Tłumaczenie artykułów

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Strategic Management of a Cultural Heritage Route with Reference to the Concept of Stakeholders

Key words: cultural heritage routes, mission, strategy, stakeholders

Abstract
The article discusses one aspect of strategic management of cultural heritage routes in Poland. Among the hundreds of existing routes of this type, none is subject to consistent management; in fact neither mission nor strategy was formulated for any of them. In this situation, their potential is not used even in part. By making reference to the concept of stakeholders, well known in the theory of management, it will be possible to explain the huge range of social impact of cultural heritage routes.

Introduction

Cultural heritage routes frequently constitute a wide network that often covers the area of the whole province. The record here belongs undoubtedly to the Wooden Architecture Route in the Małopolskie Province that comprises 251 objects spread along a few routes covering the area of 1500 kilometers. There are, however, many other shorter routes that are also significant in a given region. Here belong, for example, *the Silesian Industrial Monuments Route* covering 36 objects found in the most distant sites in the Śląskie Province (starting from Żywiec and Ustroń in the south reaching as far as Częstochowa in the north), or *The Piast Route* having several dozen landmarks connected by the route that runs through the area of two provinces: Wielkopolksie and Kujawko-Pomorskie. Effective management of such complicated structures requires constant involvement of the respective entities (all of the routes mentioned above are in the phase of more or less advanced transformation), and – even more importantly – precise strategy which would connect reaching the planned results with the mission and the basic aims related to the way a given route of cultural heritage functions.

Mission and strategy, that is the compass and the map:

There are a number of definitions of the term *strategy* that are to be found in the literature on the subject. The overview of the most significant ones are to be found in the classic work *Zarządzanie. Teoria i praktyka* [Koźmiński A.K., Piotrowski W. (eds.) 2006, p. 127]:

1. "Strategy is a holistic plan; it determines what decisions are to be taken in any possible situation" [Neumann, Morgenstern 1944, p. 79].
2. "Strategy consists in analyzing the current situation and its change, if that is necessary" [Drucker 1954, p. 17].
3. "A series of decisions determining the behaviour in specific periods of time is referred to as strategy" [Simon 1976, p. 163].
4. "Strategy implies determining the main, long-term goals of a company [organization, institution – Ł.G], scheduling activities and allocating resources in such a way that is necessary for achieving the goals" [Chandler 1962, p. 13].
5. "Strategy is a set of aims and main, organizational undertakings" [Tilles, 1963].
6. "The concept of strategy refers to the formulation of the main mission, plans and organizational objectives; the policy and programs for reaching these; the methods necessary for the implementation of the strategies in order to achieve the organizational objectives" [Steiner, Miner, Gray 1986, p.5].

One of the recent definitions that are worth quoting here was formulated by Krzysztof Obłoj who claims that strategy is 'a coherent plan of activities based on a few, critical, mutually complementary choices which allow for using the opportunities or becoming competitive and thus enable achievement of results which are better than average' [Obłój 2010, p. 13].

Irrespective of which definition of the term *strategy* we refer to it will always imply the realisation of the set aims through the implementation of an inherently coherent and complementary plan. The strategy is always based on the mission of an organisation that clearly defines "the four elements: purpose of the company (commonly referred to as the mission of an organization), the desired future condition (referred to as a vision), the key values preached by the company and the basic goals" [Glinka, Kostera 2012, p.382].

The problems related to the process of designing the mission and building the strategy in institutions of culture have been discussed in Polish literature on the subject for some time (cf. Barańska 2004]. Also, the awareness in this respect is systematically increasing, both as regards the organisers and those who manage institutions of culture.

