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Towards a New Local Tourism Economy: Understanding Sense of Community, Social Impacts and Potential Enterprise Opportunities in Podgrađe Bač, Vojvodina, Serbia

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Abstract

Serbia's Vojvodina Region has been discussed in recent research as a region with much tourism potential. Numerous studies have assessed different tourism opportunities in Vojvodina, but there is a need to understand how local residents perceive tourism to address how they see their destination developing. This paper focuses on the rural community of Podgrađe Bač. The reason for focusing on this micro-community is directly adjacent is the Bač Fortress, which is currently under review with UNESCO to be recognised (and protected) as a World Heritage Site. There is a need to consider how social impacts and social change are about altering peoples' outlook and attitude, as well as gaining support to encourage cohesive involvement among members of the community. Data were collected for this study through a Likert Scale survey with associated open-ended questions. Given the micro-locale case study focus, 29 surveys were collected from one participant in each household. The results and analysis are based on understanding sense of community in Podgrađe Bač, assessing the attractiveness of Bač Fortress and subsequent local tourism developments, and assessing resident perceptions of tourism, by considering social impacts, enterprise opportunities and overall potential.

Keywords

Tourism potential, rural development, sense of community, social impacts, economic impacts, Serbia

Introduction

The Vojvodina Region of Serbia has been identified as a region with tourism potential (see Dragicevic et al., 2009; Mulec and Wise, 2013) and tourism research focusing on the Vojvodina Region of Serbia has received much attention in the past decade (e.g. Bogdanović et al., 2016; Košić et al. 2011; Mulec and Wise, 2012a, 2012b; Ristić et al. 2010; Todorović and Bjeljac 2009; Wise and Mulec 2015; Wise et al., 2015). This northern autonomous region in Serbia is physiographically situated in the southern section of the Pannonian lowland comprising 21,500 square kilometres with 2 million inhabitants. One of the main tourism features of this region is the Exit Festival, a popular music event held annually since 2000. Previous negative images of Serbia deterred tourism to the region, but the destination has since revitalised its tourism offer and continues to attract visitors (Armenski et al., 2017).

Whilst numerous studies have assessed different tourism opportunities in the Vojvodina Region, there is a need to understand how local residents perceive tourism to begin to understand their awareness—to position how they see their destination developing. In the academic literature, there is a need for more micro-locale case study research focusing on tourism in rural communities (see Jimura 2011; Kim et al. 2013; McLennan et al. 2012; Naidoo and Sharpley 2016). This paper presents a micro-locale case study of Bač with the purpose of understanding how residents in the neighbourhood of Podgrađe perceive a local sense of

community and how they plan to anticipate future tourism. Bač is remotely located in the west of the Vojvodina Region just over 60km west of Novi Sad and 140km northwest from Belgrade (see the map in Figure 1). The reason for focusing on this micro-community specifically is because directly adjacent to the community is the Bač Fortress which is currently under review with UNESCO to be recognised and protected as a World Heritage Site (see Figure 2). Images of local attractions in Bač, the Bač Fortress and Podgrađe Bač are presented in Figures 3, 4 and 5, respectively. Podgrađe Bač is expected to experience a series of transitions and increased tourism in the future as the fortress is preserved. The UNESCO proposal for the historical place of Bač and its surroundings (including the fortress) was submitted on the 15th of April 2010 (UNESCO, 2017). If designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, this will further promote Bač and the attraction (UNESCO, 2017).

While Bač has a number of unique tourism attractions (Figure 3), residents are not used to high tourism flows; however, in line with cities and towns across Vojvodina, Bač has experienced much transition over the past decades since the 1990s and planning and investments in tourism are gaining traction (even if the pace of change is slow). The region has experienced drastic political, social, and demographic challenges resulting from economic restructuring. Although agriculture is still an important sector of the region's economy, this sector has also seen decline. A challenge is then to manage employment which results in younger cohorts of the population seeking opportunities elsewhere, particularly in larger towns and cities such as Novi Sad or Belgrade, or looking for opportunities in Schengen countries (Mulec and Wise, 2013). Many young people move to work in the service sector, and while chances of finding employment are higher in larger cities and elsewhere in Europe, tourism developments in rural areas represent new service oriented employment opportunities. Bač arguably has an advantage, having a potential World Heritage Site on the edge of the community. It is too early to tell what sort of economic impact the fortress will bring to Bač should the UNESCO designation be successful, but it is still worth conducting preliminary research with the community residents to gain insight into how they perceive future tourism in Podgrađe Bač.

This paper attempts to recognise the potential of increased tourism and how this will impact local communities within close proximity of attractions, noting it is essential to work with communities to gain an understanding of how they perceive their community and tourism potential. Tourism is on the horizon and instead of waiting until tourism becomes a reality conducting research in communities with tourism potential is an attempt to inform future social and economic sustainable outcomes so that the community can collaborate to promote their local destination.

