

VOLUNTARY CULTURE AS LEVERAGE  
VALUE WITH ADDED FOR **LEVER** SPARSELY POPULATED  
AREAS  
DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION



## Multilateral Need Survey Voluntary culture in sparsely populated areas

Hans Jørgen Vodsgaard (ed.)

## **Multilateral Need Survey – Voluntary Culture in sparsely populated areas**

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Publisher: Interfolks Forlag

Layout: Interfolks Forlag

1<sup>st</sup> edition, July 2016

ISBN 978-87-992776-9-8

This survey has been developed in the framework of the NGO project, entitled: LEVER - Voluntary culture as leverage of cross-cultural activities in sparsely populated areas with added value for democratic participation and community bonding.

See the project website: <http://www.culture-lever.net/>

The project has been supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers' NGO Programme for the Baltic Sea Region.



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# Preface

This report is part of the 3-year NGO development project, Jan 2016 – Dec 2018, entitled “LEVER – Voluntary culture as leverage of cross-cultural activities in sparsely populated areas with an added value for democratic participation and community bonding”.

The project has been supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers’ NGO programme for the Baltic Sea Region. The partnership circle consists of six NGO organisations from the Baltic Sea Region working in the area of voluntary culture, liberal adult education and civil society development. The partners are:

The National Association of Voluntary Cultural Councils in Denmark,  
The Finnish Swedish Youth Association,  
The Polish Foundation of Alternative Educational Initiatives,  
The Belarusian Republican Non-Governmental Organization, "United Way",  
The Association of Lithuanian Castles and Manors, and  
Interfolk, Institute for Civil Society from Denmark.

During the last years, we have seen more political and public interest for reviving the rural and sparsely populated areas and to counter the current trend, where citizens are moving from rural to urban areas. One of more ways to counter this trend is to promote better culture and leisure time opportunities, and the partnership circle shares the view that new initiatives in the third sector by voluntary culture associations and culture volunteers can make a difference.

In this project, we intend to develop new methods and approaches to revive the areas and secure sustainability by applying the “citizen help citizen” approach, where civil society associations and their volunteers from the cross-cultural sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture, and heritage are engaged to provide involving arts and culture activities with an added value for civic participation and community bonding.

The first main step in the project has been, during Feb – May 2016, to complete a series of need surveys in the participating countries. The results of these surveys are presented in this report.

The common aim of the surveys has been to clarify the needs and current state of art and to present the results with recommendations for the subsequent series of 1-2 pilot works in each partner country, which will start in the autumn 2016 and be completed at the end of 2017. During the last project year in 2018, we will publish a Handbook on methods and best practise as well as a Curricula Compendium for culture volunteers. For more information, see the project website: [www.culture-lever.net](http://www.culture-lever.net)

We hope this multilateral survey report can provide new knowledge and give inspiration for other stakeholders to involve the voluntary culture in reviving the local communities in the sparsely populated areas.

June 2016,  
Hans Jørgen Vodsgaard

# Introduction to the surveys

**Voluntary culture as leverage of cross-cultural activities in sparsely populated areas with an added value for civic participation and community bonding.**

**Middelfart, June 2016**

**By Hans Jørgen Vodsgaard, Head of Institute  
Interfolk, Institute for Civil Society**

## ***Content***

1. Background and need of the project
2. Priorities of the Nordic Council of Ministers' NGO programme
3. Aim and objectives
4. Concluding remarks

## 1. Background and need

During the last years, we have seen more political and public interest in the Baltic Sea Region as well as in the wider European community for reviving the rural and sparsely populated areas, and to counter the current trend, where citizens are moving from rural to urban areas.<sup>1</sup>

In the Danish context as an example, thousands of people move every month into the country's largest cities and empties slowly the smaller municipalities for citizens. The outcome is hereby that the rural areas have a declining number of inhabitants, and often worse, fewer people of working age.

*"We get a breakdown of Denmark, where the winners are the big cities with their education, good job opportunities and attractive culture. The losers can look forward to closures of schools and other welfare institutions. They have fewer resources to maintain the level of service, we know today. There are more holes in the roads, and a longer time before they are repaired".*

Lea Louise Holst Laursen, Associate Professor at the Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology at Aalborg University

This trend creates a more unbalanced country. It weakens the social equality and inclusion, the cultural cohesion and the economic sustainability and living conditions for major groups in the society.

### 1.1 The lack of culture and leisure time opportunities

There are in our point of view not only economic, but also cultural reasons for this trend. Especially, well-skilled and higher-educated younger people seek to the bigger cities, not only due to lack of well-paid job opportunities in the rural areas, but also due to lack of culture and leisure time opportunities. Likewise, most companies and businesses opt out to establish new activity in these areas, not because of logistic problems, but because it is difficult to attract employees with the needed competences despite the lower living costs here.

Cause and effect is self-reinforcing. The remote areas have fewer young well-educated and skilled workers, more with a short or no education, especially a surplus of young men, and a lot of pensioners. The well skilled don't wish to live there, because it seems as boring places with few leisure time activities and available arts and culture opportunities. The countryside, the province gets low status. A place to leave for the young and bright.

A few steps to revive the villages and remote areas have among other countries already been taken in Denmark, but progress is slow, and the models for how it could be done, is not described.

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<sup>1</sup> The key figures for the global trend for urbanisation / internal immigration are the following:

In 1950:- 29% of the world population lived in major cities. In 2012: 50 % of the world population lived in major cities. In 2050: 75% of the world population will live in larger cities. (UN estimate).

In general, the main focus has been on improved economic conditions, better transportation and infrastructure, relocation of government jobs from the centres to the periphery, etc, while there haven't been done much to provide better and more available arts and culture opportunities. But this is short-sighted:

*"Culture is the modern industrial policy (...). The transformation from industrial to knowledge society is on-going. One of the prerequisites to attract skilled labor is well-functioning cultural and recreational opportunities".*

Development Manager Rune Larsson, Hjørring Municipality

In truth, some municipalities in the rural areas have tried to improve the culture and leisure time opportunities, but their focus have mainly been on the public services and new market offerings and less on the involvement of the civil society associations in the cultural field.

One of more ways to counter this trend is - in our point of view - therefore to promote better culture and leisure time opportunities, and here new initiatives in the third sector by voluntary culture associations and culture volunteers can make a difference.

## 2.2 Culture makes a difference

Sparsely populated areas face stark challenges to revive the local communities and promote housing and employment, but they also represent an opportunity to rebuild a community and strengthen local identity through artistic and cultural activities.

A splendid example of what makes culture strong and sustainable in remotely populated areas has been documented in the report by Francois Matarasso "Stories and Fables - Reflections on culture development in Orkney" (The Highlands and Islands Enterprise, January 2012), where a strong ethos of volunteering and working together combined with the natural archaeological and historical assets of the islands have helped to revive the local communities.

This and other examples - as presented in the national surveys in this report - indicate that voluntary art and culture associations can play an important role to make our marginal areas more attractive to new residents, tourism and businesses, because:

- Art and culture help to create the community and unity that can save a village or area from being emptied of content.
- Inclusion in art and culture gives new life and creates responsible citizens.
- A vibrant cultural life and an enhanced community can create a more sustainable society, where all citizens are ready to take responsibility for their own and others' lives and for the local community as a whole.

To secure cultural sustainability in these areas, we need to strengthen the "citizen help citizen" or "peer to peer approach", where civil society associations from the cross-cultural sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture, and heritage develop their capacities and competences to provide more available and involving arts and culture with an added value for civic and democratic participation, community bonding and local identity.

## 2. Priorities of the Nordic Council of Ministers' NGO programme

The idea of promoting “cultural sustainability” by applying the “citizen help citizen” approach is quite new. It was for example introduced by the Nordic Council of Ministers just some years ago as a new programme priority for the culture policy in the Nordic countries, and even here it still haven't been applied much in specific political initiatives or systematic development work, and especially not in relation to sparsely populated areas.

A mapping of the granted European projects since 2010 by the Lifelong Learning Programme, including the former Grundtvig and now Erasmus+ programme, also indicate that there haven't been any development projects in relation to arts and culture activities in a civil society context in sparsely populated areas.

### 2.1 Links to the guidelines for co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region

The objectives of the project have close links to the priorities of the Nordic Council of Ministers' NGO programme for the Baltic Sea Region.

In general, the project has several links to NCM's culture policy and Neighbourhood Policy as well as the EU's Baltic Sea Strategy. The project:

- Meets NCM's priority of securing cultural sustainability by applying the “citizen help citizen” approach”, where cultural volunteers can provide involving arts and culture activities with an added value for civic and democratic participation and community bonding;
- Includes complementarity among the NGO associations and volunteers and facilitate people-to-people contacts in the Northern part of Europe;
- Promotes best practices and pathfinders for involving culture NGO's to address the challenges of reviving local communities in sparsely populated areas in the Baltic Sea Region;
- Focuses on NGO cooperation to make marginal areas more attractive to new residents and businesses, and thereby brings added value and improve the possible support from the European Union, national and other financing instruments;

The project also has a clear link to NCM's guidelines for co-operation with the Baltic States. The project:

- Supports parts of the EU's Baltic Sea Strategy and the NCM's Neighbourhood Policy;
- Helps to establish networks and exchanges of experiences between the countries, which enhances the Nordic/Baltic sense of affinity and mutual understanding;
- Links to the second priority area by using voluntary culture as a mean to strengthening economic and social development in the remotely and sparsely populated areas in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

Finally, the project has a clear link to the Nordic Council of Ministers' guidelines for co-operation with Belarus, because:

- The Belarusian partner "United Way" has had leadership role in the support of the development of Belarus' non-profit sector. In 2001, the United Way launched the new program "United Community House" aimed at the collaboration efforts of the three sectors' representatives (NGO's, state institutions, and private business) by providing a wide range of information, consulting, training, and integrating activities with an agenda specifically tailored to promote capacity building of the civil society in Belarus.
- Hereby democratic objectives are promoted through a joint co-operation between civil society stakeholders, business representatives, and local and regional authorities. This joint cooperation with three sector representatives is part of our project plan for the 1-2 local pilot works in each partner country, including Belarus.
- The Belarusian partner and its stakeholders will be engaged in 1-2 local pilot works, where voluntary culture will develop cross-cultural activities in sparsely populated areas with an added value for democratic participation and community bonding, and this pilot work will involve culture NGO's and co-operation on culture issues with stakeholders from state institutions and private business.
- The project includes a multilateral development work, where the partners will implement a series of local pilot works; and thereby exchange experiences, gain mutual inspiration and provide different sorts of best practise examples; and this multilateral contexts will also help to increase the understanding between peoples and forge contacts between citizens and organisations across borders in the Baltic Sea region.

## 2.2 Links to the priority of Nordic benefits

As a development project supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers' NGO programme for the Baltic Sea Region, the project must utilize specific Nordic competence or alternatively transfer knowledge from or to the Nordic countries. It must provide Nordic benefits.

We think, the project will create "Nordic benefits", as far as the term doesn't refer to specific ethnic-cultural features, but to specific social-political features. Not to Nordic values as Ethnos, but as Demos.

Characteristic "Nordic benefits" in this sense are the welfare society, a strong civil society and a free public opinion. The Nordic countries have a huge sector of voluntary associations providing lifelong learning with added civic and democratic values. Here the activities have a clear bottom-up impetus with democratic organised associations, working as grassroots in an independent civil society context. Here the state has to support, but not to control the activities.

This arm-lengths principle is not so clear for the cross-cultural sector in the Baltic States, Poland and certainly not for Belarus, where the development of a new NGO sector to a high degree is sustained by top-down processes generated by public institutions and adjustments to the market sector.

Therefore, this project will provide exchange of experiences between countries with different civil society models, which will be useful for the non-Nordic as well as Nordic partners. Because top-down processes have also gained ground in the Nordic countries, dur-

ing the so-called "modernisation" of the welfare state by means of New Public Management, where the voluntary associations and volunteering to a high degree are incorporated in new performative strategies, defined by public authorities.

A major challenge not least for the securing of core values of the classic Nordic model in the near future will be to strengthen the cooperation between the public institutions, the market and the civil society, and at the same time avoid undermining the independent learning capacity, the arm-length principle and the democratic self-organisation of the voluntary associations in the civil society.

We expect that this project can bring valuable knowledge and new examples of best practise and pathfinders as well as worst practise and detours in relation to supporting the sparsely populated areas, which the ongoing contradictory "modernisation" in the Nordic countries can learn from.

### 3. Aim and objectives

The sector of voluntary arts and culture is next to amateur sport the largest civil society sector in the countries around the Baltic Sea, and it is the voluntary sector with the current highest rate of expansion in members and new associations. Here a vast number of cultural and educational associations provide learning activities for about 20 to 30 per cent of the populations.

However, the voluntary arts and culture associations could improve their engagement in the common goods of the local communities. Several studies indicate a wide-spread lack of social values and political attitudes and engagement among associations in the voluntary arts culture area, contrary to most other civil society associations.<sup>2</sup>

These studies concludes that the associations have a low engagement in political and societal issues, because they are typically not linked to values of ideological, spiritual, political or social nature. Very few organizations are concerned about what their activities can bring the wider society or feel a responsibility for the common good. The studies give the impression of a myriad of small democratic, but self-sufficient reserves for persons with interests in a specific area of art and culture, but without any greater interest and vision for the wider community. In the associations "they fiddle while Rome burns".

