

Marcin Gorączko

University of Technology and Life Sciences in Bydgoszcz, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Environmental Engineering, e-mail: gorgon@utp.edu.pl

E70 waterway as a stimulator of tourism development in Nakło County – status quo and prospects

Abstract: The regulated (engineered) section of the Noteć River located in Nakło County (in Polish referred to as *powiat nakielski*) along with the Bydgoszcz Canal is part of the international E70 waterway established in the 1990s, which is supposed to ultimately connect Rotterdam with Klaipeda. It is assumed that this fact should constitute a stimulus for a more dynamic economic development of the county, especially in the tourism sector. This opinion is reflected in the already prepared planning documents that serve the establishment of a long-term strategy of the socio-economic development for local authority units. The paper provides a critical evaluation of the attractiveness and accessibility of tourist attractions located in Nakło County in the context of the anticipated regeneration of the E70 waterway. It has been pointed out that the attractiveness of a waterway for the tourist traffic is provided not only by the accompanying heritage infrastructure but also by the natural and cultural potential of the adjacent areas and their tourist development. For this reason, Nakło County can currently only be a transit area for tourists travelling along the E70 waterway rather than a separate and self-sustaining destination.

Keywords: Nakło County, tourism potential, Noteć River, Bydgoszcz Canal, E70 waterway, revitalization of waterways

1. Introduction

The development of tourism services based on the available natural and cultural resources is a very frequent form of pursuing non-production economic activity in Poland. This applies to large urban agglomerations, smaller towns, as well as country counties. These activities are facilitated by a range of factors, including in particular the generally good economic situation in Europe and the growing purchasing power of consumers, the increasing education level of societies and their more and more refined demands as regards spending leisure time.

In 1996, the AGN agreement (European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance), specifying the reach of the European waterway system network as part of the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T), designated the E70 waterway connecting Rotterdam with Klaipeda, which runs through the territory of Poland along the Vistula, the Brda, the Bydgoszcz Canal, the Noteć,

the Warta and the Oder (Czasnojęć et al, 2010). Its more than thirty-kilometre section runs through Nakło County, covering a fragment of the Bydgoszcz Canal and of the regulated Noteć. This fact should constitute a stimulus for a more dynamic economic development of the county, particularly in the tourism sector. This opinion is reflected in the already prepared planning documents that serve the establishment of a long-term strategy of the socio-economic development of this local authority unit (e.g. Strategia rozwoju Miasta i Gminy Nakło nad Notecią 2009-2020, 2009; Strategia rozwoju powiatu nakielskiego na lata 2014-2020+, 2014). The latter document provides that “the territory of Nakło County features significant tourism qualities related to rivers and lakes – these are tourist gates to the areas that are attractive in terms of nature and landscape in the county” and that “water tourism might become a basis for building a competitive advantage of Nakło County, all the more so that the county boasts

excellent natural and environmental qualities.” The document also emphasises that “Nakło County has rich natural and cultural resources at its disposal.” Similar declarations can also be found in the content of regional information materials addressed to tourists, both printed (map descriptions, tourist guides) and available only in the electronic form (official and popular websites).

The primary objective of the author was to initiate a discussion on the real tourism potential of the Nakło County in the context of its exploitation to create the regional offer addressed to the present and future users of waterway E70. The results of desk and field research conducted in 2016-2017 for the purposes of a cultural and tourism survey of Nakło County were used in this study (Gorączko and Gorączko, 2017).