[Figure 1 here]

[Figure 2 here]

[Figure 3 here]

[Figure 4 here]

[Figure 5 here]

Research Framework

Sense of Community

Researchers have addressed community as the foundation structure of a society (e.g. Poplin 1979; Martin 2004). Much research over the last several decades has conveyed interpretations, meanings, and conceptualizations of the term community. Broadly considering, from Block's (2009) perspective, community refers to the structure of belonging and is geographically tied to a location and shared interests that unite people. Social groups, (or social organizations), are of various sizes and strengths. Poplin (1979: 5) provides concise insight

here, mentioning: “community has been used to refer to a condition in which human beings find themselves enmeshed in a tight-knit web of meaningful relationships with their fellow human beings.” Warren (2004: 54) adds “the systematic study of community has developed around the general focus of shared living based on common locality.” Tönnies (2002) expresses *gemeinschaft* as inclusive, while *gesellschaft* is the public world. The geography of this dichotomy is scale, in the sense of *gemeinschaft* referring to some community, being a local place, or home—in association with the social locale, or interactions and influences of the greater *gesellschaft*. Tönnies viewed communities as mechanical formations forged from what is organic, being products of social interactions in a particular location (see Tinder 1980).

Human relationships are central to the functional productions of communities. Relationships and networks are established locally and personally (see Pahl and Spencer 2004) before they are expanded to promote collective togetherness—working towards a shared sense of community and identity (Schloßberger 2016). Geographies concerning a community and location involve residences, communication infrastructures, shops, and cultural elements that define the local setting. Sociologically, people residing in a location interact in place based locations to structure a ‘sense of belonging’ (Poplin 1979: 23). A community, from a social-psychological standpoint, refers to identity. This being, “the contention that members of the modern community share common ties and bonds that bind people together” (Poplin 1979: 24). Poplin (1979) also notes that for people to psychologically identify with their community, they must constitute some involvement with and directly participate in community affairs. Relationships thus emerge as by-products of immediate contacts supplement as sense of mutual belonging (see Keller 2003). However, building on these grounded conceptualizations of community as a social system, communal relationships constitute belonging through group interactions. To refer again to Poplin’s (1979) work, he also defines community as a social network consisting of multiple sub-communities making up a collective whole (see also, Piselli 2007; Suttles 1972).

Building on the above points, research on community suggests that even despite local conditions, people will strive to achieve a sense of community (Hummon, 1992; Puddifoot, 2003; Wise, 2015). Much work has acknowledged McMillan and Chavis (1986) conceptual work that outlines a theory for sense of community based on four conditions: membership, influence, integration or fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connections. Their first condition, membership is often defined or recognized by geographical boundaries (Agnew, 1987; Poplin, 1979; Suttles, 1972) but “can be so subtle as to be recognizable only by residents themselves” (McMillan and Chavis, 1986: 10). Influence involves social capital, and is often based on or bias of local politics, economics, and culture—as the existence of these three contributing variables provide the overarching structures of influence. Integration and fulfilment of needs is brought into context in numerous community case studies to position how influential factors/variables reinforce individual and group networks (Jenkins, 2008). Furthermore, reinforcement acts as a motivator of social behaviour and “it is obvious that for any group to maintain a (positive) sense of togetherness the individual-group association must be rewarding for its members” (McMillan and Chavis 1986: 12). García et al. (1999) support this conceptualization because integration and fulfilment are requirements to promote and sustain a greater sense of community and unite individuals. For example, schools and various other institutions including churches, community halls, pavilions, and recreational spaces represent common places of integration. Each of these examples allow members of the community to organize and structure their needs to fulfil goals, increase social capital and sustain sense of community. As this paper will discuss, the potential to unite a community around delivering a tourism product is a way to promote social impacts through pride in place, and also improve local social capital. This also links to shared emotional connections. Building on Sarason’s (1974) focus on interrelationships, participation, and well-being, which are

likewise important. Addressed above, *gemeinschaft* and *locale* parallel this conceptualization—expressing emotional connections and interactions among local community members and their defined (or particular) place(s). This suggests collective attachments promote a greater sense of involvement, identity formation, and belonging (Mannarini et al. 2012; Wise, 2015).

Social and Economic Impacts

Sense of community is explored conceptually as a way of understanding how a community mobilises. Relevant to this work, Jimura (2011, 2016) argues that community involvement in destinations with World Heritage Sites is essential to ensure sustainable outcomes. This paper is concerned with how people perceive a local sense of community, given the direction of Podgrađe Bač and potential future tourism. Some may view investments in tourism as investments in someone else's interests and not necessarily the needs of the local residents (Spirou, 2010). According to Fredline et al. (2003: 26), “social impacts are defined as any impacts that potentially affect the quality of life of local residents.” Social impacts are linked to community development, civic pride and induced development through new expenditures (Raj and Musgrave, 2009). There are also challenges involved if new infrastructures are not maximised, everyday life is disrupted and wealth is not distributed equally (Christie and Gibb, 2015; Clark and Kearns, 2016; Raj and Musgrave, 2009). Likewise, economic potential is often the driver for promoting tourism, but in the case of a micro-locale it is essential to frame both economic and social impacts to ensure a sustainable future that is inclusive of community residents (Naidoo and Sharpley 2016; Zhao et al. 2011).