This issue looks completely different, as regards cultural heritage routes. Paradoxically, the most significant disadvantage is not the fact that none of the routes has a defined mission (and consequently the strategy). The basic problem in this respect is that virtually nobody, neither the organisers (those who manage the route), nor the owners of the sites along the routes notice the importance of strategic management. Such status quo is the result of the lack of practical model of how the routes should function constituting a separate structure that is managed effectively and efficiently [cf. Gaweł 2011]. The routes most often function as more or less loose federations of totally autonomous entities which cooperate only occasionally, for example, while organising a specific project or event. With the framework of activities delineated in such a way the whole potential of the routes cannot be used. As long as cultural heritage routes are not perceived as individual entities that are governed by their own rights and operate to achieve specific goals (that often complement or extend the aims defined for specific entities building the route) the necessary individual missions and strategies for cultural heritage routes will not be developed. It is worth noting at this point that from the theoretical point of view they will have practically the same dimension as the activities described for the commercial sector: "The strategy of a an enterprise includes five main elements: the mission of a company, the domain of activities, the strategic dominance (strong points), the strategic aims and the functional programmes of activities […]".

The mission of the company includes the long-term objectives and aspirations of the organisation that are formulated in the language that is understandable for the employees and the environment of the organisation. Thus, the mission is the formula used in the strategy of the future vision of the company and it gets the strategic value when the following three requirements are met:

a) it sets the directions and refers to the future;
b) it expresses the dreams and challenges which are shared by the employees;
c) the process of its realisation is plausible.

The domain of the activities defines first of all, where and to whom the company plans to sell its goods/services. It may be assumed in the times of total chaos on the market that each paying customer needs to be appreciated. The problem is that this is a reasonable strategy of survival and not the strategy of a long-term development. The company without its own market and its own customers is a company without identity. It may function efficiently, but only for a limited period of time. Another issue is the question how to define one's own segment of market. It is important to realise it has to be done.

Strategic (competitive) dominance involves being a more attractive partner within one domain than other companies. Hence, the dominance decides about the competitive strength

of the company (i.e. it shows that a company is better than its competitors) which is important for customers.

Strategic goals are an elementary supplement to choices made with regard to the domain of activities and the strategic dominance over the competitors. The aims define what the company really wants to achieve in subsequent periods of time and they allow to measure if the company is successful.

Finally, functional programs of activities are the necessary supplement to the general operational strategy and they are the element which is easily omitted by the managerial staff. It is not difficult to create a theory of how to dominate the competition. It is, however, far more difficult to consequently implement such assumptions. Functional operational programs in a way "translate" the strategy into actual activities of the company and everyday behaviour of each employee" [Obłój, p. 33–35].

The point is that for majority of employees of heritage sites constituting the routes these remarks are completely incomprehensible (the situation is similar in the majority of institutions of culture). For example, how can we demand from an employee of the local heritage park that they should make their site competitive to the regional offer? Admittedly, the position of a cultural institution (in particular a public one) is unquestionable and such an entity is not subject to any critical analysis. Meanwhile, the changing number of customers and their requirements painfully verify the above mentioned truth. The increasing expectations of tourists, the rising level of their expectations as regards the available "tourism products" must cause change in approach towards one's own position on the map of the options used as leisure-time activities. Although it may sound unbelievable an outdoors exposition, museum or an attractive landmark must be prepared to compete with, for example, a shopping mall in a distant city in order to win customers.

Re-determination of aims for the sites along tourist cultural routes, re-definition of their role for the region, reliable examination of their current condition must be connected with the development of the mission and strategy of a route. This, in turn, cannot be achieved without outlining a detailed map of complex interdependencies between various entities related to the functioning of the route in a given region. If we want to define precisely these interdependencies, we should refer to the concept of *stakeholders*.

Stakeholders of a cultural heritage route

The term *stakeholder* was first used in 1963 by Stanford Research Institute [Freeman 2010, p. 31]. In Polish literature on the subject the term is most favourably translated as 'interesariusze' which is surely not perfect, but undoubtedly it relates to the essence of the phenomenon more accurately than other translations (e.g. 'oddziaływacze' or 'grupy interesu'). The academic, R. Edward Freeman defined the term *stakeholders* in classical terms as "any group or person who may exert impact, or influences the achievement of goals by an organization' [Freeman 1984, p. 25]. The scholar introduced this term on a wider scale into the domain of management. It clearly emerges from the definition that distinguishing the basic categories within the group of *stakeholders* will be based on determination of their position towards an organisation. Thus, we have:

1) *internal stakeholder* (i.e. the employees of an organization, its management, supervisory body or shareholders),
2) *external stakeholder* (i.e. suppliers, recipients of goods or services, but also the entities that are not directly connected with the organisation, e.g. local authorities or media).