2. Outline of hydrographic conditions of Nakło County and the use of water resources for tourism purposes

The primary component of Nakło County’s hydrographic network is the Noteć river, a right-bank tributary of the Warta. Old cartographic sources reveal that the river originally ran in a meandering channel, which embraced numerous islands and alluvial deposits (Kaniecki, 2007). As a result of engineering works carried out in the 1880s, the channel was straightened at numerous sections by means of tunnels so that the Noteć is a fully regulated river downstream from Nakło

(Fig. 1) (Gorączko, 2015). The most important tributary of the Noteć in the discussed area is the navigable Bydgoszcz Canal, an artificial water course connecting the river systems of the Oder and the Vistula via the Brda. The history of the Bydgoszcz Canal, constructed in 1773-1774 and subsequently modernized several times, has been presented in multiple publications (e.g. Winid, 1928; Rogalski, 1984; Mincer, 1992; Jeleniewski, 2004; Badtke, 2006; Izajasz, 2014; Jankowski and Dombrowicz,

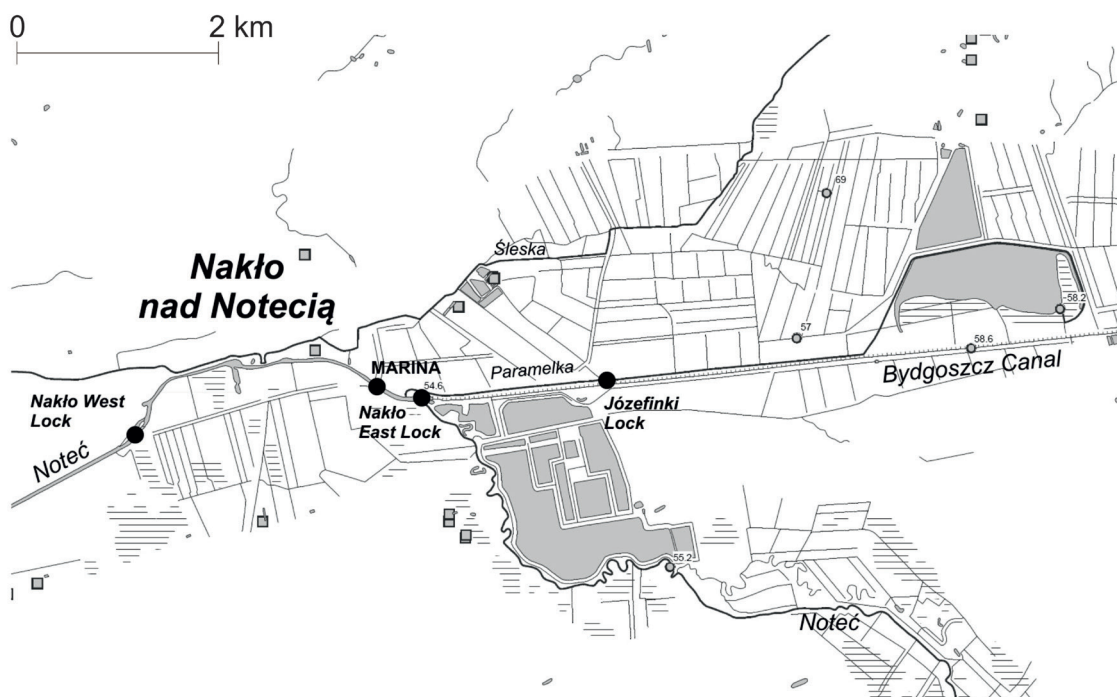


Figure 1. Water junction in the area of Nakło nad Notecią (prepared based on www.geoportal.infoteren.pl)

2015). It should be emphasized that it is the oldest inland waterway in the current territory of Poland that has been still in operation.

In 2005, the Bydgoszcz Canal was entered on the list of heritage structures of Kujawy-Pomera-
nia Province. As a result, this form of protection of historical heritage covered also two canal chamber locks present within the admin-

istrative borders of the county. One of them is Józefinki Lock (Fig. 2) located in 37.2 km of the Vistula-Oder waterway (part of waterway E70). The lock was constructed in 1773-1774. The present form of this nonbuilding structure comes from the period 1910-1914, when the Bydgoszcz Canal was reconstructed.