These studies may not be quite fair and they neglect the many associations and groups that in fact are engaged in local community work and apply arts and culture to include and empower marginalised areas and groups in our communities, as the many good examples in the studies of this report document. Anyhow, the tendency to self-sufficiency cannot be explained away, and an underlying objective of this project is also to reverse this trend.

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<sup>2</sup> Such as the Survey of the voluntary cultural sector, published by the Danish Ministry of Culture, May 2006 (Undersøgelse af det frivillige Kulturelle område) and the Survey of volunteering and non-profit in Denmark, published by the Social Research Institute, 2006 (Frivillighed og nonprofit i Danmark), which was part of the international survey of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project.

### 3.1 The project objectives

As mentioned, the overall aim of the project is to apply the "citizen help citizen" approach within voluntary art and culture to help to provide sustainable communities also in the sparsely populated areas. This approach will also imply that the culture associations strengthen their organizational capacity and competences to promote such a mission.

The civil society associations and their volunteers from the cross-cultural sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture, and heritage need to develop new methods and approaches and provide new examples of good practise in the field. Therefore, the partners in the project will prepare, implement and complete pilot works within cross-cultural activities in 1-2 sparsely populated communities in each partner country, in order to create exemplary actions that can inspire others.

The project objectives are

- To develop innovative ways of outreach to citizens engaged in arts and culture to become resourceful volunteers (culture boosters) in cross-cultural activities in the local communities.
- To develop high quality learning opportunities tailored to these groups to learn how to initiate and organise local cultural activities with an added value for civic participation, community bonding and local identity.
- To develop the know-how and abilities of the voluntary associations in this cross-cultural sector to support volunteering and cooperation with local stakeholders to initiate enlivening arts and culture opportunities with added community values.
- To develop appropriate methods to assess and certificate the involved knowledge, skills and attitudes to fulfil such demanding voluntary work.

### 3.2 The reason for the need surveys

The first step in the development work is to complete local need surveys to clarify the baseline as well as to find examples of good practise on how to provide cross-disciplinary arts and culture opportunities for the local communities in sparsely populated areas with an added value for civic participation, community bonding and local identity.

Hereby the subsequent development work and related impact evaluation get a baseline to start with, a clearer picture of the needs and refined guidelines for improvement. We can present the possible gaps between the desired status and current status and finding out the ways to fill that gap. The difference, between where we are now and where we want to be, defines where our development work shall concentrate its effort.

The multilateral series of baseline surveys will thereby also act as benchmarks to assess the quality and relevance of the subsequent development work, and they will be a key tool in the project valorisation process.

### 3.3 The guidelines for the need surveys

The overall aim of the baseline/needs surveys in each partner country has been to clarify the current state of art and challenges to counter the current trend, where citizens are moving from rural to urban areas, and to present the results with recommendations for the subsequent pilot work.

It must be emphasised that the ambition of the surveys was not to make a complete survey of the provision of culture activities by voluntary culture associations in the sparsely populated areas in each country, but more limited:

- To short present the current culture policy in each country / region with reference to the project issue and the need for a better policy;
- To find and analyse 2-4 representative examples of good practise in selected communities in sparsely populated areas in each country, where voluntary culture associations and their volunteers make a difference;
- To clarify the risks and challenges for the voluntary culture associations to fulfil the project aim of helping the local communities in sparsely populated areas to avoid migration to, especially regarding what they need to improve to do a better job?

## 4. Concluding remarks

Even though the six project partners share a common interest in the topic and objectives of the project, they at the same time represent different backgrounds and approaches and can involve diverse competencies, skills, experiences and networks in the field.

These differences will pulled together bring more knowledge and experiences regarding the common Nordic/Baltic challenges as well as a more comprehensive approach to the work programme of the project. The issues addressed by the varied surveys will benefit from the contributions of partners from different areas of voluntary culture, liberal adult education and civil society development.

Thereby the following surveys can provide a wide range of multilateral Nordic/Baltic knowhow and different expertises, and present a varied approach to the methodological challenges, and bring more Nordic/Baltic reliability and validity to the survey results.

Enjoy.

# I. Need survey in Poland

## **A study on state of the art of cultural activities in the sparsely populated areas in Poland**

**Bielsko-Biała, April 2016**

**By Rafał Dadak, project manager  
Foundation of Alternative Educational Initiatives**

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  - 2.3. The "Kultura na Granicy" and "CINEMA AT THE BORDER" festival
3. Risks & challenges
4. Recommendations

## 1. The current culture policy in Poland with reference to rural areas

The sparsely populated areas in Poland are mostly the rural areas, as defined in the Polish Rural Areas Development Programme. Cultural activities may be realized in Poland by all non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as associations or foundations, if only culture/artistic activity-related goals are described in the statute of the organisation. This is possible since activities - such as those in the field of culture, arts, cultural heritage and national heritage protection; maintaining and disseminating national traditions and development of national, civil and cultural awareness as well as activities for the benefit of the national and ethnic minorities and regional language - are included in the social benefit activity sphere, described in the Public Benefit and Volunteer Work Act, defining the scope of possible activities of the NGOs.

All the entities realising cultural policy in Poland or running cultural centres/units, including NGOs, need to realise their activities on the base of the Organisation and Conducting Cultural Policy Act, as well as the Public Benefit and Volunteer Work Act. The State patronage regarding NGOs running cultural centres/units is being realised in a form of the Minister of Culture Programmes. The non-governmental organisations may apply for grants for activities in the field of film, theatre, festivals, readership, music and art pieces purchasing.

The cultural activities in Poland are being run by the NGOs in forms, among others, such as art-galleries, cultural centres, community houses, clubs, museums, theatres, etc. Non-governmental organisations may also realise cultural tasks being commissioned by the local government units. Cultural activities may also be included in projects being submitted in the frame of the two most popular granting programmes for the NGO sector: The Civic Initiatives Fund Programme and the Social Activity of Seniors Programme.

Finances for cultural activities, the NGOs in Poland must acquire themselves. This is the biggest challenge for the cultural centres/units run by local communities/civil society organisations (as 62% of this kind of units indicates). The cultural policy, on the regional/local levels, is being realised by the local government units in the frame of the so-called „Development Strategies” created for a specific region. The guidelines for cooperation between the local government and non-governmental organisations are clarified in the so-called “NGOs Cooperation Programmes” that are being outlined just for 1 year-long periods. Public organizer of a cultural centre/unit can entrust the management of the unit to another legal person, including NGO, and then the centre/unit is financed from the public funds. The level of financing for the cultural sector by the local government units, on the regional/local level in Poland, is very diverse.

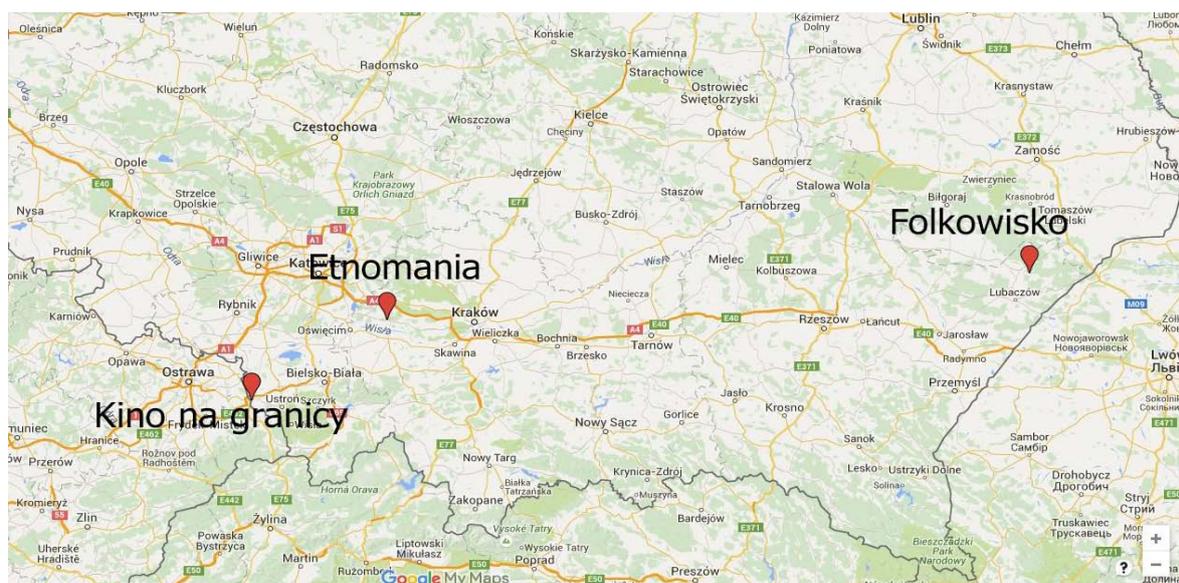
The rural areas in Poland are defined as those inhabited by less than 20 thousands of persons, excluding also towns inhabited by a population bigger than 20 thousands of people. These are so-called rural communes and urban-rural communes. These areas are covered by so-called Local Development Strategy-documents being developed in cooperation by the public, business and social (NGO) sector representatives. Support offered depends on the specific area diagnosis, local needs identified, and priorities for the specific region.

The SWOT analysis included in the national Rural Areas Development Strategy does not identify, specifically, culture-related subjects concerning rural areas. One of the main barriers for culture development in the rural/sparsely populated areas is, undoubtedly, under-invested road infrastructure. One of the consequences is low level of interest concerning the cultural resources of those areas. An opportunity for the culture development in rural/sparsely populated areas is increased interest in residence and rest on these areas. One of the main challenges is low level of promotion of the rural/sparsely populated areas and their cultural centres/units, also those being run by non-governmental organisations. Reference is also being made to the culture as an endogenous potential of rural areas development and activation of local communities.

An important, strong element of cultural integration in the rural areas is craft, craftsmanship. Here, the non-governmental organisations constitute an important factor supporting the preservation of the cultural heritage as well as good image of crafts building. However, there has been developed no legally documents in Poland for the craft industry yet, that would define the development strategy for this sector.

The Rural Areas Development Programme designed for the period 2014-2020 will support the cultural activities as well as national heritage preserving activities in the frame of the LEADER Programme (with a current budget of 467,7 mill Euro). The programme will be realised by so-called Local Activity Groups operating on the local levels (at the moment there are around 330 such organisations in Poland). The projects foreseen for co-funding are to create synergy of activities in the fields of cultural resources, creativity stimulation, touristic products, and economical potential growth. Projects preferred would be those implemented in socio - economic and public partnership that would serve to satisfy the needs of the local community.

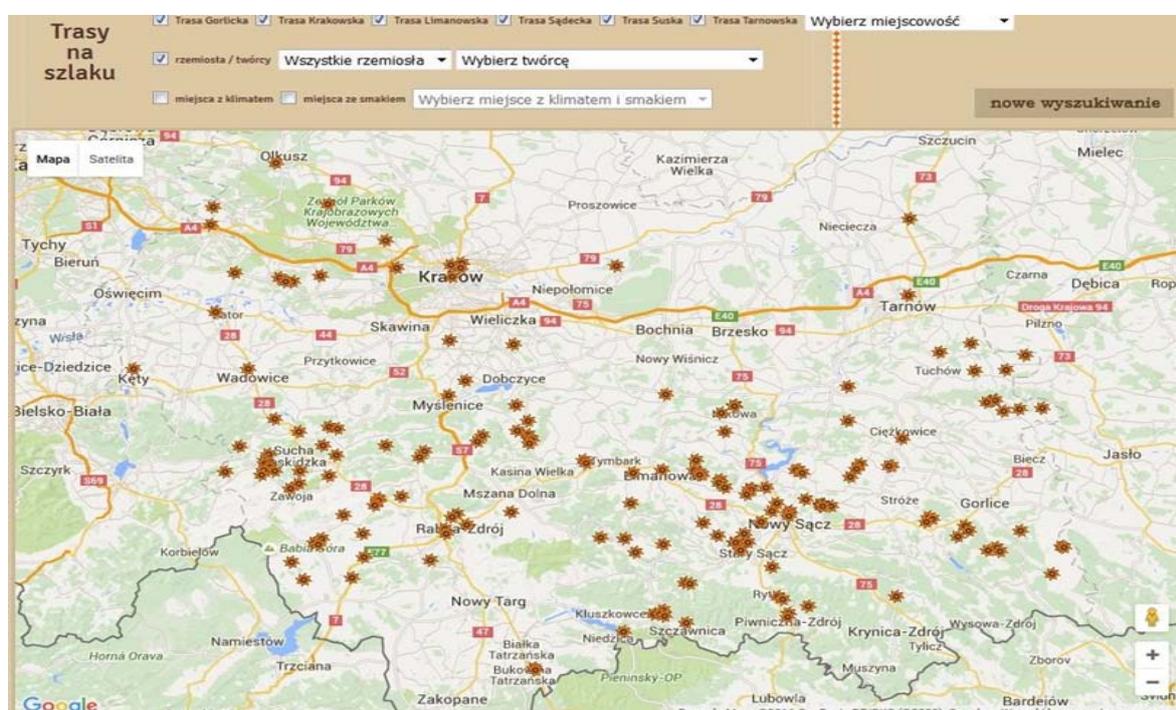
## 2. Examples of good practices:



## 2.1. The Crafts Track in Małopolska and ETNOMANIA festival in Wygieźłów

The Crafts Track project was launched to show contemporary folk artists, who work using a combination of modern and traditional methods. Owing to the track it's possible to meet the artists for whom craft is not only a job but first of all - a passion. Thanks to the Crafts Track, tourists and other interested can get to know old professions and traditions in the Małopolska region (South of Poland) or to rediscover them.

