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Wine histories. Winemaking in Western Poland

Main Idea: the revival of the wine and wineries as searching for the tradition of region.

There is lack of this kind of tradition, because:

1) The communist ideologies are not attractive anymore. That was the history of recapturing the land of polish dwellers at the beginning of existence of polish state (tenth century). This part of Poland belonged to Germany for 150 to 800 years and most people were speaking German here. Some of them were of "polish" (not in national sense, but in ethnical sense): of Slavic origins. Poland was "moved" to west after WWII and some German territories became Polish. The communist history of the region was the history of coming back to old sources of polish nation.

2) Prewar history and tradition were passed over in silence. Some historical researches made in this region were focused on minor manifestation of polish identity by prewar people of the region. That's why overwhelming majority of past were just forgotten and ignored (even if strikingly visible, materially, culturally or socially: e.g. architecture, cemeteries, public places "speaking German", "communicating", saying some stories, expressing some cultural meanings).

So: empty space needs filling up with tradition legitimating the cultural practice. Especially this weird practice - winemaking needs explanation, it needs some "excuse" – Poland is not really wine region.

When talking to people about wine it is visible that it is not only wine: story of winemaking reflects understanding the tradition, history and future of the region. Sometimes this is the way of cutting the history off. History of traditional agriculture, history of communist ideology of progress and modernity and also history of provinciality. It is not only affirmation but also denying some identity.

There are three main groups of local community interested in wine and winemaking: winemakers, local authorities, common people/consumers – locals and tourists.

Winemakers: private land, family activity (selling home-made wine is difficult in Poland because of very harsh law), limited because of costs, hobby.

Local authorities: in declarations – support winemakers in revitalizing local traditions, in practice – no support, no autonomy for winemakers, no cooperation. Regional authorities develop the strategy of "museum tradition". The biggest wine harvest feast is made without local wine.

Consumers: very well-wishing to winemakers, but not used to drinking wine, especially local wine (dry white – Riesling type). In Poland consumption of wine is quite low, and there is very weak and limited usage of it. Sweet and red wine is much more popular and generally easy to drink.

In my research I focused on winemakers, trying to analyze their attitudes in detail.

WINEMAKERS: Young to middle age couples, many of them connected with public space (journalist, town hall official, modern – educated, mobile agriculturalist, defining themselves as opposed to "traditional" parents' way of land management)

To recostruct the winemakers attitutes I put some questions:

1) how people legitimate changing their life into 'wine direction' ("why do we do it?")

2) how people describe wine and winemaking?

3) what is the aim of winemaking – what is the future of this activity

Main answers for these questions are:

Past (tradition):

1. invisible

2. **inspiration (historical interests, hobbies)**

3. path to continue

4. interesting but not practical

5. **interesting because of wine**

Reasons (legitimating, social context, cultural meaning of winemaking)

1. accident: looking for some economical activity (agricultural)

2. **family tradition (agricultural or wine tradition)**

3. **continuation of historical interests**

4. wine (but not regional) interest – from France, Germany, Italy – European, cosmopolitan.

Aims (Future strategies)

1. doing the same – "just for me"

2. **doing more and more – to live by wine only (now its hobby, after the 'proper' work) - there are no ideas of stopping it one day**