a compensation for Soviet Union annexing the former Polish territory in the east, as the result of decisions undertaken at Yalta and Potsdam conferences in 1945.

Tab. 1. Evolution of attitudes towards cultural heritage in the so-called Western and Northern Territories in Poland after 1945

Phase	Material heritage Uses of heritage	Perception of heritage Values attached to it
I. hostility, destruction	removing German symbolism, irresponsible usage, devastation	hostility, strangeness, inadaptability, attempt at degermanisation, temporary abode
II. adaptation, partial assimilation	caring for heritage because of its utility value, usage	indifference, getting used to, slow familiarisation
III. acceptance, internalisation, assimilation, reconstruction	care, initiatives leading to preservation and recreation of former heritage	little homeland (<i>Heimat</i>), identification with, part of identity, curiosity about the past, wish to rediscover the lost heritage

Source: authors' elaboration based on Mazur (2000)

The factor leading to faster assimilation and therefore better maintenance of historic buildings is the local authorities' policy encouraging the present tenants to buy their former dwellings on preferential terms. In Chełmsko it is already easy to identify those buildings which have been entirely privatised as private ownership is conducive towards greater care for the property and its surrounding. The concern for private property (no longer anonymous, belonging to everyone thus appreciated by no one) at the same time leads to better overall aesthetic image of the town enhancing its tourist attractiveness.

The problem of revitalisation is also connected with the need to develop a new legal system for heritage protection in Poland (the current law of 15.02.1962 although amended and improved many times is quite outdated). The owners often experience a paradoxical situation in which, from a purely economic point of view, it is sometimes more advantageous to allow a dilapidated building to fall into complete ruin and then reconstruct it in historic forms than pay much more for proper conservation and maintenance of its authentic substance.

2.4. Residents' attitudes

Three connected elements of inhabitants' perception must be distinguished in terms of their opinion on tourism development:

- attitude towards tourists and the perceived role of tourism in local development,
- attitude towards cultural heritage constituting the nucleus of tourism attraction (discussed above),
- a generally active or passive attitude especially in regard to collective actions and initiatives for common good.

Tourism is regarded as the most desired function for the town by most of the questioned residents. Moreover, 44% percent of those declaring a will to start up their own firm pointed at the tourism industry as the chosen field. Tourists are positively

perceived as a factor conducive towards making the town more lively as well as a source of income. Such positive attitude seems to be quite typical in areas of depression and structural problems (Gursoy et al. 2001). It does not however have a direct effect on the actual growth of the tourism industry. Further barriers identified in connection with inhabitants' mentality and attitude are the lack of tourist service traditions among present day inhabitants of Chełmsko and the subsequent lack of qualified personnel to perform these services. The high unemployment rate is yet another obstacle. The generally low economic status of inhabitants prevents them from making any significant investments, also in tourism. The feeling of resignation and passiveness connected to unemployment is especially visible and worrying among youth. Members of the local elite point to the lack of interest the younger inhabitants display both in learning about the town's past and the lack of any will on the part of the younger ones to do any voluntary, unpaid work for common good even if many of them have a lot of free time.

Moreover, the inhabitants are convinced that tourism attractiveness is determined by selected, most important sites (namely the weavers' cottages and the parish church). This may be true, however in order to make the tourists' stay longer and to create a lasting impression of the town, a complex, positive image of it is indispensable. As follows, the *genius loci* of Chełmsko is the key component of its tourism product. It should include a serene ambience and a cosy and charming yet lively historic setting. Presently, inhabitants think of the atmosphere in town as neither attractive nor charming, further deteriorating with the increasing impoverishment of some residents. Furthermore, they do not believe that by making little improvements and repairs which do not incur high costs (i.e. flower pots in windows, freshly painted windows and doors) the image of neglect and dilapidation can easily be changed into charm and picturesqueness – qualities very much looked for by tourists. This is closely tied to the problem of distaste and hostility towards collective work for common good, stemming from the prevailing passive attitude towards life most inhabitants display and the overall devaluation of voluntary work under socialism. A small group of members of the Association for Development of Chełmsko "Silesian Weavers" often finds it very hard to receive any help, support or even understanding from other members of the local community.