In the project participates workshops, studios and craftsmen houses from all over Małopolska voivodeship. Currently the database contains more than 200 artists, representing 24 crafts, working in nearly 130 towns/villages. They are all gathered in the frame of seven regional routes: The Kraków route, the Tarnów route, the Suska route, the Limanowska route, the Sądecka route, the Gorlice route and the Podhalańska route.



\* The routes on the Małopolski Crafts Track

The Track, among others, opens the door to a century-old pottery and a weaving workshops, leads through a wicker plantation and a Lemko land (Lemko is one of the four legally recognized ethnic minorities in Poland).

Thanks to the track it's possible to combine active recreation with learning craft techniques and getting to know culture of the region. A special web page has also been launched, containing a guide to the Track - [www.szlakrzemiosla.pl](http://www.szlakrzemiosla.pl) – where there are information about the artists and crafts, an interactive map with suggestions of routes, multimedia materials, current information about cultural events, a base of interesting sites and a touristic offer.

For the owners of electronic devices with Android and Apple iOS systems a special application has been prepared – The Craft Track – that includes descriptions and contact de-

tails to 50 active artists, information about current events on the Track, galleries of products, as well as an interactive map with the help of which you can plan your trip on Track.

Link to the event webpage: [www.szlakrzemiosla.pl](http://www.szlakrzemiosla.pl) \* <http://etnomania.pl>



ETNOMANIA is the most important event on the Crafts Track arranged by The NADwyrasz Association. The event takes place in Nadwiślański Park ETNOgraficzny in Wygieźów (40 km from Krakow). During the festival you can take part in crafts workshops conducted by artists from the Track Crafts Malopolska - including pottery, lace making, glass painting, sculpture, tissue paper objects making, smithery, folk toys making, paper cut-outs making and many more. You can also listen to concerts of ethno music bands and learn folk dances, see the latest fashion collections inspired by folk, buy original hand-made items, try regional dishes and so-called slow food. The festival takes place in the picturesque open-air heritage park.

## 2.2. FOLKOWISKO Festival in Gorajec

The FOLKOWISKO festival is an annual event, which take place in the tiny village Gorajec in the Podkarpackie region, Eastern Poland. It's going to be the 6th edition of this festival this year (2016). The FOLKOWISKO is an interdisciplinary, 3-days long event, which presents multicultural sources of national culture of Poland. As the organisers define it, the event offers an opportunity to look at the world from the little village at-the-end-of-the-world perspective, where modernity is combined with tradition. During every edition there are important social issues discussed. There are concerts of the best artists performing traditional European music.

The festival was appreciated and awarded by EFFE (Europe for Festivals, Festivals for Europe) for its special atmosphere, care for tradition combined with an innovative way of organizing and promoting the event, as well as a great interaction between the audience, local community and artists. During these 6 years the organisers managed to create strong communities gathered around the festival. An organisation – Folkowisko Association – was founded, that works actively through the whole year.

Every year the FOLKOWISKO has a new theme, for example in 2016 it will be migrations from the perspective of individual people, former and contemporary migrants. There are some constant points too. There are debates, folk crafts workshops, trainings, concerts and local tours, where walking, car tours or kayaking are offered. The organisers are doing their best to make sure, the festival's guests are actively involved in all events; so many guests are coming back to the festival.



Thanks to the festival, the whole region gains recognition in Poland and outside. The festival also has some achievements in the field of education and promotion. The FOLKOWISKO is often called „three-day school of folk crafts, culture and tradition”. The FOLKOWISKO is also a space for cultural exchange between different social groups.

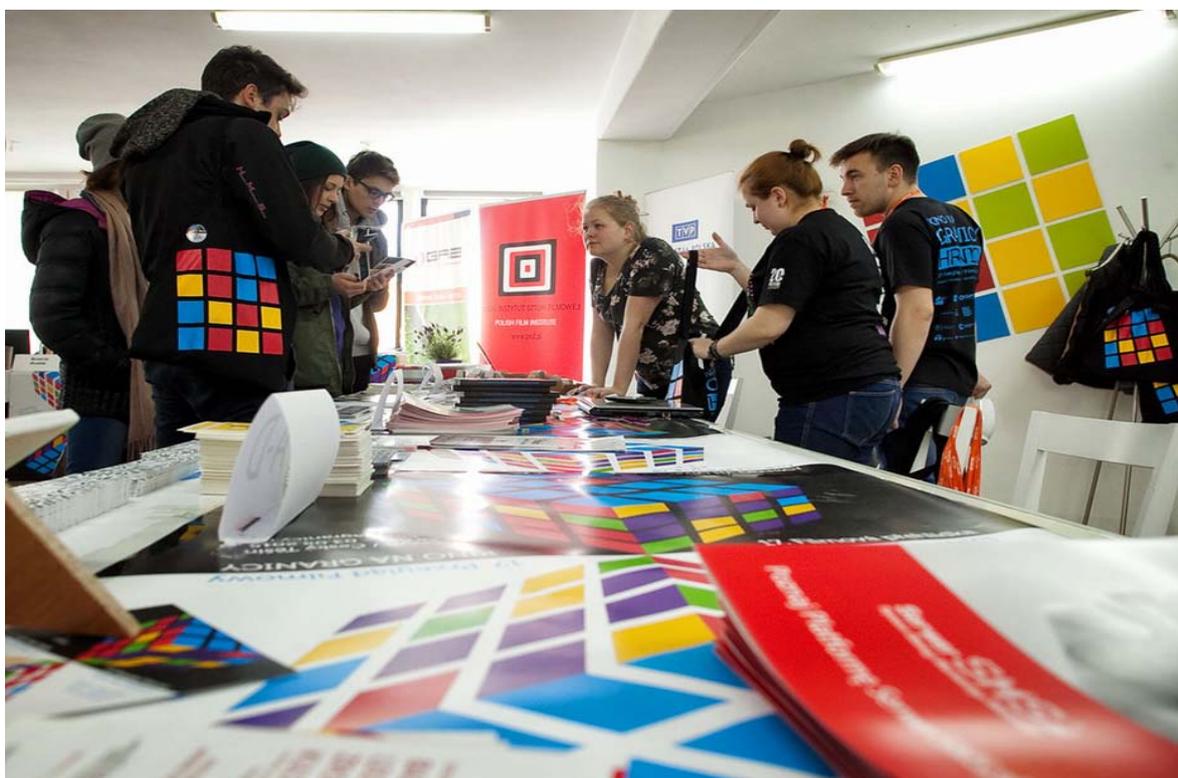
One of the most important aspects of the festival is the region's promotion, presenting of its diversity and uniqueness. Creating FOLKOWISKO's brand also strengthened the brand of the Roztocze Wschodnie region, as a perfect place for rest in the surroundings of nature and traditional culture.

Link to the event webpage: <http://www.folkowisko.pl>

### 2.3. The "Kultura na Granicy" Association and "CINEMA AT THE BORDER" festival

„CINEMA AT THE BORDER” (“Kino na Granicy”) is a film festival organized by the "Kultura na Granicy" (“Culture at the Border”) Association in Cieszyn, a small “double” town at the South of Poland. “Double” town, because there is a Polish Cieszyn and a Czech Cieszyn town, separated by the Olza river.

The Film review Kino na Granicy / Kino na Hranici Festival idea was born in the Polish-Czech-Slovak Solidarity movement, embedded in a need to get to know the culture of neighbours across the Olza river. The first edition of the festival took place in 1999 and offered 11 Czech movies that were displayed in one cinema. Third edition broadened an artistic search for Slovakian movies. Beginning from the fourth edition the festival is held both on the Polish and Czech side of the Cieszyn town. In the sixth edition, Polish and Hungarian movies appeared too. Number of showed movies systematically has been increased up to 100 in the twelfth edition.



From then on the festival lasts 6 days offering over 100 Polish, Czech, Slovakian and Hungarian movies to watch, and many accompanying events, such as concerts, workshops, exhibitions and many other artistic events organized both on the Czech and Polish side of the border. The main idea of the festival remains unchanged to discover and promote the culture of the nearest neighbours. Festival run by the "Kultura na Granicy" Association has been rewarded and shortlisted for many awards, among others Polish Film Institute Reward. A unique feature of the festival is its intimate atmosphere that's why so many people like coming back there.

An interesting context is that it was also in Cieszyn, where one of the other most popular Polish (and nowadays - international) film festivals - Era Nowe Horyzonty (New Horizons) Film Festival – was initiated. In 2016 there will be 16<sup>th</sup> edition organised. The festival after few years moved out from Cieszyn to Wrocław (a big city in South-Western Poland), since the festival grew and Cieszyn became “too small” for it. „CINEMA AT THE BORDER” festival remains in Cieszyn and the “size” of the town, the fact festival places are located in a walking distance, and the unique intimate atmosphere is what brings so many people back there every year.

Link to the event webpage: <http://kinonagranicy.pl>

### 3. Risks & challenges

The main risks & challenges faced by voluntary culture associations in Poland are:

- Low level of social communication
- Low level of social capital
- Disintegration of the art communities
- Low level of cooperation between the NGO's and culture, education, science and business sectors
- Low awareness of the importance of cultural education
- Insufficient use of cultural potential for development processes
- Insufficient financial resources for the sustainability and development of cultural projects
- Difficulties in obtaining sponsors
- The bureaucratic system of fundraising by NGOs and individual artists
- Lack of a coherent cultural policy of local governments
- Low activity of artists in the economic life and the difficulties in the development of the cultural industry
- Low accessibility of the national heritage in a multimedia forms
- Low level of digitization of culture resources
- Insufficient building cultural competence in society through cultural education
- Low level of cultural activity and restrictions on access to culture in rural areas
- Inconsistent process of digitization and sharing of cultural resources
- Lack of creative and innovative behaviours at the group level
- Not adapted rules of functioning of cultural institutions to the needs of customers
- Low activity of artists in the economic life
- Unfavourable institutional environment for the development of the creative industries sectors
- Not adapting of cultural offer to the pattern of spending free time
- Dependence of NGOs from public funds and lack of ability to generate their own revenue

- Low awareness of the importance of innovation as a key factor for the development of social capital
- Lack of specific studies on the participation of NGOs in culture
- Low level of knowledge about the cultural needs of the local communities
- No significant achievements of the institutions of culture in attracting new audiences
- Coordination of cultural activities - the difficulty in creating a common calendar of events

## 4. Recommendations

Recommendations on how to improve providing cultural activities by voluntary culture associations in Poland:

- Using of cultural heritage as potential for development
- Adapting the cultural offer for different audiences
- Sustainable amount of cultural events in the year
- The growing importance of cultural tourism
- Conducting a public debate about culture and its role for the development
- Increasing the number of international cultural projects, co-funded by the EU funds and other sources
- Development of new forms of participation in culture - the use of new technologies
- The answer to the growing demand for cultural events
- Increasing recognition of heritage sites as tourist attractions in rural areas
- Improving of communication and cooperation between public, economic and social entities (NGO)
- Increasing the number grass-roots initiatives
- Implementation of modern management standards and new technologies
- Building social capital through a sense of community, mutual trust and the ability to use common cultural heritage
- Using a network of NGOs for the promotion of cultural activities
- Reacting to changes in the pattern of participation in cultural life - fostering participation and cooperation
- The using of culture by NGOs to build social cohesion and encourage volunteering
- Increasing NGO's cultural activities through intergenerational, original projects
- Searching of charismatic people to work with youth and proficient in the use of high tech communication tools
- Development of skills of designing multimedia and interdisciplinary events
- Strengthening local leaders
- The creation of local (social) culture coordinators
- Studying of the cultural needs of local communities

## II. Need survey in Lithuania

### **A study on state of the art of cultural activities in the sparsely populated areas in Lithuania**

**Vilnius, May 2016**

**By Regina Žirgulevičienė, project manager  
Association of Lithuanian Castles and Manors**

#### ***Content***

1. Background and aim of the local survey
2. Methodical opening
3. Current tendencies in national/regional culture policies in the field
4. Representative examples of good practise
  - 4.1. Aikas Žado laboratory in Žeimiai manor house
  - 4.2. Sližių manor in Ukmergė district
  - 4.3. Saldutiškis manor in Utena district
  - 4.4 Akmena manor in Anykščiai district
5. Conclusions – needs and challenges
6. Recommendations for the subsequent pilot work

## 1. Background and aim of the local survey

The Manors and castles in the Lithuanian territory began to settle in the thirteenth century. At the beginning of XX century there were approximately 3000 manors. The estate consists of palaces, parks, gardens, outbuildings.

They were formed as cultural centres from the very beginning. Villages formed around the estates. Historically, there were not many cities and towns in the territory of Lithuania. Lithuania was a rural region, and the majority of the population lived in rural areas. The manors were surrounded by strength of villages or small towns.

In 1941 Lithuania was incorporated into the Soviet Union. the Estates were nationalized immediately. They were used as grain or technical warehouses, residential apartments, shops, and schools sometimes. Within 50 years the manors were severely destroyed or demolished. Thereby the villages and small towns that were located around the manors also disappeared or vegetated. Since the 90s of the last century, the rural population began to decline, the villages were rapidly disappearing, the entire territory of Lithuania, few cities except, turned into sparsely populated areas.