Figure 2. Józefinki Lock and the view on the Bydgoszcz Canal eastwards (photo made by the author, 2017)

The other lock, Nakło East Lock (38.9 km), is a slightly newer nonbuilding structure since it was erected in the period 1800-1801 during the repair and expansion of the Bydgoszcz Canal. In 1887-1889, the lock was altered to the stone/masonry form, while the present form of the nonbuilding structure also comes from the period of 1910-1914. Both these locks are administered by the Regional Water Management Authority in Poznań, the Noteć Drainage Basin Authority in Bydgoszcz. In the summer holiday period (early June – late August), the locks are in operation between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. (weekdays), while in the remaining part of the navigation season (usually April–November) – only on weekdays between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. There are also two chamber locks on waterway E70 (on the Noteć) in Nakło County: Nakło West Lock (42.7 km) and Gromadno Lock (53.4

km). They also need to be treated as hydraulic engineering heritage structures, even though they have not been officially recognised as such (no entry on the list of heritage structures so far). According to the current classification of inland waterways (Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 7 maja 2002 r.), the whole section of waterway E70 in the analysed area can at most be classified as a waterway of a regional importance (the Bydgoszcz Canal –class II, the Noteć –class Ia). This prevents the possibility of using it for freight purposes on a broader scale, at the same time permitting the use for tourism purposes.

In 2014, a marina located in Nakło nad Notecią at Notecka St (Fig. 3) – “Przystań Powiat Nakielski” (Nakło County Marina) – was put into operation. It consists of a harbour basin with an area of 1 ha, which is directly connected

with the Noteć stream bed. The yacht basin marina is intended for safe mooring of sailing and motor yachts as well as other recreation, sports, leisure and rescue vessels. The marina is also a place where theoretical and practical classes are held for students of the Inland Navigation School Complex in Nakło nad Notecią. The most important enclosed structure within the marina is the building that provides tourism, educational, training and administrative functions. It is also the seat of the Tourism and

Sports Department of the County Office in Nakło nad Notecią. The facility offers ten beds in guest rooms. Apart from the tourist part, the facility comprises: the marina authority's office – acting as an information point, the harbour master's office, a boatyard and a hangar intended for water equipment storage. Guests have a fully equipped kitchen, a place for meal preparation and consumption, as well as sanitary facilities at their disposal.



Figure 3. “Przystań Powiat Nakielski” (Nakło County Marina) marina in Nakło nad Notecią (photo made by the author, 2017)

The following facilities were built in the area surrounding the marina building and the harbour basin: a beach volleyball court, a playground, a pétanque court, a badminton court, a campsite as well as parking spaces for people arriving in the marina. The area includes also a water equipment (canoe, pedalo) and bicycle rental.

At present, both the marina and the section of waterway E70 within the borders of Nakło County are characterised by a low intensity of use, not only on the regional or national scale but also on the local scale. For example, in 2017, only 32 short cruises were scheduled from the marina aboard “Łokietek” training ship owned by the Inland Navigation School Complex in Nakło nad Notecią, along the section between Nakło West and Nakło East locks (a distance of circa 4 km). In addition, similarly to previous years, they are organised only

on weekends – this year, these are two days in June, two days in July, one day in August and one day in September. In five cases, cruise participants will have the opportunity to take part in the transfer of a vessel through the lock (through Nakło East Lock). Cruises on longer routes (e.g. Nakło nad Notecią–the Bydgoszcz Canal–Bydgoszcz or Nakło nad Notecią–Osiek nad Notecią–Nakło nad Notecią) are held sporadically. Thus, the tourist navigation offer in the region that boasts a centuries-old tradition of inland navigation is currently very modest and addressed to Nakło's residents rather than tourists. Instead, river cruises should be held on a regular basis at least in the summer holiday season. The main reason why the waterways in Nakło County are generally desolate is the small size of the available fleet and the concerns about the profitability of its enlargement, which in turn results from the lack of