In the light of the above, it is worth considering what kind of entities may be defined as stakeholders of cultural heritage routes. In this context it seems necessary to refer to the definition of this type of structure: "Cultural route is a marked up and labeled material route that connects objects and places according to the established criterion of a theme which

is a unique and representative example illustrating the broadly understood cultural heritage of a given region, community, ethnic group, national minority or a nation. Through the presentation of tangible heritage, the route is to enable us to become familiar with that tangible heritage and to promote it, treating these two areas as an inseparable entirety. When managed efficiently and effectively a cultural route may become an important instrument for the protection, development and popularisation of the cultural heritage, affecting both local communities and tourists visiting these places' [Gaweł 2011, p. 76].

It is also important to emphasise the most important characteristics of cultural heritage routes, i.e. their spatial dimension. Contrary to individual heritage monuments, a route influences (and is influenced by) a larger number of factors. The simple principle of synergy is at work here and it implies that the impact of individual components is lesser than the overall impact of the system created by these. It is also significant that the individual points along the route may be linked by more than one route. Thus, the space between individual points A, B and C becomes a reaction space (i.e. the space that is influenced by various factors). Bearing in mind the above assumptions, the scheme of the stakeholders of a cultural heritage route may be as follows:
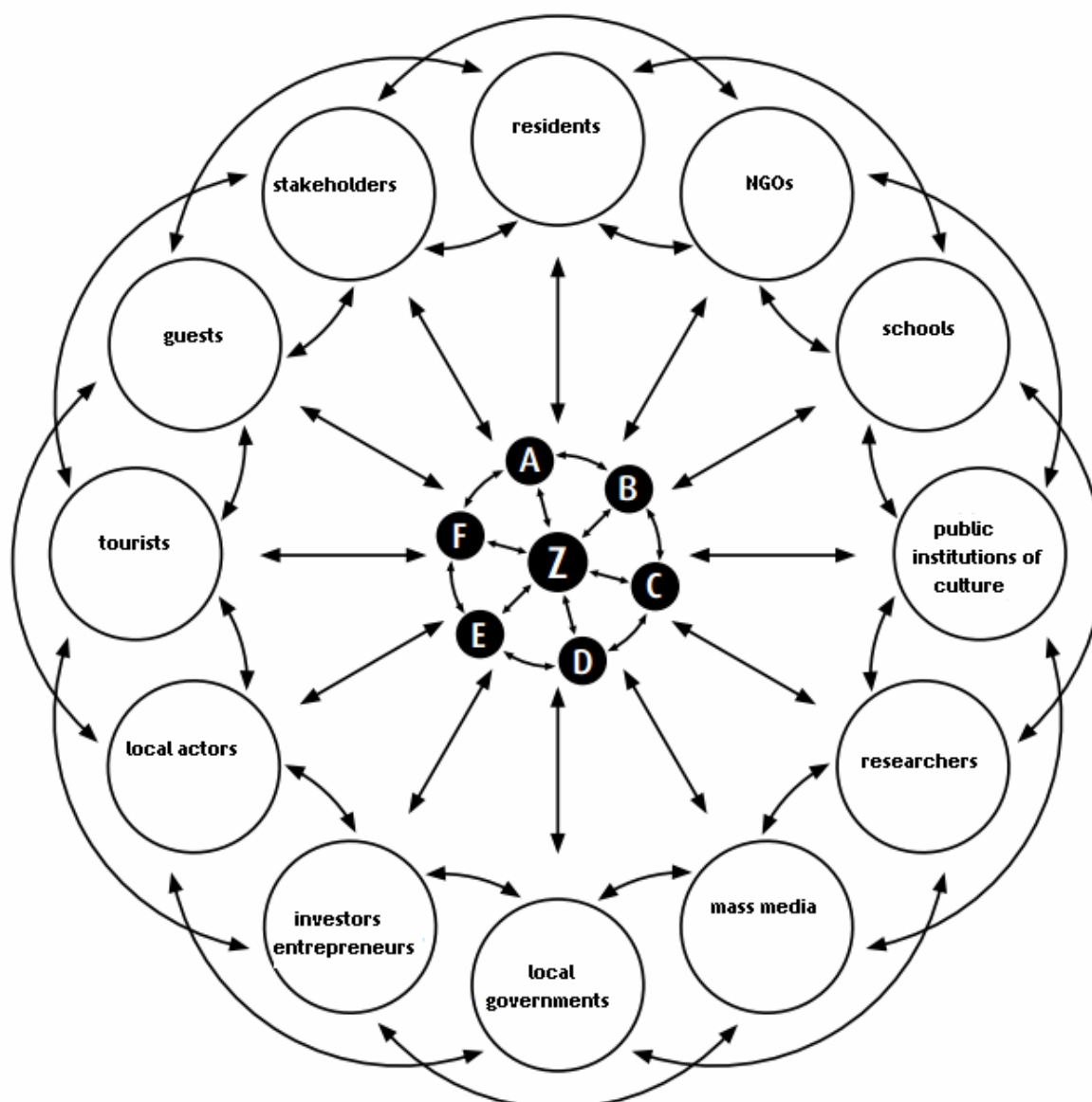