Our association consists of managers or owners of about 50 castles and manors. They all are our volunteers. Each of them has set a task - to restore the heavily devastated and collapsing manor and revive cultural activities in it. At present, only thanks to the activities of volunteers, the manors are slowly coming to life again. Our goal is not only to restore the manor houses and other buildings and all infrastructures, if it is possible, but also to bring back to life the heritage of cultural traditions.

This will be followed by the positive trends discovered in the course of our study, which justify an optimistic approach. Finally, we will provide proposals arising from the research on how to develop the existing potential and to eliminate the impeding barriers.

## 2. Methodical opening

This mini-survey is prepared using desktop research, interview, structured interview, summarizing visited material and talking with members of the Lithuanian association of castles and manors - owners, and managers, who are volunteers.

## 3. Current tendencies in national/regional culture policies in the field

Till our days there is no elaborated sustainable national heritage protection in Lithuania. Despite this fact, the owners and managers try to exhaust all possibilities to restore and rebuild heritage by all means. Almost all of them are volunteers. They started this work in various ways and have continued it over many years.

In many cases they are the first ones that found and discovered the beauty and attractiveness of sparsely populated areas. It's a very nice thing that they also invite others to be volunteers. From the very beginning they have invited acquaintances or relatives and

their family members to take part in voluntary activities. Step by step the participants have invited other participants.

As a current tendency we find bundle activities of work volunteers and cultural volunteers. There is a great tradition from soviet-times to spend a day or some days as a work-volunteer and to participate in voluntary actions doing some good works, cleaning surroundings or likewise. It was a very attractive thing, everybody felt significant doing useful work. Till our days residents favourably dispose of work volunteers. They participate in voluntary actions with pleasure.

On the other hand, the cultural volunteers most of all arrive from other places. In large part cultural activities for them is a way to express themselves. As a rule, the revival of sparsely populated areas is much more successful, when we band together work volunteers and cultural volunteers. Close integration of residents and people who arrive can promote that they feel freer, wish to work together, can express themselves and maintain a good mood. But the greatest thing is the gained motivation to stay for those, who live in such sparsely populated areas and a willingness to return to these places again and again for those, who live in other places.

Tourist routes and paths in the area, where there are no well-known objects, is justified only in cases, when they include some cultural activities.

## 4. Representative examples of good practise

Below we introduce some representative examples of good practise from our network.

### 4.1. Aikas Žado laboratory in Žeimiai manor house

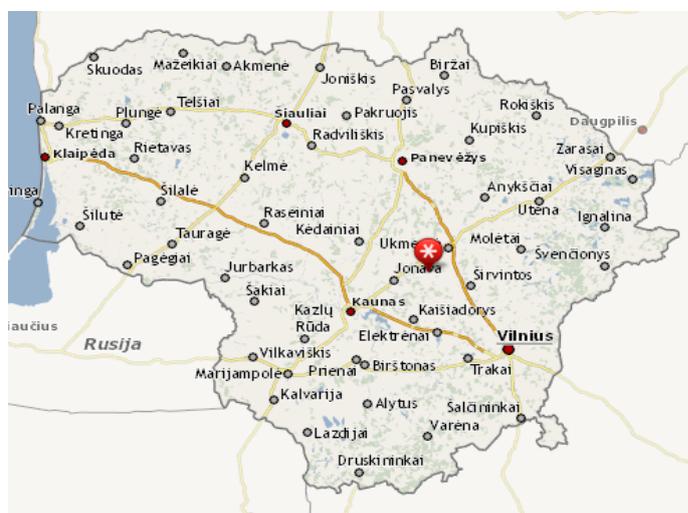


*Aikas Žado* laboratory is a laboratory, where *Aikas Žado* is working/performing. *Aikas Žado* is a post-resident. In the laboratory of *Aikas Žado*, Žeimiai manor house is being organized as a town of post-residents, where the possible participants are the prodigies of observation. The main aim of the participants living in this town is to decode the same hyper/header in different time zones (psychological and real). However, this is not a liv-

ing museum anymore, where the objects of cultural heritage that have a lasting value are serving to increase the surplus value. It is just a space, where each time, the treatment of life itself is restructured and the heritage scenario of terrestrial globe is recreated. Earth, neither faster nor slower, is being girded with the skin of aggregate. Furthermore, the technology of metabolism is being tested in the laboratory. Participate and get to know why in the year 2016 this small city reminds of an everlasting Halloween.

Meanwhile, Aikas Žado is living back in 1826 and is assisting J. Berzelius to form the first manual of organic chemistry.

## 4.2. Sližių manor in Ukmergė district



**Sližiai manor** has since the 18th century been an economic unit, which once united villages and peasants from a land area of 400 ha. It survived through the Soviet devastation, is being reborn and regains its face again as a cultural attraction centre.

Sližiai rural community is getting stronger and is fulfilling its dreams with new impulse. Culture – its background, all of HOW they do, act and work. Sližiai manor and Sližiai rural community are nourishing very different activities based on voluntary work and private initiative. Citizens are invited to participate in all their fiestas. They do dream, think and act.

Several but not all the activities, events, gatherings are described below:

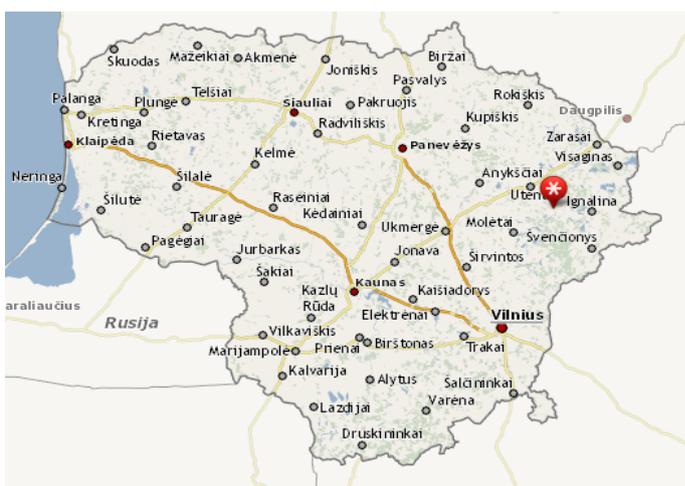
I. Celebrating the year turnover into New Year. For Christmas season participants prepare skating rink, do „snow art“, decorate the Christmas tree and venue hall. Ideas are born spontaneously and members all come together and make a beautiful and innovative fiesta.

II. Celebrating Independence Day, February 16. Traditionally a tournament of chess and table tennis games are organized. All participate in the game - young and pensioners, farmers and presidents. III. Common work „Let’s do it“. This year they renewed the outdoor volleyball/ basketball playground, renovated and maintained the village park, restored a part of the manor park, and planted oaks in the Oak Street.

IV. Poetry fiesta „Cherry blossom” each May. It has been celebrated in the village for more than 20 years. The Initiative comes from the „old times of kolchoz“. At the organisational work, the contest and prizes are established by the rural community.



#### 4.3. Saldutiškis manor in Utena district



Saldutiskis manor organises together with the local community exhibitions, events, festivals. They invite everyone to join the community organized campaigns, white heart festival, sheep shearing festival, arts exhibitions, etc.

The main activities include:

I. Revival of symbolizing holidays - Easter, International Mother Language Day and the festivals such as January 13th, February 16th and March 11<sup>th</sup> occasions, also to combine different generation for discussion of sensitive problems to our community, Saldutiskis manor invites all to have a good time spending.

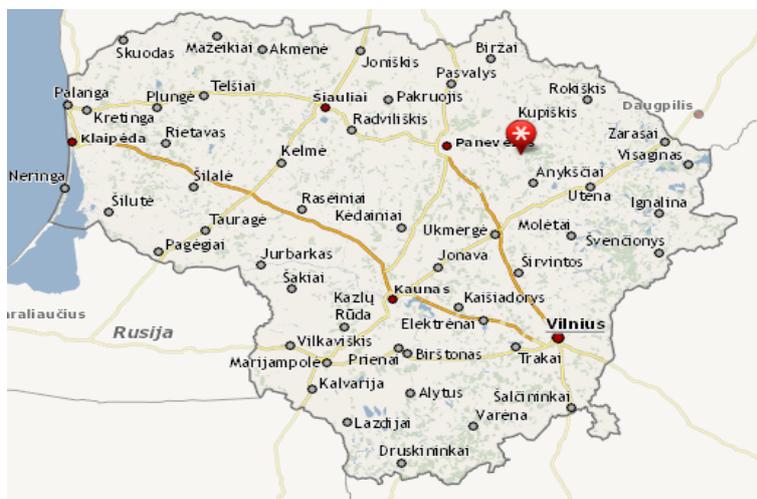
II. Manor Rural community invites to spend two days in the campaign: White Heart – to be a good citizen helping children. The campaign aims to point out that many children have cancers disease and we need to help them. A charity activity organized in Manor Park connects people and helps to support and remember children.

These activities aim to bridge the gap between rural and urban residents by appealing to a common desire to promote citizenship and nationality initiatives, to strengthen the mutual understanding of different age groups, and to engage citizens as civil society actors to tell real stories.

The goal is to speak out, what all are thinking, but too often remain silent about. The campaign also aims to point out that every third woman in the world, which is about a billion, suffers from violence. Violence against women in the family - it's all intentional physical, psychological, economic, sexual violence done by a family member, usually a man, against another member of the family, usually women, where these actions violate her, as a citizen with personal constitutional rights and freedoms, and cause economic, physical, mental or moral harm.



#### 4.4 Akmena manor in Anykščiai district



There is a small local community in Akmena manor house. As a tradition four times a year, there are organized various 2 or 3 days plenary about earthenware, paintings or some other forms of arts and crafts. At the same time participants have other obligations or duties with preparing meals, arranging a flower bed, making firewood or decorating a Christmas tree. These fiestas are so attractive, that participants invite their family members and friends and long after keep discussions in Face book.



## 5. Conclusions – needs and challenges

We use the cultural heritage as a potential for development, for the benefits not only of the local communities, but also for people from towns that are looking for new opportunities and conveniences.

However, it is indeed an extremely complicated thing to restore the old manors owing to insufficient mechanisms and other resources. The need for financial resources is a main challenge; and speaking about challenges, we must also avoid terrible risks for various accidents for our volunteers. Any form of insurance would be welcome.

## 6. Recommendations for the subsequent pilot work.

The project's pilot work can provide a very good acknowledgment of the effectiveness of cultural *volunteers'* actions. It is needed to consolidate efforts to do a broader promotion, because it is not enough to do something in one or another place.

We intend to initiate pilot work in many places at the same time. We have also experienced that it is very attractive for citizens to observe nature and landscape.

Therefore we wish to invite volunteers at the same day to be engaged in landscape documenting. It may be photography, video, painting or some other forms of documenting nature or living environment in sparsely populated areas. The final part of the pilot work could be an exhibition of selected things, which may include prizes, honouring of authors and publications of their works. More details of our pilot plans will be specified later.

# III: Need survey in Belarus

## **A study of the challenges for voluntary culture activities in sparsely populated areas in Belarus**

**Minsk, May 2016**

**By Alicia Shibitskaya, Executive Director  
"United Way" Belarusian Republican Non-Governmental Organization**

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    - 1.1 Working hypothesis
    - 1.2 Project aim and objectives
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      - 2.1.2. Demography
      - 2.1.3. Infrastructure
    - 2.2. Cultural shifts
      - 2.2.1. A farmstead as a mode of life
      - 2.2.2. Language
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## 1. Methodological guidelines

### 1.1 Working hypothesis

Being directly or indirectly engaged in the problems of our small Belarusian villages since 1972, we would like to specify the districts most suitable for the project (Fig. 1). On the light map (demonstrates dynamics of night lighting, i.e. intensity of modern life of this country), such districts are enclosed with double red-green lines. That might have been the end of it, but we have to choose one of the three, and such a choice must be justified.

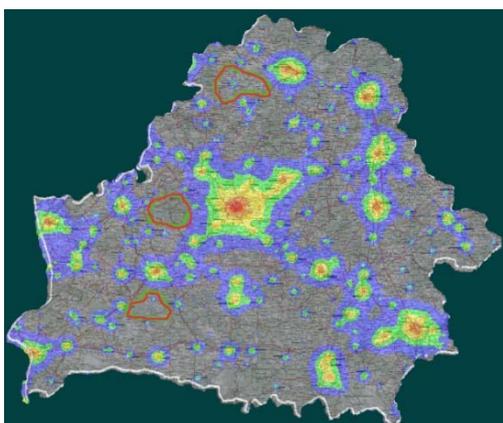


Figure 1: Territories of Belarus most suitable for the project <sup>3</sup>

### 1.2 Project aim and objectives

The project aim is to promote cross-cultural activities in the sparsely populated remote areas with an added value for civic and democratic participation and community bonding.

The project objective is to prevent from migration of small village inhabitants through providing them with the opportunities to develop folk crafts, involvement in cultural and training events, and attraction of tourists.

## 2. Survey of the situation in the country:

### 2.1. Structural changes

With the modern development, the rural areas undergo changes almost similar for all countries. Hereby, the number of workers is concentrated in places, where the lands are mostly fertile (as indicated in figure 2), environmental conditions are most suitable, and communication lines are most reliable; while workers migrate from the opposite areas (as indicated in figure 3)<sup>4</sup>. As a result, still worse living conditions are created in numbers of villages, administrative districts, and even whole regions.

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<sup>3</sup> Limited technical capacity does not allow us to transfer the shapes of territories intended for the project to other maps, though this would be reasonable as it clarifies and illustrates the entire analysis.