ideas that may turn into a good turnout. In 2015, Nakło County purchased “Zgłowiega” (renamed “Jadwiga”), a ship that previously navigated Koronowo Reservoir. So far it has not served regular routes. While striving for overcoming the stagnation on waterways in the Nakło area, it is becoming increasingly important to realize that professionalization of tourist services involves an offer tailored to a specific group of customers who want to increase their knowledge in a given topic of interest. For example, it is difficult to find a common denominator between people wishing to learn the history of inland navigation in a region during the cruise, a tour of primary school pupils, enthusiasts of birdwatching and photography, a group of pensioners from Germany on a sentimental trip, or participants of a social gathering aboard the ship. They all have different, often divergent requirements and expectations. This obviously is an organisational inconvenience, but it is also an opportunity to create an expanded tourism offer. At present, it cannot be assumed that partici-

pation in a cruise involves only watching the riverside views.

The construction of the marina in Nakło nad Notecią certainly reinforced the significance of this town within the “Great Waterway Loop of Wielkopolska” (in Polish: Wielka Pętla Wielkopolski) – a tourist navigation trail from Kostrzyn nad Odrą via Santok, Czarnków, Nakło, Kruszwica, Konin, Poznań and Międzychód (Słowiński and Nadolny, 2007). The marina in Nakło nad Notecią has the potential to become a base for canoe tourism in the region as it provides convenient conditions for this kind of activity within the navigation routes (the Noteć and the Bydgoszcz Canal) as well as tributaries of the Noteć that drain the plateau areas, such as: the Gaśawka, the Orla and the Rokitka. The hydrographic conditions allow for organising both one-day and longer canoe trips in Nakło County and the adjacent areas (e.g. “Small Loop of the Noteć” running from Nakło nad Notecią via the Bydgoszcz Canal, the Górnonotecki Canal and the so-called Old Noteć).

3. Other tourism resources in Nakło County

Nakło County covers fragments of five physical geographic mesoregions: the Middle Noteć Valley, the Toruń Basin, the Chodzież Plateau, the Krajna Lakeland and the Gniezno Lakeland. In addition, it is located on the boundary between Krajna and Pałuki, regions that for centuries have been showing considerable differences in terms of history and culture. They are separated by a relatively wide valley (currently used by the Noteć and its tributaries), originally a forbidding wetland, but subsequently developed by colonists from the western part of Europe. The history of all four urban centres located in the region dates back to the Medieval times. Kcynia was granted the location privilege in the second half of the 13th century, Nakło – in the late 13th century (already in the 11th century being one of the major gords of the Pomeranians tribe), Szubin – in the second half of the 14th century, while Mrocza – in the late 14th century. Part of the county was covered by institutional landscape protection under the Krajna Landscape Park, while such protection is contemplated for another part (within the

framework of Pałuki Landscape Park being currently planned). To summarise, it would seem that Nakło County constitutes an administration unit with a very large tourism potential, at least on the scale of the Kujawy-Pomerania Province, but actually this is not the case. In fact, the aesthetic qualities of the landscape are rated here at most as average (Bański 2016). One of the reasons is the monotonous relief, lacking forms that are generally recognised as spectacular. Certain exceptions in this regard are the scarp of Krajna Plateau, which steeply descends towards the ice-marginal valley and is densely cut by ravines, and the vicinity of Kcynia with characteristic moraine hills. The typical features of the lakeland relief are present only in the northern and north-eastern parts of the county. Today, the ethnographic specificity of particular parts of the region is not very distinctive, and in the historical context – even difficult to reconstruct. Such a state of affairs is characteristic of areas penetrated by cultural influences (Krajna and Pałuki). Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that the current

territory of Nakło County underwent very strong and long-term Germanisation by the community that mostly abandoned that place after World War II. Moreover, the undoubtedly interesting Medieval history of the area located on the border between Krajna and Pałuki is hardly reflected in the heritage structures that have been preserved to this day. There are no

traces of the Medieval castle in Nakło nad Notecią or the walls that surrounded the town in the past. The remnants of the castle in Szubin are neglected ruins. Admittedly, later periods are much better documented, but even in this case, it is difficult to talk of facilities that could be regarded as a potential target of cultural tourism of national importance (Fig. 4).