Fig. 1. Stakeholders of a cultural heritage route
A, B, C, D, E, F – objects of the route, Z – body managing the route
Source: the author

First of all, the graphic illustration of the existing interdependencies surprises with the abundance of the links (i.e. there might be even more arrows connecting individual entities, but this would negatively affect the clarity of the scheme). On the one hand, it makes us realise that a route may not be treated as an isolated structure with a limited influence. On the other hand, it shows how significant it may be for the region if these interdependencies are used in a conscious way. It shows all the managers of the routes how many entities impact heritage routes, both in the positive and negative (destructive) dimension.

Internal stakeholders are all the workers employed directly within the structure of a cultural heritage route.

The letter 'Z' here shows the structure managing the route, although in our conditions it is rarely one body. In reality, even within one structure there are many links and interdependencies that significantly influence the possibility of achieving specific aims by a route. It is often the case that the body responsible for managing a cultural heritage route is a specific department in a Marshall's Office. It is enough to examine the largest cultural heritage routes to realise how complex the situation is. Theoretically, the body responsible for the Małopolski Route of Wooden Architecture is the Department of Tourism, Sports and Promotion at the Marshall's Office of the Małopolskie Province. In fact, majority of the activities related to the animation of a route are to be carried out by the Małopolska Tourism Organization which organizes, for example, summer concerts entitled 'Muzyka zaklęta w drewnie'/'Music of the wood'/ that is the main cultural event promoting the route. At the same time, the sites along the route each year are included in the Małopolskie Dni Dziedzictwa Kulturowego/Małpolskie Days of Cultural Heritage/ organised by Małpolski Institute of Culture (14th edition of this event was organised in 2012 and it was entirely devoted to the beauty of wooden objects). The example of this specific route shows how complicated the relations and interdependencies may be even at the – seemingly - most basic level of a cultural heritage route. It also shows the complex network of influences on the organisation (route) and the character of its activities.