<sup>4</sup> In 2000 as many as 14% of the employed populations were engaged in agriculture, in 2016 only 8%.

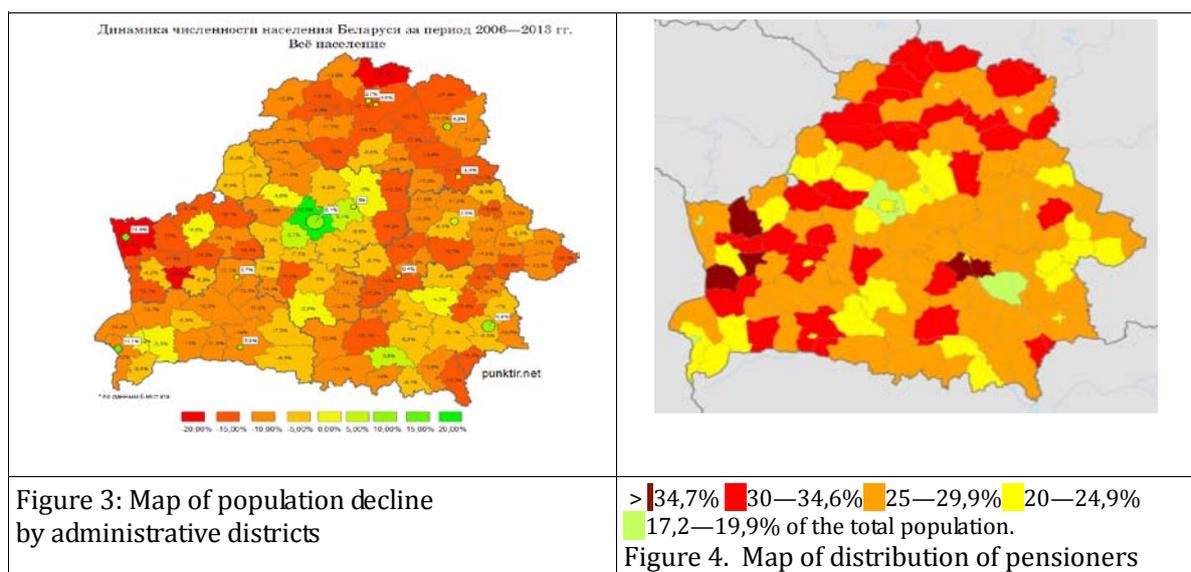


Figure 2: Fertility of land

Response of the government to such decay processes does not comply with their safety and is mainly connected with formal interests of social protection and mobilization of all kinds of resources. Humanitarian problems are the last thing to be solved, mainly proportionately with people's initiatives.

It should be mentioned, that structural changes occur within the period which is less than the time of professional and social formation of one generation. In Belarus changes affected both the production pattern and social order, which made the problems inherited from BSSR more complicated.

So, we should have a brief overview of the state of infrastructure, production environment, education system, health protection, trade, communication, transport, and recreation, i.e. all that relates to mode of life and is connected with the settlement system in the regions located in relatively unfavourable conditions.



This review is based on identification of consequences caused by the present problems. Structural changes occurring in Belarus after 1991 outstrip the transformation of the set-

tlement system, which lags further and further behind the changing structures of production.

### 2.1.1. Agrarian economy

The Soviet production strategy of the government (considering that the number of family-operated farm in this country is less than 3000) remains unchanged. This fact negates the effectiveness of investments both in production and social infrastructures, due to growing inconsistency between the complexity of instruments of labour and market relations and the ability of the employed to use the same.

This also increases the gap in the income level <sup>5</sup> and quality of life between rural and urban families, accelerates migration of young people to towns/cities.

Analysis shows that the main reasons for migration are economic ones (59%); every fifth countryman leaves his/her village by social reasons, every tenth by reasons of structural nature. In the meantime, all-time president of this country A. Lukashenko persists with Stalin's strategy of so-called agro-towns, proving fruitless efforts of village urbanization, because correlation of capital of production and non-production spheres make 2:1 in the cities/towns, and 6:1 in villages, and such correlation has remained invariant for 50 years in spite of dozens of milliards of investments. I.e. the stronger is the dependence of the development of villages' social sphere on funds allocated by agricultural enterprises, the more stable disproportion between small and large rural settlements will be.

At present, 100% of kindergartens, 100% of secondary schools, 97% of post-offices, 95% of cultural institutions, 95% of medical personnel, 90% of consumer service providers, 85% of modern housing stock, 80% of permanent shops are located in agro-towns.

### 2.1.2. Demography

Against this background, the *demographic cataclysm*, which has started after completion of collectivization in Western Belarus, draws to a close. When analyzing it, we have to consider only the circumstances are relevant to our project.

So, *predominance of women in the population*, especially vivid in the elder age groups, is peculiar to the Belarusian village. The reason is early male mortality. The gap in the mean length of life of men and women in villages makes 17 years.

*Decline in birth rate*: The aggregate birth rate has steadily declined during recent 50 years.

*Negative migration balance*: from village to towns/cities and abroad has been retained at the level of 70-90 thousand persons per year for 50 years. Distorted employment pattern has heavily shifted in favour of persons of older – retirement and preretirement – age. Modal age of people employed only in the field of production management declines.

*Low level of education*: The number of people with incomplete secondary education is the country's largest in villages.

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<sup>5</sup> E.g., in February 2016, wages/salaries of wage-and-salary workers in villages made 63% of the country's average wage/salary (37% without regard to managers)

### 2.1.3. Infrastructure

The problem would not all be bad, if it was not for *imperfect transport infrastructure*. One third of the settlements have no regular transport communication with larger inhabited localities.

That is why the population structure and all types of agro-service and non-production activities related to carrying our works and services to the population are heavily displaced to agro-towns and centres of former collective farm' teams or state farm departments (table 1). It looks as follows:

*Table 1: Quantity and structure of the population depending of the type of settlement (%)*

	<i>Agro-towns</i>	<i>Teams' centres</i>	<i>Small villages</i>
<i>population</i>	54	33	13
<i>children</i>	72	21	7
<i>capable to work</i>	76	21	3
<i>pensioners</i>	19	35	46

Distribution of small villages and their population in the territories looks as follows:

*Table 2: Territorial distribution of small settlements and population of small villages (average in the country within average administrative district)*

	<i>Distance from a district centre, km</i>			
	<i>below 10</i>	<i>-20</i>	<i>-30</i>	<i>over 30</i>
<i>Population per 100 square km</i>	20	16	9	7
<i>Population per one settlement</i>	19	17	15	11

In this way, social and economic imbalances between the population of small remote villages and other countrymen are formed, maintained and strengthened. There are no economic grounds for the existence of such villages within the state strategy of the rural industry development in agro-towns and suppression of private initiative.

The development also has no demographic prospects: it is empirically known that if the average age of the population in a settlement exceeds 45 and the type of economic activity carried on in such settlement changes, such settlement will disappear.

## 2.2. Cultural shifts

Culture as a phenomenon is composed of two parts: The material body of culture (what has been created by the nation during its existence), and the language. The historical fate of Belarus has been that both parts of the national culture have been badly hit.

Seen from the angle of this project's purpose, sufficient are the things which have stood the test of time and can be transformed to the forms able to support life in small villages: i.e. the language that ensure interaction and communication between people, and also experience in certain crafts.

### 2.2.1. A farmstead as a mode of life

It has to be said that in terms of adaptability for changing life environment, the Belarusian peasants have practically demonstrated everything but the kitchen sink. That is why, in spite of administrative efforts, the villages preserve much unchangeable.

Let's take any Belarusian village that has survived after total devastation within the past century. Most probably, it is populated by direct descents from affranchised peasant serves; "Stolypins" peasant proprietors; farmers "liberated" by the Great October Socialist Revolution; collective farm members. At present, they are again wage-workers of agricultural enterprises. Free peasants or farmers can only be met occasionally.

It is less favourable but fully possible that one or more families have lived in such villages, in the same very old houses, from serf age time, changing their social status mainly on the orders of authorities.

Conservatism of architecture and technological structure of a farmstead are by no means distinguished with mental consequences of life in the open air, but rather with unbreakable bond of traditional households and personal plots of the Belarusians with the climate and landscape: the fact that the farmstead as a technological and social-cultural complex is a result of centuries-long adaptation of millions of families to our change of seasons and kinds of agricultural work, where the technologies support the mode of living and the life of peasants' families, – and strengthen the optimal way of human adaptation to the environment.

That is why farmstead stability is close to that of climate and landscape. And that is why peasant serves, peasant proprietors, collective farm members and agricultural labourers of some sort of JV Spikelet JSC can live in the same house from century to century. That is why anyone, if taken to a rural backwater (which is unlikely though not impossible), will have to provide himself, as well as his wives and children, with a house of a certain design, certain household outbuildings, cultivable land, and farm implements. Then and only then he will begin to live in easy street among plants and animals keeping in mind additional income streams in preparation for victory of natural forces over the unlucky landowner.

In restless praise of the farmstead, we are in danger of running into a certain "Pochvennichestvo" (nativism) and come to praising sacral fire against the tide. But it gives no sense, as since 1991 this complex, balance with millenarian practice has been exposed to changes.

We should only pay attention to the changes and their consequences for our area in focus: Gas infrastructure development, water supply, disappearance of full-fledged subsidiary personal plots, disappearance of repair and manufacture of goods, change of the mode of work-rest routine and work-rest mode.

### 2.2.2. Language

Material body of culture in its contracted form is stored in the language. It is the Belarusian language, where traditional work, stable relationship types common and viable under conditions of Belarus are preserved.

In 1840 the Russian tsar prohibited the use of the Belarusian language in education, courts, and army. In some fields of higher education the Belarusian language was possible in the period from 1920s to 1950s of the XX century.

Later, the Central Committee of the CPSU assigned this country a role of a leader within the party's policy of construction "a new historical community – soviet people". CPSU launched in 1960 a violent Russification policy with actual ban of the Belarusian language in courts, army, higher education and secondary special education, government and business document circulation; and it resulted in replacement of the live Belarusian language with the soviet pidgin. Consequently, the number of words used daily by an average Russian-speaking Belarusian is four times less than that of an average Russian.

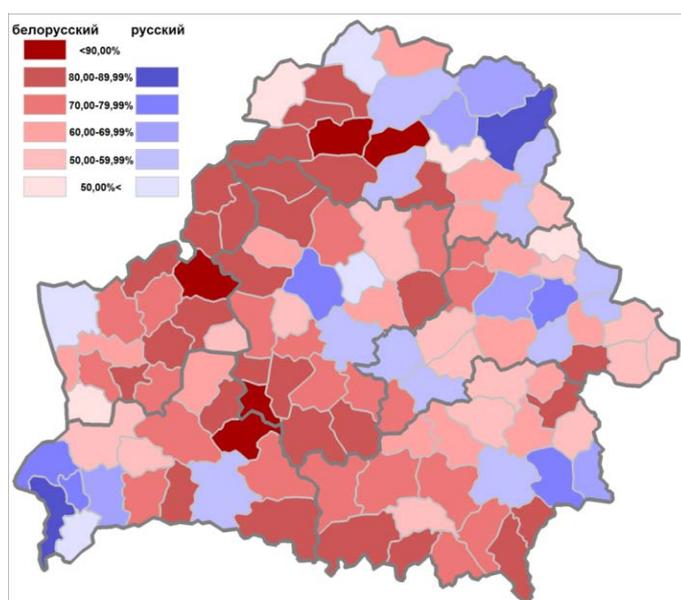


Figure 5: Map of use of the Belarusian language at the household level outside the city limits (Belarus National Census 2009 languages spoken at home share for rural population: Belarusian (red) and Russian (blue))

The state purposefully annihilates the Belarusian language. There is not a single higher education or special secondary education, where the language of instruction is Belarusian, even though dozens of thousands secondary school student pass their finals in the Belarusian language. The Russian language is the language of the army, law-enforcement structures, and court system.

The declension of the language entailed strong mental and social changes. In defiance of these efforts, the language held on at the mundane level for a certain period.

### 2.2.3. National and cultural identity

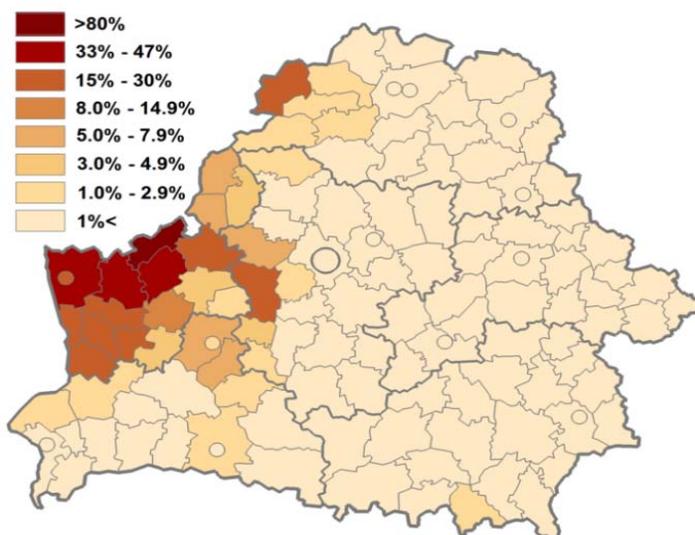


Figure 6: Map of distribution of ethnic Poles in Belarus

It would be a mistake to treat Belarus beyond the city limits as a mono-ethnic country. That is why we refer to the role, which can be contributed to the project by the Polish minority, whose dramatic fate during communist domination has substantially changed its position among the nations populating this country. From one of the most educated and rich nations in 1940, it has passed into the poorest and least educated one by 1989. The things could probably move inversely, but migration opportunities have become better, and it “preserves” the situation. The ethnic Poles born in the post-war years, who in their childhood lived primarily in small settlements and isolated farmsteads, have surprisingly better preserved the Belarusian language and skills of individual farming.