Figure 4. Half-timbered building from the first half of the 19th century in Nakło nad Notecią – the so-called Skipper's Cottage (photo made by the author, 2017)

Nakło County features a large number of nobility or landowner residences. However, these are generally private properties, not available to the public. They conceal a considerable potential but due to enormous costs of restoration and maintenance of such heritage structures, it is very unlikely that this potential will be used for tourism purposes in the foreseeable future. Owing to the turbulent history, the region encompasses numerous places of important historic events (e.g. battlefields of

Nakło, Kcynia, Szubin, Zamość or Rynarzewo) and places of martyrdom from World War II (e.g. the DP camp in Potulice, POW camps in Szubin, other places of martyrdom). It is difficult, however, to use them for end-to-end or even specific tourism products. Generally speaking, tourism resources in Nakło County are characterised by very large spatial dispersion and a relatively low and rather local importance as well as the lack of a leitmotif around which they could be promoted.

4. Tourism offer of Nakło County for the users of waterway E70

Given the current potential of Nakło County, it would be feasible to offer the users of waterway E70 a one-day tourist stay in Nakło nad Notecią and its environs. The local accommodation

and catering base is not particularly rich (lack of rated facilities), but there are several interesting restaurants that may be regarded as interesting due to historic interiors (Fig. 5), regional



Figure 5. The interior of an old granary in Nakło nad Notecią, adapted for a restaurant (photo by the author 2017)

cuisine or artistic programmes (chamber concerts). Some of them offer overnight accommodation in guest rooms.

At present, the stay in Nakło nad Notecią would be primarily a walk through the largest urban area in the county, with a fairly well-developed service and commercial sphere. Since recently it has been possible to go sightseeing around the town according to a thematic key that takes into account the history of the preserved buildings from the turn of the 20th century, along the virtual route “Nakło – a town of three cultures” (Pasięka, 2016). There is no facility or major exhibition in the town, which would be dedicated to inland navigation in the region, the historic connections of the town with the Noteć and the Bydgoszcz Canal. Unfortunately, the Museum of Krajna Land located in Nakło nad Notecią focuses on other aspects of the history of the town and the region. Perhaps it would be possible to establish such a facility as part of the activities pursued by the Technical Secondary School of Inland Navigation in Nakło nad Notecią. It is worth noting that the original image of the ice-marginal valley bottom has been preserved mainly in Nakło County, with a complex network of land drainage structures and periodically waterlogged areas used for agricultural purposes. Nakło nad Notecią seems to be the most appropriate centre where the unique engineering and cultural heritage

should be protected and the knowledge about it disseminated.

It is possible to rent a bicycle or use a private one to reach several interesting places near the town, starting from the Nakło marina. The Museum of Transport is located in the village of Paterek (ca. 3 km from the marina), which is a private collection of several dozen buses shuttling around Poland from the 1970s to the 1990s. In Trzeciewnica (ca. 5 km from the marina), the regional “Browar Krajan” (Krajan Brewery) can be visited after arranging an appointment in advance. Another production plant with an offer addressed to tourists is the glass works in Tur (13 km). A community centre called “Szkłany Tur” (Glass Tur) has been recently built in the village, which houses a permanent exhibition related to the history and glass production dating back to the first half of the 19th century. The village of Brzózki (11 km) is definitely worth visiting. This is probably the only thematic village in Nakło County (folk sculpture in wood) and at the same time an isolated case where inhabitants try to preserve the memory about their predecessors – German colonists (Fig. 6). Even better conditions for a similar project are found in the village of Weronika (13 km), due to the interesting architecture of farm buildings erected there during World War II. An interesting proposal for the evening may be a sky observation in a private astronomical

observatory in the village of Niedźwiady (12 km) or playing golf on the first professional golf course in the Kujawy-Pomerania Province

in the village of Olszewka, in “Stara Stodoła & Golf” (Old Barn & Golf) – an agritourism farm located 6 km from the Nakło marina.