Internal stakeholders also include all those employed in the sites along the route. These are often quite sizable teams, because along cultural routes we can frequently encounter large institutions of culture (e.g. heritage parks in the territory of the Małpolski Route of Cultural Heritage or the Historic Mine of Hard Coal 'Guido' in Zabrze that is a part of the Śląski Route of Technical Monuments). As it was shown in the diagram, crews of various sites may impact one another (both within the framework of formal and informal contacts). We should not, however, forget that in the very objects there are specific tensions and interdependencies having significant influences on the way a given route functions and on the possibility of achieving specific aims. As is the case in each organisation, also as regards a route, there is the principle that in a team there are no unnecessary persons. This basic rule in the field of managing human resources seems to be forgotten by those who manage institutions of culture. Irrespective of the high quality of the product on offer, or the innovative value of a program which has been developed, visitors in the first place always meet people: porters, cashiers, cloakroom workers, usherettes, caretakers (i.e. all those people who are given the least attention in the recruitment process). It is largely them that influence the way a given place will be remembered. "There is strong evidence for the fact that the quality of any tourist attraction is closely related to the quality of services provided by the personnel. The individual character of each staff member makes it difficult to impose such standards of operation as are stipulated for machines along an industrial production line. That is why appraisal of tourism-related services in terms of their quality is such a challenge. Here, the importance of one's attitude towards others becomes absolutely clear […]. Involvement […], kindness […] and attention to others […] are the basic features which are to be taken into consideration while recruiting employees, in their training and in the process of management". [Rogers, Slinn 1996, p. 89]. Hence, it may turn out that a site

perfectly prepared it terms of its thematic contents and attractive options on offer, is perceived negatively because of its unfriendly personnel (it is also often the case that hospitable, attentive and open personnel "saves" the sites that are not otherwise properly prepared for receiving guests).

External stakeholders are a large group of people and entities apparently unrelated to a cultural heritage route.

Undoubtedly, the group of stakeholders that is considered in the first place here as exerting most significant influence will be the tourists. They make the basic group of recipients of the product, i.e. a cultural heritage route. Also, they have the most significant influence on the goals set forth for the route. Exact determination of the needs and expectations of these recipients (within the framework of precisely designed surveys) seems to be a necessary component of the process aimed at designing an effective set of options for visitors. It is worth noting at this point that cultural heritage routes are surely not a medium that is to blindly meet the expectations expressed by tourists. It is rather a way to create specific needs, promote responsible attitudes towards heritage. Reaching a compromise between expectations of all visitors is practically impossible. Tourism became a mass phenomenon and travellers, apart from a suntan, demand impressions. They visit one place after another and they outdo one another in the numbers of historic places visited and photographs taken. Heritage monuments are to be "served to the table" quickly. They should not occupy too much time in the full itinerary of the contemporary traveler. Apart from them there is a significant group of people seeking authentic contact with heritage and culture and they are ready to devote much time to such pursuits. They find it pleasurable to peacefully contemplate beauty.

It seems that consciously managed cultural route may be a specific case in the sphere of tourist attractions. Notably, the point is not in efforts aimed at "freezing" a heritage monument and the surrounding cultural space, but in its conscious formation. It is not about chasing the impeccable past; that kind of effort would be doomed to failure anyway. The point here is to make effort so that the inevitable changes make it possible to maintain proper quality. Within a route we may take all the chances against any simplifications – this approach will not close the door for "one-minute" visitors that run ever further and it will indeed ensure high quality of experiences to sensitive connoisseurs of beauty. The prerequisite here is – as long as it is possible – to maintain the "living" function of a heritage monument which is – at best – used by the local community on a daily basis, and thus comes along as authentic in the cultural landscape. At the same time this has to be connected with looking for new functions for obsolete sites and transforming these, so that they can serve new needs.

The aforementioned local community constitutes another group ranked as one of the most important stakeholders of cultural heritage routes. This author believes in fact that this group is more important than any other. Cultural routes are made of heritage monuments that have grown into specific land and are related to the history of the community that lives there. Although the contemporary world considerably weakens our bond with the "land of our fathers" and numerous migrations have contributed to changes in population structure in almost every part of Poland, legitimate heirs of local heritage live almost everywhere and new inhabitants create contemporary history, adding new chapters to it. Because of this we should not strive to restrict the use of sites, or change their functions when local community opposes it. In accordance with the rules of logics, needs of the local community should be of primary importance. This in fact is in line with postulates for marketing-based management of local administrative units. One of these says that "a territorial unit with specific spatial and administrative shape is a place inhabited by a community whose needs and wishes are the main guidelines for bodies managing its resources' [Szromnik 2008, p. 17]. Any other policy, if followed, will lead to 'museumification' of heritage sites, as well as elimination

of their social, historic and local context, which would ultimately result in contradicting the very idea of cultural heritage protection. It is only "living" heritage sites which in fact are authentically needed. This is one of the reasons why sites along cultural heritage routes should make it possible for visitors to get acquainted with both tangible and intangible heritage. Old customs, festivals and occupations may indeed be preserved in many of these places.