Supported by Poland, this national minority is also the most consolidated one from among the Slavs and Christian minorities, which fact gives additional opportunities for cooperation.

### 2.2.4. Religious identity

The dissolution of the USSR and collapse of the communist ideology entailed a strong process of strengthening religious life. This process cannot be construed as fully successful, as far as, e.g. from the part of the Russian Orthodox Church, it is grounded on the expressly anti-Belarusian idea of the “triunity of the Russian nation”. At the same time, the Moslems and Catholics (Fig. 7) in the mentioned districts positively treat the Belarusian culture, are deeply integrated in the social medium, and historically had no conflicts with the orthodox population during one half of the century.

Russian Orthodox churches and Roman Catholic churches are the places, where the inhabitants of small villages communicate with each other. The map shows that in spite of low density population in the mentioned districts, density of Catholic parishes is relatively

high (Orthodox parishes exist everywhere, as 1000 churches of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church were built and restored in the past 25 years).

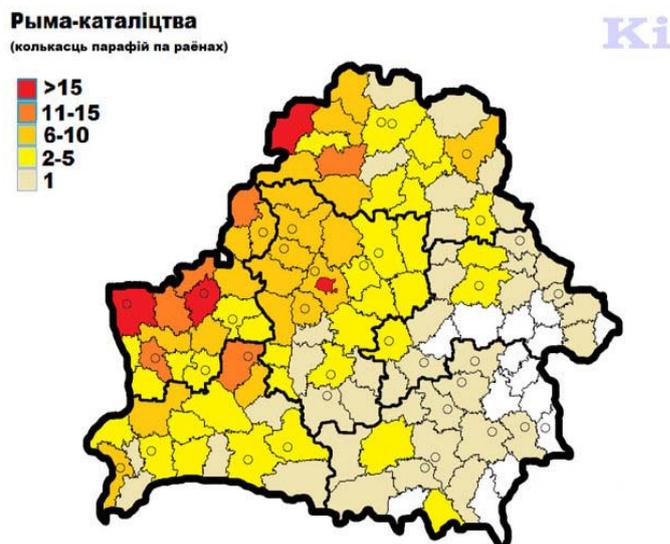


Figure 7: Map of density of Catholic parishes

### 3. Criteria of choice of a region for the project implementations

The purpose of this project here in Belarus is twofold. On the one hand, it is similar to that of hospice workers, i.e. to let small villages die peacefully and with dignity; on the other hand, to provide some of such village with the opportunity to survive through the change of business profile, if they succeed.

Our selected areas, defined in the initial working hypothesis by looking at the light map compiled on the basis of satellite night light images, are located in the grey zone. It should be stressed that out of the 9.5 million population as many as 7 million live in the areas coloured in red and orange, and 2 million live in the regions coloured in green and blue. The density of the population, which is a target group of this project, is 0.5 persons per square km.

Moreover, all three regions are located in the population decline area. The question is, on what particular regions should we focus? The answer is, on those having more favourable natural, economic and other favourable conditions. Let's examine them one after another from north to south taking account not only of technological peculiarities and comparing the selected regions.

#### 3.1. Natural and climatic conditions

After the disastrous explosion at the V.I. Lenin Chernobyl NPS one quarter of the Belarussian territory was contaminated with radio nuclides and, truth be told, had to be removed from the area of economic activity. Alternatively, the country leader's strategy focuses on maximum drawing these localities into an economic turnover.

As a consequence, a great number of small sparsely inhabited villages are located within the contaminated area, but we believe that the appropriate projects may not be connected with support of natural population growth or population sustaining in such villages.

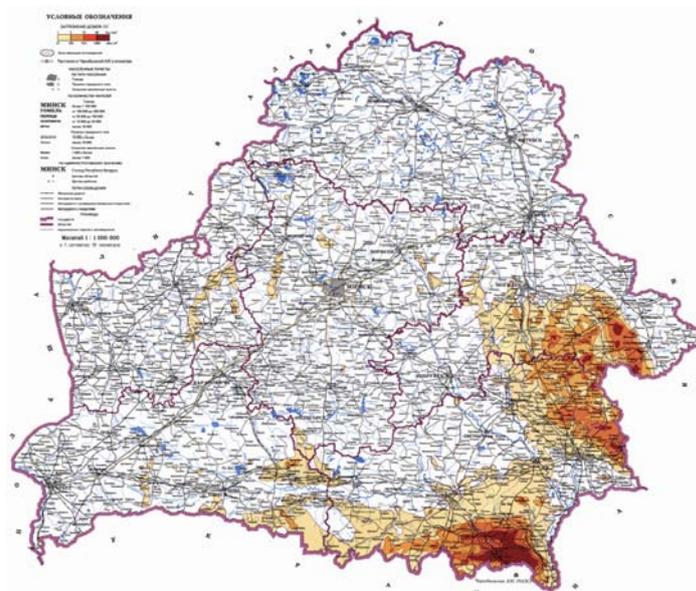


Figure 8: The map of territory contamination with radioactive cesium (is best congruent with the areas of contamination with other radioactive elements and areas where agricultural activity is inadvisable in the years ahead)

At the same time, the centre of the chosen regions is partially located in the area of relatively low radioactive contamination, in the nearest proximity to the richest metropolitan region of this country. This requires clarification of information about on-site contamination with a view to eliminating certain kinds of activities there: agriculture and long-term recreation of visitors with children.

### 3.2. Economic conditions

Figure 9 shows that the north and central regions, located in the environment relatively unfavourable for agriculture, belong to the most economically depressive zones of this country. It causes differences between the welfare levels of the target group.

The average amount of labour pension of the inhabitants of settlements covered by our sphere of interest makes 80% of the country's average amount, i.e. BYR 2,152,000 (approximately USD 100 per month); their nominal total salary due makes 2,600,000 or 39% of the country's average salary. In a number of north and north-east regions salaries are not paid or are paid irregularly. Moreover, the nominal total salary due makes the implicit level owing to the fact that we have accounted for small village inhabitants employed in forestry, transport, and industry.

Taking account of the average size of a family with 1.9 persons and the demographical structure of settlements, the average per capita income at disposal of a small remote village inhabitant is estimated as BYR 2.17 million, with the minimum consumer budget BYR

1.64 million. Due to such circumstances small village inhabitants first of all are evidently facing a problem of surviving.

It should be understood that any form of activity, which fails to bring any income will not be treated with deference by the population. Moreover, inhabitants of the north region in its area belonging to tourist zone – Lake District (Poozerie) have certain shadow income from dwelling services and illegal fishery. Such circumstances will probably create new problems when dealing with the population.

The possibility to derive income from different kinds of activities is undoubtedly the main criterion of vitality of regions and settlements (fig. 9).

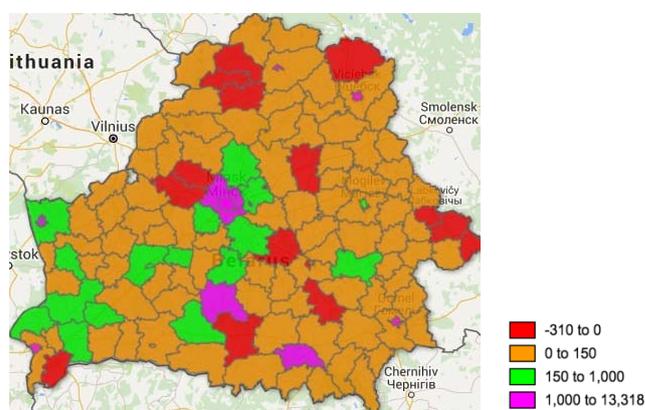


Figure 9: Map of net profit per districts (BYR milliard in January – September 2014)

Quite unnaturally inhabitants of the north region (which belongs to the most economically successful) will prefer agriculture, and small settlements in such region will be more and more involved in the process of economic transformation, and opportunities of this project implementation are relatively low there due to competition of other forms of activity.

The foregoing enables us to come to the following conclusions:

1. It will be understood that any proposal not connected with deriving additional income will be opposed;
2. Attempts to implement a certain initiative in remote small villages in east and north regions will fail by reason of extremely low paying capacity and poor transport accessibility for most of the year.

Thus we should focus on the villages located outside the main zone of radioactive contamination accessible to car owners with sufficiently high income level, i.e. residents of major cities.

In other words, such villages must be located in proximity to major cities, primary roads or objects of international tourism. The regions marked on the map are suitable from the angle of economy and infrastructure.

### 3.3. Other conditions

The mentioned regions are notable for the fact that they are the remainder of the country's localities, where more than one half of the population does not use the Russian language in everyday life (fig. 5). The mentioned regions are also the place of residence of both Belarusians and historical national minorities: The Poles (fig. 6) and Tartars who have preserved their national identity and faith of ancestors.

The north region is located in the border area between the "Braslav Lakes" National Park and Polotsk–Novopolotsk urban agglomeration, where salaries/wages are higher than the country's average due to the developed petrochemical industry. The region is a tourist destination, attracting foreign visitors (primarily from Russia) and a great number of visitors from Minsk. At the same time, average salaries/wages in the mentioned territory are the country's lowest during the last five years. This region suits for our project perfectly, not accounting for negative attitude of KGB bodies to NGOs efforts to implement international projects in the border area.

The central region is the heart of Belarus. Its dialects served as basis for formation of the standard language. It has most completely captured the vestiges of material culture, confessional and national diversities. The major historical accomplishment and life histories of well-known persons are connected with this region. Minsk agglomeration sucks out all its resources. However, farming is relatively profitable, the appreciable quantity of summer houses are located there, relative high transport accessibility enables young people to visit their elderly relatives more often than in other regions of Belarus.

The Ivenets Museum of Traditional Culture, Museums of Local Lore in Molodechno and Volozhin, "The Yanushkevichs" gallery-museum in Rakov, "Zaslavye" historical and cultural museum preserve, Folklore Center in Rakov are placed here. The local rural communities are among the few presented in the Internet good enough, e.g.

[http://ivenec.eu/index/ivenec\\_zaprashae\\_gascej/0-11](http://ivenec.eu/index/ivenec_zaprashae_gascej/0-11);

<http://www.nalibaki.org/2016/04/blog-post.html>.

The natural complexes of Nalibokskaya Pushcha and its outskirts create the opportunity for renaissance of a number of traditional crafts. Strong Polish and Rome-Catholic communities, including those tied with associations of fellow-countrymen throughout the world, will contribute to effective communication of the project participants.

The south region is the most preserved one from the ethnic and cultural angle. It has preserved its authenticity but lacks market outlets for its, so to say, cultural product, even though the agrarian sector of economy – both state-owned and private – functions relatively effectively. At the same time, proximity of Soligorsk with its country's highest salaries/wages, and Moscow-Berlin highway give ground to hope for certain success with relatively high (as compared to the preceding regions) expenses in case of commitment to farming operation using environment-friendly and traditional technologies, provided the participants' income level is maintained or increased.

Taking account of the above comparison, the central region is the most promising.

## 4. Target group

All types of costs in all selected regions will be connected mainly with imparting to the survived small village population skills lost way back by their parents. To achieve a result, one will need not only living bearers of such skills located anywhere in this country, to which it will be necessary to bring the project participants, but also re-constructors, scientists and museum workers.

Let's consider the situation of the target group using the example of the central region. The territories that are subordinate to Rakov and Ivenets rural councils (Volozhin district) are most suitable for dealing with. According to UN<sup>6</sup>, projects in such territories should be made exemplary for ecotourism and local governance.

### 4.1. Gender-age and education structure

In the territory of Ivenets rural council there are as many as 1427 farmsteads with 3461 persons or 2.4 persons per farmstead, which is higher than the average national value. Nevertheless, the fact comes under notice that 0.55 children fall on the couple capable to work. Kamen', Sivitsa, Sudniki, Radniki, Doudka, Prouzhaly, Padnevichy, Galimtsy, Pralniki are the largest villages, the remaining 60 are small. All socialist infrastructure is situated in larger villages, small ones are connected with the rest of the world by travelling shops.

Population of Ivenets district by age		
younger than employable	employable	older than employable
523	1890	1051

The same situation characterises the Rakov rural council. Many families residing at Rakov are employed in Minsk. The total population makes 5273 persons, including 2592 in Rakov borough (or 49%); among them 2863 are able to work, 1382 are pensioners, 1028 children. There are 2124 farmsteads in the mentioned rural council. There exist 64 villages; in 22 of them, the population is less than 10 persons; in 13 up to 20 persons; in 12 up to 50 persons. I.e. 600 persons inhabit 47 villages.

Consequently, the target group in two rural councils makes approximately 1500 persons inhabiting 90 populated localities deprived of any social infrastructure.

### 4.2. Social degradation level and readiness to actions

Common availability of education, in particular benefits for servicepersons, when entering higher and secondary special education, the so-called "organized enrollment", delivery of local youth to the 'national economy's construction projects" outside Belarus (which average quota in the period from 1955 to 1975 made 60 000 persons per region) and impos-

<sup>6</sup> <http://un.by/by/undp/news/belarus/2011/03-11-2011-n2.html>

<http://www.volozhin.gov.by/ru/home/novosti-regiona/item/1480-30-rayonov-belarusi-gotovy-oprobovat-innovatsionnyy-podhod-k-razvitiyu-malyh-gorodov-i-selskih-territoriy>

sibility to develop farming, drastically lowered cultural and mental levels of villagers, as almost all more or less brainy people were drawn from the villages.