Imitating effects are a hoped for way of overcoming the above indifferent or even negative attitudes. Firstly, in terms of replicating positive attitude and will to work towards making the town prettier and livelier (The Association, school). Secondly, the success of those who are involved in the tourism industry (i.e. have already opened up an agrotourism farm) would expectedly encourage others to do the same. Finally, one may hope that the town can benefit from the increase in number of tourist and pilgrim arrivals in Krzeszów Abbey. In this respect, the planned connection between Chełmsko and the Abbey via a bicycle path along the former railway tracks is especially important, as an investment which could help to develop tourism in both places.

The revival of the unique pre-war local traditions would also help to stimulate the development of tourism. These include the possibility to recommence the production of local specialities – beer, sausages, ginger bread, further revival of the bed and breakfast tradition, production of hand-made souvenirs, horse buggy and sleigh rides, making

the parish church tower again accessible to tourists. The restitution of the pre-war traditions would surely be easier if closer co-operation could be initiated between the Polish settlers and the former German inhabitants. Moreover, an attempt to initiate co-operation would have a positive effect on shaping the town's image. It could also eventually help in obtaining funds for revitalisation of the town. Unfortunately, the contacts between the organisation of German natives (*Landmannschaft*) and the current residents are very limited. A certain 'timing mismatch' regarding interest in heritage may also be observed. While in Germany, the generations of displaced, those who have nostalgic memories of the former *Heimat* are slowly disappearing, conversely, since the 1990s, Poles display a growing interest in the culture and heritage of the region. The key to co-operation and understanding between the two nations seems to lie in the acceptance of the heritage of former residents by current, Polish inhabitants, and on the part of the Germans in the appreciation of the regeneration work done by Polish residents of the town despite the scarce economic resources the small community may dispose of. An example of such activities is the well managed cemetery, where German tombs are well kept thanks to the care of the present residents. Moreover from the German-Polish relations point of view the period after 1989 has, perhaps for the first time in many years, been extremely conducive towards breaking with the traditional, narrow, nationalistic approach to Silesian history. As follows, the value of Chelmsko's cultural heritage should be emphasised in terms of its meaning as a part of the common European heritage, belonging both to the present and to the former inhabitants (Tomaszewski 2001).

As a European heritage site Chelmsko could also be promoted more effectively both in Poland and abroad. It is especially important because while nostalgic tourism is still an important incoming tourism segment in Lower Silesia, the continuous decrease in the number of such tourists must be taken into account. As mentioned above, younger generations of displaced Germans are visibly less interested in the heritage their ancestors left behind or look at it from a different point of view. Choosing the vacation destination they often take other selection criteria into account such as quality and fashion in the tourism market.

Furthermore, there exists a common opinion on reclaiming city rights being a panacea for many local problems. It is also one of most often discussed local issues diverting attention from other problems. As mentioned earlier, the urban status in Poland is not dependent on the number of inhabitants but on the central government's decision to grant a settlement a city charter. By many residents the administrative status is regarded as the main development barrier of the former town. The survey revealed that 86% of the respondents would like to see Chelmsko receiving its city status back. Following perceived benefits of the formal town status were pointed at: greater funds for development programs, greater grants and subventions (30% of the total number of persons surveyed), financial independence, self government (22%), greater funds for monument conservation (20%), greater overall care for the aesthetic image of the town (10%) and creating new jobs (15%). In this respect, due to a lack of knowledge, there exists a dissonance between the wishes and perceptions of inhabitants and the real situation and legal status of a commune in Poland. Only secession of a part of the commune and creating a separate Chelmsko commune would give the town real financial independence

– a development unlikely to happen as the tax base of the area is very restricted, the settlement pattern not favourable and the central government not supportive for divisions within and secessions from existing administrative units. Reclaiming a town status within the existing commune – as the so called additional – supporting unit is yet another option. This “imperfect” town status does not entitle to any direct financial gains but on the other hand there are many examples which prove that the very status itself has an integrating and activating effect on the local community, the change of status being perceived as an award and an opening up of new possibilities. The administrative function and status may also be stimulating for developing other central functions. In terms of the development of typical urban qualities Chełmsko was listed among eight most developed former Silesian towns (Drobek 1999). Consequently it seems that the local community would have grounds for effective lobbying towards reclaiming the city status. Urban status is a sort of “natural state of affairs” for Chełmsko. However, due to small real gains connected with it in this particular case, the question of confirming the status legally should rather be saved for future political agendas and for the sake of efficiency not presently dealt with.