Strong stakeholders also include schools in the region. Their involvement will be visible at a few levels of heritage route operation. First of all, students are natural, and regular customers using products generated by the route. Admittedly, the way institutions of culture (heritage monuments) function on a daily basis is not tourists-oriented (these appear in specific, easily foreseeable periods), but it is conditioned by the expectations of local recipients. They provide an excellent stimulus to enrich the subject matter of options on offer (museum lessons, workshops), which will increase attractiveness of a given site, and thus attractiveness of the whole route for guests coming from outside. At the same time, students are naturally interested in both historical and contemporary functions of sites. Schools, through their programs of regional education, may successfully contribute to increased awareness, as regards local heritage, which – in turn –translates into an increase in cultural identity or one's personal identity. Importantly, educational goals of such activities are much deeper. The example in point is the lesson plan *What have we learned while wandering through the village* …. Its authors point out the following advantages that emerge for students as a result of such a project. Student "know various kinds of historical sources, history of the landmarks in their own village or town; they collect, repair and store family keepsakes; they properly use the portfolio method for collecting source materials; they can write a report, a note in a diary; they improve their skills in describing an object or a situation; they pay attention to linguistic accuracy of his utterances; they respect their cultural heritage and protect it from being forgotten" [Piwońska 2001, p. 73]. This increased interest in "one's own" heritage sites opens up new possibilities to those who manage objects along the route, e.g. running programmes for volunteers. The number and kinds of interactions seem to be unlimited here and the only prerequisite is the people, who are willing to take up unusual challenges.

These creative persons acting in the direct vicinity of a site constitute another group of stakeholders. The so-called "local actors" are all people making effort for the region. It may be both a teacher and an employer of the local library, the rector of the local parish, a local patriot or an involved citizen. Contribution of such people is often invaluable and their involvement easily translates into better management of an object that is part of the route (for example, in Lipnica Murowana on public holidays, guiding services in the wooden Church of Saint Leonard are provided by a retired man who settled in the village some time ago).

Frequently, active and creative people from the area establish local, non-governmental organizations. It is believed they have a strong will for taking action (which is not exclusively motivated by a strive for profit). They are flexible and can adjust to temporary conditions, or have the ability to carry out unusual, unique projects. This is why winning local associations for cooperation (not only those acting in the areas strictly associated with protection and animation of cultural heritage) may result in considerable broadening of options on offer. Significant role in this respect may also be played by local institutions of culture. Their institutional and organizational stability may become an asset for numerous activities that aim at animating a cultural heritage route. Moreover, such institutions may contribute as partners or as an entity which independently designs options related to the relevant subject matter within a site along a specific route (e.g. expositions devoted to: the region's history, local intangible heritage, local heroes, etc.). In the case of peripheral sites, a local institution of culture may also support those who manage the route, as regards ensuring visitors' access to the site.

Naturally, local governments at each level will have significant influence on the route. A good example of the existing interdependencies is the case of the Śląskie Province, where the condition of the route (or the level of interest in its development) has improved since one of the Marshalls, who is a local patriot, became greatly interested in the preservation of local cultural heritage. A similar yet negative example here is connected with the region of Małopolska; from the time a former Marshall, who was passionate about wooden architecture, left the office, the provincial authorities do not pay as much attention to the route any more. On the local level (a commune) these interdependencies are even more visible and here we can clearly see the symmetry of such relations. On the one hand, it often happens that the condition of a historical site depends on the commune authorities. On the other hand, the same authorities, in their operations, may depend on the current condition of local cultural heritage (it is easier to encourage investors for cooperation when they can see well preserved heritage sites bearing witness to the wealth of local history).