Among those who stayed, the process of the best people migration towards the best places of application of labour, i.e. large villages, started. At the same time, the average age of small village inhabitants, their alcoholization, the share of people already convicted, and the related social dependency and dependence on local administrators and management of agricultural enterprises were growing.

The so-called “loud-hailer” – the wired-radio outlet, TV receiving 1-2 state channels, and a district newspaper - were the external sources of informing and formation of such people. The household studies in Belynichy district as early as the end of the 80s showed that 20% of small village inhabitants at the age over 40 were practically illiterate, i.e. forgot all they had studied at school. Over the last years, the situation has aggravated.

Such circumstances and some other factors must be taken into account during implementation of this kind of project. <sup>7</sup> In brief, anyone, who will try to implement this kind of project, will face minimum readiness of a target group to individual actions and complete unpreparedness for collective ones. It should be expressly indicated, that after managerial opposition to any kinds of penetration to local life from outside, this factor will be the main hindrance.

## 5. Prospective and desirable project participants

Social-economic evaluation of the project prerequisites gives ground to speak about formation – on the principles of local governance – of initiative groups, which, if supported externally, can implement some small programs, in particular:

- 1) Zastsenak (Chamber) – one authentic peasant household of the beginning of the past century (restored by efforts of a small village), conduct of excursions, sale of products, demonstration and training in traditional skills and technologies.
- 2) Zelki (Plants) – the program of environmentally conscious collecting, treatment of wild plants and mushrooms, study of use of plants and mushrooms in the traditional cuisine and medicine. Reconstruction of functioning of ancient hospitals (without the right of medical practice).
- 3) The Year of the Belarusian – a program of phenological observations, traditional festivals and rites, study of weather signs and weather forecasting.
- 4) Beegarden – demonstration of traditional bee-keeping, sale of wrapped cut-comb honey.
- 5) Roots – stories about villages, families and persons as a subject of interaction between local people and visitants. Telling stories in a clean house at supper, with video and audio recording, invitation of elderly persons from other sites. But this will be top performance.

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<sup>7</sup> E.g., it was so interesting in France: *La mémoire longue : temps et histoires au village*, Nouvelles éditions JMP, Paris, 2000. Françoise Zonabend; *Une campagne voisine Minot, un village bourguignon*, Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1990 Collectif

The conception is that small village inhabitants will be the performers of all programs, tourists from Belarus and abroad will be the users. All those who become interested will be advisers and assistants.

Without doubt, successful implementation of this project requires participation of representatives of the local government, workers of museums, owners of tourist companies, voluntary organizations of beekeeper, representatives of local religious communities, specialists in traditional crafts, owners of web-sites dedicated to localities covered by the project activities. It is possible to compile the list of the project associates, but it will be valid only after agreement.

## 6. Conditions and prospects of the project implementation

The tasks of the project are the same as on the framework text. So we must focus on assessment of probable obstacles. The most characteristic for Belarus is administrative shift of the project-related agreements from the level of rural administrations (rural councils) to the level of districts, ministries, etc.

In this respect, we see it fit to have a prior agreement on involvement of performers of national cultural and commercial programs coordinated with the government.

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<http://volozhin.gov.by/ru/home/novosti-regiona/item/1480-30-rayonov-belarusi-gotovy-oprobovat-innovatsionnyy-podhod-k-razvitiyu-malyh-gorodov-i-selskih-territoriy>

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The list can be extended during the project implementation. Optimal possible results:

1. Implementation of one of the programs;
2. Creation of prerequisites for development or transformation of other programs.

# IV. Need survey in Finland

## **A study on state of the art of cultural activities on the sparsely populated areas in Finland**

**Helsinki, May 2016**

**By Tomas Järvinen, General Manager  
Finnish Swedish Youth Association**

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## 1. The current culture policy in Finland with reference to rural areas

What does the Finnish communes need *non-governmental organization* for? This question has been tackled in two large-scale analysis carried out in the spring of 2015, and the results reflect the growing need for cooperation and partnership.

### 1.1 Public Reports about collaboration with the third sector

In February-March, the Central Finland Community Support Association, the Council of Central Finland, HUMAK University of Applied Science and Central Finland Villages Association carried out an online survey for the communes in Central Finland. It examined what kind of co-operation and partnership the communes in Central Finland has got with the nearby NGO's, as well as asked about the potential of collaborates. The results were published in June 2015.

Nationally, the collaboration between the Finnish communes and third sector, in turn, was explained in a survey by the Local and Regional Authorities, Civil Society Policy Advisory Board and the Kane Arena Civil Association. The results of that survey were announced at the Democracy Day seminar in Helsinki 13/10/2015.

Both reports imply that the communes are welcoming cooperation with associations and organizations. Communes see NGO's as important partners, and recognize the importance of the work of the volunteers and voluntary organizations. In Central-Finland cooperation is carried out at present, especially with senior citizens-, residential-, youth-, sports- and village associations, whereas, for example patients' and multicultural organizations are just not listed. In the national survey, in turn, the social and health side had a significant role in organizations mentioned by the partners in local governments.

The communes in central Finland hope for more enhanced cooperation with NGO's in the future, especially when it comes to service-production. Also in the nationwide survey, production of public-services emerged as a major issue, where the role of the third sector was seen alongside public services, not to replace them (Yhdistystori 2015.).

### 1.2 The authorities support for associations in North Karelia

One example of effective collaboration between authorities and NGO's in sparsely populated areas in Finland is the one in North Karelia, a region in eastern Finland. North Karelia's local authorities issued during 2014 the provincial associations a total of 6.7 million euro in the form of various grants and partnership agreements. About a thousand associations received grants. This is shown in the "Municipalities & Society allowances and co-operation in North Karelia 2014"-survey that was carried out by the North Karelia Villages Association. The report is the first comprehensive summary of the local NGO co-operation in North Karelia.

It appeared there were big differences between different models of local government support. For example, the main general grants were distributed in the cities of Joensuu and Lieksa, and particularly in the social and health organizations the subsidies were sig-

nificant. In third came Kontiolahti. Among the municipalities that showed the largest supported for the activities in the villages were Joensuu, Iломantsi and Kitee.

The Finnish Association of Communes aims clearly to activate the communes with reference to these recent publications. Ritva Pihlaja writes in her report, *Kolmas sektori ja julkinen valta (The third sector and the public authorities)*, that the ongoing change in the municipal and service structure has changed the cooperation quickly, and this is why the communes do not have a clear picture of how to collaborate with the third sector. The problems are manifested in the projects for example in procurement, methods and operating grants. This would require a systematic and coordinated planning, based on the principles of the definition of co-operation. In 2010, about 30 percent of the communes were following some sort of NGO strategies. All of the communes that were investigated are located in the Finnish countryside (Vuoristo 2015, 59).

## 2. Example of good practices

In order to clarify the choice of our examples of good practice, it is pertinent to briefly describe our organization. The Finnish-Swedish Youth Association was established as a non-political, national youth association in 1906 to advance the interests of the Finnish - Swedish (Swedish speaking people in Finland) youth associations.

Today the main mission is to give the member associations every kind of service:

- Information about youth work
- Service concerning amateur theatre
- Proposals of project activities
- Observe the economic support of government authorities and other important issues valid to activities for the members and young people
- Help the members to restore and keep the buildings of the local associations in shape

Among all the activities, theatre has become the most popular. FSU supports the theatre groups (about 100) with information, plays and copyrights among other things. FSU wants young people to have a chance to lead active lives, get in contact with youth in other countries and to create knowledge about cooperation between organizations.

The members (district organizations) are:

- Nylands Svenska Ungdomsförbund r.f.NSU - 108 youth associations
- Svenska Österbottens Ungdomsförbund SÖU r.f.- 106 youth associations
- Åbolands Ungdomsförbund ÅUF r.f. - 31 youth associations
- Ålands Ungdomsförbund r.f. ÅUF - 21 youth associations

Since all district organizations have member organizations that are active in rural areas, it was natural to interview a member association from various district organizations.

## 2.1 Fagerö Folkpark/Rangsby uf (Närpes, Ostrobothnia region in Western Finland)

Interview with the association chairman, Christina Enholm.



The gate to the association's area in Närpes

Rangsby ungdomsförening r.f Fagerö is a youth association in Närpes that is operated voluntarily. There are about 200 members in the association. The most important part of the activities is the log dances that are organized in the summers at the pavilion, which is beautifully situated by the sea. They have an average of about 1,200 visitors / dancers. The association also arrange large flea markets, and the pavilion can be rented for weddings, family reunions and more. The association is very seasonal with limited operations during the winter months.

A challenge when being active in rural areas is that the distances become longer both in terms of the visitors and goods to be transported to the site of the events. Then again they think that the feeling of really being part of a community might be stronger in rural areas in comparison to associations in more urban areas. People feel that they are working for themselves and their own community, and everyone is committed 100 percent.

An example of activities that Rangsby uf have had, which have gathered a lot of people in their operating environment are the log dances. They organize 6 dances per summer. These usually attract about 1200 people. They also organize so-called archipelago – flea markets that have had an increasing number of visitors in recent years. They usually have about 140 tables with vendors.

Still, they face some difficulties in their organization. As many others, they have difficulties getting the economy rolling. Someone must always find time to apply for grants and so on. Another challenge is the old association house that constantly requires some form of renovation.

To further improve their operations, they would need more money. A lot of ideas fall because of financial reasons. They should extend the season to get better economy; this would require that they winter insulate the clubhouse, but they lack funds for renovation. They also need more voluntary workers. New projects are often costly in large associations, for that reason, they need bigger investments and more hands.

## 2.2 Skäriteatern (Närpes, Ostrobothnia region in Western Finland)

Interview with the association chairman, Johanna Karhulahti.



Picture from the association's venue, Brännkull during a play

Skäriteatern was founded in 1993 as an ambulant summer theatre. In 2013, the Association got its own venue, Brännkull that is located by the harbour in Replot. The association has about 25 active adult members and about 40 active children.

The chairman, Johanna Karhulahti really likes the fact that the association is active in a sparsely populated area. Everyone knows each other, and supposedly it is difficult to determine, if you hang out as members of the association or just as friends. In sparsely popu-

lated areas there is not much activity, so it is quite easy to gather people for various events. People simply seem to have nothing else to do.

One example of activities, where Skäriteatern have gathered a lot of people in their operating environment, is the summer theatres that attract the whole neighbourhood. People, who have moved away from the area, will often travel back "home" for these events.

The main challenge the association faces, is the lack of people. There simply are not enough free hands. The will is there, but there doesn't seem to be enough time to realize their ideas. They think cooperation is crucial, when you work in organizations in rural areas, and they always try to involve as many associations as possible in their projects.

### 2.3 UF: Kamraterna (Sipoo, Uusimaa region in Southern Finland)

Interview with association chairman, Niklas Lindqvist.



The association house Träskberga

The association, UF: Kamraterna was founded in 1951 and has about 400 members. The association shall endeavour to organize meaningful activities for their members in the club house or nearby places. The ordinary business is divided into three sections, "Sports and Exercise", "Leisure and Youth" and "Events and Functions."

Also in this organization the distances seem to be an issue, as the stretches are a bit further out in the rural areas. Then again, they like the fact that associations often seem to have their own house in the more sparsely populated areas. That's rare in urban areas.

Over the past year UF: Kamraterna have organized movie theatre evenings in the club-house. These have attracted up to 40 participants. They applied for a grant to pay for the permissions needed, and the municipality have been helping to get it all to work. Usually they also organize various athletics events and theatre trips. Last year they organized about 280 events at the club house.

The greatest challenge here seems to be that so much happens these days. The competition for the young people's time is hard. Another problem is that the clubhouse constantly

requires new renovations. They should now renew the roof and that will cost about 40,000 euro.

Another challenge, the association has in common with many other associations in the sparsely populated areas, is that the members are rarely changed. The ideas are running low, and they rarely seem to renew their activities. They would need new enthusiasts to the association. They also lack a functioning division of labour, as they have difficulties knowing, who is doing the various tasks within the association and things often remain undone.

#### 2.4 Vänö Vänner: (Kimitoön, Archipelago Sea in the Southwest Finland region)

Interview with the association chairman, Mikaela Venberg.



Image from the scenic archipelago in Vänö

This association was registered back in 1997, and they have nearly 300 members. The business is highly seasonal, and they arrange log dances and children's day-care during the summer months. Even here, there are complaints of the distances being very long, which may hamper operations. Logistics simply are costlier and harder out there in the boonies. Still, the chairman, Mikaela Venberg is convinced that people in associations in rural areas are more concerned about their associations and are willing to help whenever possible.

Also in Vänö, the log dances gather a lot of people. The association is a large one and most of the people in the area have some connection to it. That's probably why their events gather so many locals.

As the island mixes summer visitors and people living on the island all year, the main difficulty lies in communication between these two parties. People, who only live on the island during the summer months, look at things with different eyes than the islanders, who live year round on the island. Everything tends, however, to be solved without major conflicts.

To improve the operation, Venberg would like new visions for the association, as it seems that the ideas are running low and they suffer from lack of enthusiasts.