2.5. Local initiatives and leaders

Initiatives of local leaders have often been the key to local development in Poland in 1990s. The local community’s ability to self-organise is not only a testimony of the inhabitants’ attachment and identification with their place of residence but also the basic prerequisite of growth based on endogenous resources (Reijnen 1987, Levai 1996, Gorzelak 1999). There are presently two non-government organisations working in the commune: “Brama Lubawska” (“Lubawska Gate”) Foundation established in 1993 for the purpose of supporting a comprehensive, broadly understood development of the commune and the Association for Development of Chełmsko “Tkacze Śląscy” (“Silesian Weavers”) founded in 1999. Both organisations have already achieved some success in promoting and renovating Chełmsko. Presently less active, earlier on the Foundation has focused on infrastructure improvements such as new street lightening, repair of local roads, renovation of some facades in the market square, operating a quasi-museum. Most of its projects in 1990s were financed from the European Union PHARE grant. The Association of “Silesian Weavers” concentrates on activating the local community, organising outdoor and cultural events, projects making the town more lively and better known (i.e. The Annual Fair entitled “Chełmsko Days”, the international flax linen heritage route) running an art gallery and a weavers’ shop. The fact that both NGOs operate in the same area and often have similar ideas sometimes results in overlapping competencies and visible conflicts of interests between them. This may lead to inefficient use of resources and at the end weaken the impact of their positive actions in the town.

Naturally the degraded town’s fortunes are also to a large extent dependent on local politics. Generally speaking, the power relations within the commune in the current term in office have been favourable for the small community. The recently created and voted in local development strategy as well as the new master plan both give a lot of

attention and priority to Chełmsko's problems. The positive state of affairs in this respect may change with the upcoming local elections – depending on their outcome the current strategy may be implemented or changed. A positive phenomenon is a growing number of enthusiasts of Chełmsko in Poland and abroad and the emergence of certain groups lobbying for it. An example of such actions on a sub-regional level is the European historic weaving route project on the Polish side co-organised by the Association “Silesian Weavers”, the flax textile factory in Mysłakowice (Erdmannsdorf) and the Museum of Lower Silesian Weaving in Kamienna Góra (Landeshut). By working within a wider European context the organisers hope to attract international interest and also obtain some funds from the EU.

3. Conclusions

The transformation of 1990s meant a shock therapy and dramatic changes in many small towns in Poland. It has provoked the question as to what sorts of activities could provide a new economic base for such places. Despite of many barriers identified, tourism may become an important development factor and a promising function in many small towns. This partly stems from the fact that often no other real options may be identified. In many places, the administrative, industrial or agricultural functions are rather unlikely to grow. Tourism is thus not really an alternative development path but a “necessity” if further social and economic degradation of many towns is to be avoided. This does not signify that tourism should be the towns' future monofunction, but rather that this industry may become a pillar supporting growth of other sectors (i.e. catering, handicraft, SMEs).

Still, achieving a consensus regarding the need to develop tourism does not mean that indispensable pro-tourism projects will be implemented. To what extent is orientation towards tourism possible? According to the authors, establishing tourism as a rationale for local economy is only possible in places which do already possess significant tourism resources and are able to create tourism products out of those resources by giving them a proper image and supplying infrastructure. Further *conditio sine qua non* are a favourable attitude of inhabitants and if necessary a change of mentality, in addition to a well thought out promotion policy. As follows, the success in the case of many small towns depends on a complex interplay of both the exogenous and the endogenous factors. In this respect Chełmsko is a good illustration of dilemmas involved in attempts to develop tourism function.

Chełmsko does not have to create its tourist product from scratch. It already possesses strong local symbols on the basis of which a sharp, easily recognised image could be created. The image however must be created as the result of cooperation of all local actors (corporal identity). In the authors' opinion the future tourist product of Chełmsko should consist of an attractive setting, green surrounding and proximity of larger tourism centres (i.e. Karpacz, Teplice n. Metuji) promoted under a unique brand name of “The Town of Weavers' Cottages”³. Furthermore, Poland's accession to the EU in the near future may help in obtaining ERDF funds for infrastructural projects connected with tourism.

A differentiated approach and interpretation of potential tourism values is also needed for different potential market segments. Contrary to the popular belief that every tourist looks for traces of his or her own national culture, in this case a contemporary Polish tourist may rather search for interesting traces of former German presence in the area. At the same time younger German tourists, especially from larger metropolitan centres, are often more concerned with leisure opportunities offered by clean natural environment and a charming atmosphere than with former German heritage as such. Furthermore, Chełmsko would have a better chance in the market if offered as a part of a larger tourism product for example as a part of the regional product of small Silesian towns' route, European linen route or as a detour from Krzeszów Abbey.