Gaining interest of the media is indispensable for creating positive atmosphere around a route. This can be easily achieved by organizing study tours for journalists. These should include visits to selected sites (with a competent guide), as well as visits to sites related to the route. Moreover, dinner at a restaurant serving regional dishes is also a good idea. This can be a perfect chance to disseminate information and promotion materials. Cooperation with wide-ranging mass media is as important as cooperation with local (regional) media. The former may contribute to increased interest among tourists from distant places. The latter, in turn, have influence on the daily functioning of heritage monuments in a local community, which – as was written above – is a matter of primary importance. "Research conducted by the Association of the Local Press shows that local press is the basic source of knowledge on local issues for more than 50 % of the respondents. Notably, more than 60% of the respondents declared they had read the latest issue of the local paper." [Piwek 2011, p. 83]. This is the reason why journalists should be regarded as a significant group of stakeholders.

Promotion of local, cultural heritage is also inextricably connected with activities of local academics and researchers. Related benefits may be varied and difficult to predict. Such cooperation may result in the preparation of a monograph of a heritage monument (e.g. a diploma work of a student). Also, it may be related to organizing students' trainings in the region; this way it would be possible to ensure public custodians for sites – at least in the summer season. Increased interest in specific sites (a route or heritage) on the part of academic circles may also contribute to their promotion. Researchers are usually a mobile group and they willingly share their latest achievements, research results, interest or passions. Thus, it is worth treating them as "ambassadors" of a route.

Entrepreneurs are also a significant group from the viewpoint of stakeholders theory. Again, the group comprises both persons that are economically active in the closest vicinity of the route and big companies not related directly to the local heritage. The former ones can naturally participate in many activities aimed at protection of local cultural heritage. The latter, usually thanks to activities undertaken by local leaders, may want to support local heritage preservation programs, provided that they become convinced about the value of such endeavuors. Such activities will be probably encountered more often, since they perfectly fit in the development of positive image of a company, within the program promoting social responsibility of the business sector.

Among the groups that have significantly less influence on heritage routes there are at least two worth mentioning: business persons (who came to the region for specific reasons and happened to find out about a cultural heritage route) and guests (who got acquainted with the route in a similar way as business persons, but came here for personal reasons, for example to visit their family or friends). In both cases the first contact may bring

a long-term effect, when representatives of these two groups come back to the region as tourists in order to visit the cultural heritage route.

Conclusions

This comprehensive list of entities having possible impact on cultural routes still does not explain thoroughly the complexity of contacts and relations involved here. It is often the case that "strangers" move into regions which they had previously visited as tourists, guests or on business. Although – as was written above – they do not become automatically natural heirs of local heritage we may assume that from this moment they are its co-creators…

Relations between the aforementioned groups naturally involve possible tensions. It is practically impossible that all such entities will have the same attitude towards heritage encountered by them. The differences in their attitudes will determine the intensity of tensions or conflicts. Harmony in this respect – at the highest possible level – may be ensured solely by educating each group and making them sensitive towards the needs of others; in extreme cases there may be a need for mediation.

Irrespective of how complex these relations may be, full identification of stakeholders is a precondition for transforming a cultural heritage route into a structure having importance for protection and promotion of cultural heritage, local development and growth of cultural identity (for both local communities and tourists).

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Zarządzanie strategiczne szlakiem dziedzictwa kulturowego w świetle koncepcji *stakeholders*

Słowa kluczowe: szlak dziedzictwa kulturowego, misja, strategia, stakeholders

Streszczenie:
Artykuł omawia jeden z aspektów zarządzania strategicznego szlakami dziedzictwa kulturowego w Polsce. Spośród kilkuset działających tras tego typu, żadna nie jest poddana konsekwentnemu zarządzaniu, dla żadnej nie sformułowano misji, ani nie opracowano strategii. W tej sytuacji nawet w części nie wykorzystywany jest drzemiący w nich potencjał. Sięgnięcie po znaną z zarządzania koncepcję stakeholders ma uświadamiać, jak olbrzymi zasięg oddziaływania społecznego mają szlaki dziedzictwa kulturowego.