In recent years "Vänö Vänner" has had volunteers during the summertime. These have come from Romania among other countries through the organization's CIMO's project: European Voluntary Service (EVS). They also have via the project sent several of their own members abroad to be volunteers.

### 3. Risks & challenges faced by voluntary culture associations in rural areas

Associations have long been aware of the fact that expanding the funding base is essential, but it has been proven very difficult in practice. Efforts by the associations to increase revenues of service-production and to find new sources of funding have proven to be very challenging, especially in rural areas. In addition there is a risk, the organizations in such situations are considered to be engaged in business activities.

Producing services with project funding is seen as too short-lived, temporary, and a lot of extra emitting means to work. From the perspective of rural municipalities and the government, non-profit activities and the demarcation of business are not so much a question of tax or competition law, but above all a socio-political question. The reform of the wage subsidy is threatening several service delivery organizations and in that regard, the effects can be very far-reaching from the perspective of the residents.

According to a report by the Ministry of Employment, the employment opportunities offered by the third sector play a significant role in supporting the elderly living at home (home, janitor, food service, cleaners, etc.), supporting school children and families in everyday life, as well as environmental issues and waste disposal. It should be noted the decrease in service organizations have left a significant resource gap in the care of the elderly, training and youth action, social services, and municipal environmental services. It is for example reported that the effect of the social and health-oriented EU competition law is greater than the municipalities own laws of legislation (Pihlaja 2010, 64.).

Another significant risk, when it comes to NGO's in the Finnish rural areas, is the fact that the population is constantly moving towards the urban municipalities. The so-called urbanization has continued steadily since the 80s ([www.findikaattori.fi/sv/56](http://www.findikaattori.fi/sv/56)). At the same time, I believe NGO's play an important role in the attempt to retain the sparsely populated villages. The Association helps to create the feeling of really belonging to a community.

Something, which seems to be a recurring challenge among organizations in the boonies, is to get away from the same old routines and get some kind of innovation in the activities. If you are active in a sparsely populated area, it is rare to get influences from the outside, and several of the associations, we interviewed, was actually talking about the risk of getting stuck in the same old rails.

Several of the people, we spoke with during the interviews, wanted to see simpler models, when it comes to applying for grants, or more instructions on how to apply. People, who are active in voluntary culture associations, have day jobs and seldom have time for a lot of extra paperwork.

Another typical problem is the division of labour within the organizations. In several cases, there is not the structural framework to manage the economy, and most are made entirely without funding. Besides e.g. repair of the association house, which often remains undone because of lack of money.

#### 4. Recommendations how to improve providing cultural activities by voluntary culture associations

- Simpler models of seeking grants and contributions
- Education in seeking grants and contributions
- Manage the economy through a purchased service on commission
- Greater collaboration provides greater contributions
- Benchmarking
- Open the doors to the public for a certain time during the year, for example, to attract new members (NGO festival).
- Cooperate also with urban associations to attract their "audience"
- Do volunteer exchange both nationally and internationally to gain new insights and influences
- Make certain there are benefits for association members within the community
- Package the operation for various potential sponsors
- Focus also on small details regarding the association external branding

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# V. Need survey in Denmark

## **A study of good practise of voluntary culture activities in sparsely populated areas in Denmark**

**Copenhagen, May 2016**

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## 1. Background - it was lovely summer weather in the country

*"It was lovely summer weather in the country".*

So began the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen his fairy tale "The Ugly Duckling". But the reality of life in the countryside of Denmark - in the sparsely populated areas and in the villages - is described by the village researcher Jørgen Møller as places were:

*"education, cultural offerings, prices, public service, health - in many parameters are ... far behind."*

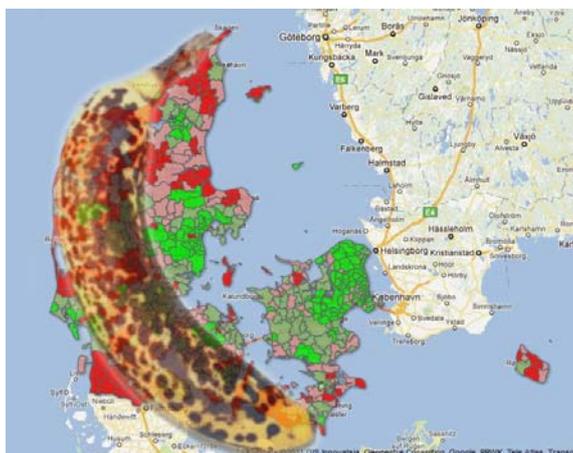
Jørgen Møller sees this development as a clear step away from the idea, that everyone should have equal opportunities:

*"We have had an idea that one should be able to live a good life everywhere in Denmark, but it seems to have been somewhat difficult."*

Jesper Samson from the Danish newspaper "Information" wrote in an article that:

*"A common feature of peripheral areas is that they are mostly located relatively far from the major urban centres in Copenhagen and Jutland. This means that "peripheral Denmark" from many views is going in a gentle curve through the Northern, Western and Southern Jutland over the islands in the South, Lolland-Falster and Bornholm. Often there are also included some municipalities in Funen and Zealand".*

It is a gentle curve also known as "the rotten banana", which together with other negative words stigmatizes the areas that are less populated. And when the media today talks about life far from the big cities, it's mostly about decay, unemployment, the closure of schools and shops as well as a lack of transport opportunities.



There have been many initiatives to try to change this. Among other things the Danish Government has moved 3,900 state jobs out to the provinces in the hope, it can help so people don't leave the villages. But whether these actions will help, remains to be seen. Professor Flemming Just, Director of the Centre for Rural Research at the University of Southern Denmark says, that

*"There are clear doubts about which buttons must be pressed. Various solutions are proposed without any proof of what works. It is also my impression of the political debate at the moment that politicians are facing the same problem."*

## 2. Examples of good practices

Locally, some villages - often led by local enthusiasts – have tried to choose another way, by working together in self-managed communities with art and culture as the focal point.

### 2.1 The Old Library in Ejby

The president of The Cultural Council of the Municipality of Køge lives in a small village with 3,200 inhabitants 9 km outside the town of Køge - a city of 37,000 inhabitants. Køge is situated 45 km from Copenhagen.

It has due to Danish legislation for many years been possible for the residents of Ejby (and others of course) to start an association of volunteers, who is in charge of activities with professional artists e.g. concerts, theatres, exhibitions etc. and more associations have been set up with a democratically elected boards and with local support and designated rooms for their activities.

#### A new community centre

But in March 2013, there was a significant improvement for residents in Ejby, as the president of the local cultural council succeeded in acquiring the disused library and here created a community centre in cooperation with residents of the city. It became a cultural meeting and gathering place that would have cultural and educative activities in order to strengthen the community in the small town, and in order to encourage residents to remain in the city and perhaps even attract new residents.



Ejby Library

The municipality was interested in the idea and agreed to cover the cost of improvements to the building and maintenance of the alarm system. In addition, the municipality would be responsible for all exterior maintenance.

The library agreed to let most of the furniture and books remain in order for the community to continue to be able to borrow books. The collection of books was also supplemented with books from another disused library nearby.

#### A trusting community

All citizens of Ejby are welcome in the house. You pay a membership (which is cheap) and receive a key to the house. This means that you can use the house during business hours, but also during the evening, where the last person to leave the house is responsible for

locking up. By thus giving the responsibility for the house to the residents themselves, they also felt valued as members of a trusted community.



Performance by the magician, Lisby in Ejby Community House

As a member you can engage in various activities that are mostly initiated and controlled by the members themselves, and they consist for the most part of artistic and cultural activities such as the following:

- Changing art exhibitions, theatre performances, concerts and lectures on a variety of topics throughout the year. Theatre performances and concerts are often for the whole family, so that the children get used to visiting the house.
- Courses in genealogy and IT.
- Summer workshops in theatre and music for children.
- Throughout the year, as a member, you can borrow all the books you want. There is no control of the loans. It is up to the members themselves to arrange for the return. This part of the function is based on mutual trust that makes everybody feel it's their house. It may also be this level of confidence that means that many members leave their own books on the library shelves, so others can benefit from them.
- In addition to the activities mentioned, there are meeting rooms, reading rooms and a kitchenette available to members, and all associations in the city can book meeting rooms for free.

Most importantly, however, is that the existence of the house means that arts and cultural activities in the city have grown and that the community has strengthened the resident's identity as citizens of Ejby.

## 2.2 The Horbelev initiative

In North-Eastern Falster, an area 125 km south of Copenhagen, there is a small town, Horbelev, which only has 587 inhabitants. The nearest big city is Nykøbing with 16,500 residents, which is 16 km from Horbelev.

Horbelev was previously, similar to other villages in the area, marked by migration and decline. But the town has reversed this situation. Previously there were 33 unsold houses in the city. Today there are only 10, and the population has increased by 37 inhabitants since 2009.

### Refuse to surrender

It is now known beyond the municipality's borders of Guldborgsund, that the citizens of Horbelev have refused to surrender to the negative developments that have otherwise offered many dramatic stories about the death of villages and their inhabitants trying to escape from peripheral Denmark.



Public meeting at Horbelev old school

The 587 residents of the city have for many years acted as enthusiasts, who struggle to hold on to a lively and varied community life with the energy to create positive experiences and a coherent community. An example is the transformation of the city's former elementary school into a new rallying point for the entire city.

### The Association of the Future of Northeast Falster

Horbelev School was closed 10 years ago, and has some years until 2009 been run as an independent school. But as the independent school also closed, a group took the initiative to hold a public meeting, where they wanted to take action. About 250 interested people attended.

Subsequently there have been many workshops, which have resulted in the setting up of 10 different interest groups covering the themes of: The elderly, Tourism & Business, Sport, Nature & Outdoors, Arts, Culture, Hesnæs Port & Beach, Children & Youth, Village Centre and Urban Renewal. There were a myriad of ideas in each group and coordinators for all groups were subsequently appointed. Also “The Association of the Future of Northeast Falster” and “Northeast Falster Investment Fund” were formed.



Members of the Association of the Future of Northeast Falster in Horbelev Community House

Through the Investment Fund the school building was purchased and “The Association of the Future of Northeast Falster” was established in 2011 in the village centre of the former school. In the village centre there is room for the association of theatres, the associations of art clubs, exercise association, kids club, thrift store, pizzeria and much more.

### An ambitious conversion of a closed school

The facilities in the old school were far from perfect for the variety of activities and users. Therefore “The Association of the Future of Northeast Falster” tried to search for funding for the village centre in order to realise a development project based on the conversion of the closed school for new purposes. Unfortunately the project could not on the selected criteria compete with the other three buildings that were selected to proceed in the planned development, but the centre received some funding. Despite this, the residents themselves took the initiative and developed a number of activities with a fine blend of art, culture and other activities in the old school, and they managed to get some extra funding. It was even possible to integrate various other local companies into the project, and it is a fine example of an ambitious conversion of a closed school.

### So no more talk

Torben Stjernholm, who chairs “The Association of the Future of Northeast Falster”, says:

*“We look forward to moving ahead with the development of the village centre. We have many local users at the centre today and expect to create a true culture farm - that will mean far more from Northeast Falster and the surrounding cities will find their way to Horbelev. The expansion of the village centre allows us to create more events and exhibi-*

*tions, than we have been able to accommodate. We already now see that there are several newcomers, who are attracted to our project, and we are aiming to stop the exodus from Northeast Falster.*

*We want to develop our beautiful area and the social community to the benefit of all residents in Northeast Falster. We will bring together the residents about various activities and make it a very attractive place to stay. We want to get as much interest in the area, so businesses, new residents and tourists find their way here. Northeast Falster must be a role model for rural development in Denmark. So no more talks of peripheral Denmark, village death and the rotten banana in our part of the country!"*



Communal Thursday Dinner in Horbelev Community House

## Mission statements

The purpose of Northeast Falster Futures Association is

- To safeguard the common interests of Northeast Falster internally and externally, including social and cultural activities
- To place great emphasis on children and youth work outside the sports club, including creating and supporting activities for children and youth
- Creating and supporting a vibrant community
- To attract active and engaged residents to our area
- Attracting businesses to the area
- To convene the members to discuss the activities and developments in the area at least twice a year
- To create service
- To participate in municipal working groups or ad hoc committees

### 3. Conclusion

The launch of the arts and cultural activities here described was based on forming a democratically structured association. There is more than a 150-year-old tradition of forming associations in Denmark. It is said that every Dane is a member of at least 3 associations, and it is probably not entirely wrong.

The association structure is very well respected in Denmark - and in general across all five Nordic countries. The associations are what we call "small democracies". They are places, where people, using the rules of democracy, can change anything; and it is communities, where important democratic learning takes place, and where you learn to take control over your own situation in everyday life.

Increasing engagement and influence is equal to a reduced feeling of powerlessness. This also applies to the activities referred to in the above examples. When you can act on a problem, you remove the feeling of impotence. You become one of the owners of a project that is built up jointly and in a democratic spirit. Therefore, it is perhaps precisely activities like art and culture in associations, where everyone is involved, and where people can create a positive and coherent community, which is needed to counter the challenges of depopulation of the sparsely populated areas in Denmark.



## Multilateral Need Survey

### Voluntary Culture in sparsely populated areas

This Survey has been made in the framework of the 3-year LEVER project that are supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers' NGO Programme for the Baltic Sea Region.

The project idea is to engage volunteers to promote cross-cultural activities in rural areas with an added value for civic participation, community bonding and local identity.



Interfolks forlag