As mentioned above, tourism is perceived as a desirable, profitable function. However, a change of disposition towards individual responsibility for one's dwelling, monuments in general and collective work for common good are needed. Further activities of NGOs and local leaders in addition to the educative role played by school are indispensable in order to stimulate the necessary changes in residents' attitudes, changes which although crucial to local success, unfortunately are a very slow, long-term process. Without them the realisation of Kosiński's (2000) postulate that we need "*a picturesque and pretty countryside as a counterpoint to crowded metropolises*" is not possible. Aesthetisation and recreating the town's charming atmosphere are basic prerequisites of its success.

Finally, with proper promotion, there are better chances that the values of places such as Chełmsko are recognised by a growing number of tourists. Overcoming the above mentioned barriers and taking advantage of the town's strong points will create a synergy effect leading to the transformation of the town into a centre of vacation leisure, hiking, agro- and ecotourism, attractive to those segments of the tourism market which all require a pretty, unspoiled natural landscape and a "cosy, small town" atmosphere as a backdrop.

Summary

The case study illustrates dilemmas related to the development of tourism in a degraded urban centre. Chełmsko Śl.(Schömberg) in Lower Silesia possesses significant tourist values including the unique 17thc. wooden weavers' cottages. The tourism flourished here before the Second World War. After 1945, with significant border shifts and a complete political and demographic change, the tourism traditions were almost forgotten. Since 1989 the so far dissonant and neglected heritage has become a possible base for recreating the tourism function. However, there exist many barriers to tourism development such as poorly developed infrastructure, lack of professional skills, overall social degradation of the town and its peripheral location. The authors

³ The genius loci of the town and its value as an attractive backdrop was recently recognised by Polish television. The main public TV channel (TVP 1) produced a TV version of a well known play of the Swiss playwright F. Dürrenmatt using Chełmsko as a natural stage for it. It is hoped that the town's first appearance on the television screen enlivened by well known Polish dramatic actors will encourage some tourists and other film producers to come to town.

show ambiguous character of most of the above mentioned barriers. For example the lack of investments during the times of communism led on one hand to neglect and dilapidation of some of the building stock, on the other allowed to preserve a unique genius loci of a sleepy, medieval town. Similarly, the remote location may be regarded as a barrier but also with the changed role of the boundaries and the closeness of the local growth centres (Krzyszów (Grüssau), Teplice) allows to create a well defined and attractive image. There exists an overall consensus among local authorities, leaders and most of the residents as to the need to develop tourism. There are however many related problems such as the overlapping of competencies and plans of the local NGOs, insufficient funds the local commune may dispose of, finally attitude and mentality of the inhabitants. Overcoming the syndrome of the dilapidated and poor town will depend on a number of factors such as the success or failure of the first new investments in the field (new hotel, agro-tourism farms) as well as on the will of co-operation between the local actors. At times of intensive competition between places only well thought out actions, based on a detailed analysis of the market may lead to setting on the desired development path.

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Dylematy rozwoju turystyki w zdegradowanym ośrodku miejskim. Przykład Chełmska Śl. (Schömberg) na Dolnym Śląsku

Streszczenie

Na przykładzie małego dolnośląskiego miasteczka, autorzy weryfikują popularną tezę, iż turystyka jest główną szansą rozwoju wielu zdegradowanych, przeżywających trudności okresu transformacji ośrodków w krajach postkomunistycznych. Biorąc pod uwagę specyficzne uwarunkowania diskutowanego przykładu, takie jak wielokulturowy oraz peryferyjny charakter omawianej miejscowości, autorzy dyskutują przestrzenne, infrastrukturalne, strukturalne oraz mentalne bariery rozwoju turystyki, podkreślając dualny charakter większości z nich. Przykład Chełmska Śl. potwierdza, iż nawet istotne składniki produktu turystycznego związane z dziedzictwem kulturowym i położeniem geograficznym miejscowości nie są same w sobie wystarczające by turystyka stała się podstawą lokalnej gospodarki. Niezbędne są przedsięwzięcia podejmowane przez inwestorów zewnętrznych, intensywne działania lokalnych liderów oraz zmiana w postawach mieszkańców. W artykule podjęto również próbę sformułowania propozycji pokonywania istniejących barier.

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