Figure 6. “Twórcza wieś Brzózki” [Brzózki – a creative village] – a thematic village in the Noteć valley (photo made by the author, 2017)

When evaluating the techniques that have been used in Nakło County to promote tourist attractions, it appears that they did not match the expectations of the contemporary customers, and thus proved ineffective. They amounted to compiling all accessible or inaccessible, preserved or ruined, unique or ordinary structures, places and events, irrespective of their actual impact range and significance. In the age of internet communication, the attractiveness of such resources – “empty shells” – is revealed quickly and with no sentiment. Bearing this in mind, a completely different strategy was adopted when executing the “Ekomuzeum

Doliny Noteci” (Eco-Museum of the Noteć Valley) project, which is coordinated by the local “Partnerstwo dla Krajny i Pałuki” (Partnership for Krajna and Pałuki) association (www.turystyka-krajna-paluki.pl). It is a cultural and tourism base of (pre-selected) structures that are worth visiting, interesting events and places that enhance the attractiveness of Nakło County and provide knowledge about the historic regions of Krajna and Pałuki. At the same time, projects that engage a local community are distinguished. “Ekomuzeum Doliny Noteci” is a new initiative but it represents the right direction of such activities.

5. Conclusions

Nowadays, the development strategy of Poland, and of the Kujawy-Pomerania Province in particular, puts a great emphasis on the efforts aimed at regeneration of waterways. Particular attention has been paid to trans-European waterways, which may serve tourism purposes

if equipped with appropriate infrastructure. In this context, the construction of a new marina on waterway E70 in Nakło nad Notecią constitutes an important step towards the restoration of this town’s position as a major inland navigation centre but by no means guarantees an

immediate increase in the tourists' interest in the region.

The name "Przystań Powiat Nakielski" (Nakło County Marina) given to the newly constructed marina informs mostly about the source of financing of this investment project but also indicates certain ambitions to create a flagship tourism brand that integrates the natural and cultural resources in the county. However, this does not change the fact that the discussed waterway is of prime importance only to the municipality and the town of Nakło nad Notecią, i.e. the region that is most strongly connected with the use of waterways. The other communes have to build their offer based on other qualities.

In general, the tourism potential of Nakło County compared to other regions located along the E70 waterway is at most average. At present, it is difficult to talk about tourist attractions of national or even provincial importance. In this situation, there is a real risk that Nakło's marina will serve an inferior function of a transit traffic handling point, not an important communication hub and a base for tourists who want to penetrate the region. In order to prevent the limitation of the tourist traffic only to the area of Nakło's marina and the nearby commercial and gastronomic facilities, it should be a priority for the local authorities to prepare a concept of tourism development based on a realis-

tic analysis of the available resources. If Nakło County cannot compete with other regions in terms of natural and cultural values, then one should focus on competition in terms of creativity and professionalism in tourism development and popularisation. It seems that the centuries-old traditions of local water resource management, integrating the region's historical heritage (including the hydraulic engineering structures in particular), the development of the valley areas that is specific in terms of spatial planning and architecture, the agriculture and fishery in areas that are subject to land drainage, the region's culinary and cultural heritage, etc., could become the leitmotif of such a tourism offer.

It is expected that the activation of tourism on waterway E70 will not proceed consistently. The nearby town of Bydgoszcz, where the work on the regeneration of the Bydgoszcz Water Junction is already very advanced, is a natural partner for the local authority of Nakło. The two cities should strive to increase the recognisability of the Bydgoszcz Canal in Poland and abroad, e.g. through activities aimed at entering this engineering structure on the UNESCO World Heritage List or at least on the List of Historical Monuments. It should be noted that the functional initial section of the Bydgoszcz Water Junction is located in Nakło nad Notecią.

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