Creating a stable economic tourism base around a particular activity or attraction is an advantage for a destination—especially a World Heritage Site. A challenge that Podgrađe Bač will likely face is rural destinations struggle without support from the private sector—as public funding is often stretched (Smith, 2012). Private sector financing however can create issues in communities, and from the standpoint of social impacts there is a need to create opportunities (employment or leisure related) for both tourists and locals (Fredline et al. 2003; Hayllar et al., 2011; Wise and Perić, 2017, Wise et al., 2017) whilst trying to reduce social exclusion (Wise and Whittam, 2015). Economic impacts of tourism are often measured based on visitor spend, but also through levels of new employment and enterprise opportunities. There is a need to develop programmes based on enterprise and employment demands so more local residents can get involved (see Wise et al., 2017). If businesses are run by locals, this ensures money is retained to maximise profits and bring new benefits to a community—resulting in both social and economic impacts (McLennan et al., 2012). However, depending on how funding is allocated, investments are still often needed. Ultimately it is policy and planning initiatives that influence the development of tourism products and new opportunities in local communities. Establishing new networks, norms and trust helps enable people to work tougher in pursuit of shared objectives—which helps create bonding capital based on shared influence between community members. This is also supported by typologies of participation, which can be: passive, functional, interactive or achieved through self-mobilisation and connectedness (see Pretty and Hine 1999). In Podgrađe Bač, this will likely be influenced by UNESCO if the fortress is designated a World Heritage Site. Through UNESCO, this can help improve competitiveness and increase visitor spend revenue.

Speaking back to the points noted earlier in this section, academics are increasingly concerned with how the public sector focuses on social legacy, or ‘softer’ impacts (Clark and Kearns, 2015). Moreover, Lawless (2010) argues that social benefits and legacies are lost in the planning and development process. Many tourism projects are financed, supported and maintained through private sector funds—thereby limiting opportunities and sometimes excluding access to local residents. It is also important to leverage outcomes, to determine what

approaches will be most beneficial to the general public. Development and planning for tourism can potentially have long-term impacts on social relationships between the public sector, planners and communities. Therefore, new approaches to tourism planning and associated developments need to address how changes will impact communities—in terms of creating a sense of social cohesion, pride in place and how local residents recognise tourism potential (Thwaites et al., 2013). Wise and Perić (2017), building on prior work assessing social impacts (e.g. Chalip, 2006; Getz, 2013; Smith, 2012), attempt to further the significance of this discussion by outlining social conditions concerning policies based on social benefits, collaboration, involvement of local community residents, and programmes in place to support socially sustainable futures (concerning legacy).

There is a need to consider how social impacts and social change are about altering peoples' outlooks and attitudes, as well as gaining support to encourage cohesive involvement among members of a community (Deery et al., 2012; Dwyer, 2005; Quinn and Wilks, 2013). Sociologically, this lends to discussions of individual and social capital (Thwaites et al., 2013). Social capital also involves the formation of networks, norms and trusts that enable people to work together to persevere and achieve a number of set shared objectives (Quinn and Wilks, 2013). Putnam (2000) addressed social capital, but bonding capital focuses on forging community ties that lead to a greater sense of belonging. Building on the literature presented above, conceptualisations pertinent to sense of community are important to acknowledge here—since these ideas will assist the framing and interpretations in the subsequent analysis and support the development of social capital. Social capital and discussions of community refer to the binding of people in a particular location to establish a sense of empowerment through enterprise and entrepreneurship activity (Altinay et al., 2016; Partington and Totten, 2012; Waite and Gibson, 2009; Zhao et al., 2011).

Survey Method

Data were collected for this study through a Likert Scale survey with some open-ended questions (to gain subsequent insight to reflect on in the paper). Given the micro-locale case study focus, 29 surveys were collected from one participant in each household. Survey demographics are presented in Table 1. Participant names are not used in this paper, and are referred to as, for example, Participant 1. There are 35 homes in Podgrađe Bač as observed in Figure 2. 29 were inhabited with year-round residents at the time of the survey, and it was known that 34 of the homes are habited (with five not occupied year-round). Parts of the survey were adapted from Puddifoot (2003) who focused on sense of community based on personal and shared perspectives in Durham, England. The usefulness of this approach, to adapt and use questions looking at sense of community in Podgrađe Bač, was to first frame this rural tightknit community and then lead into questions focusing on local perceptions concerning attractiveness of the destination's fortress before understanding how the community could or might become involved in future tourism opportunities.

The survey was split into three sections: 1. understandings and perceptions of community; 2. awareness of tourism potential; and 3. tourism and the community. Results presented below analyse averages and standard deviations from the 7-point Likert Scale survey, and with the first analysis strength associations were conducted. Previous studies have used a 5-point scale so the purpose of utilising a 7-point scale was to identify results based on variance and seek reliability in the data through the standard deviations due to the small sample size given the parameters of this study. The open-ended questions were an attempt to capture any further insight from participants. It was expected that there was a lack of tourism knowledge given the underdeveloped tourism infrastructure. Moreover, since the fortress is being reviewed by UNESCO, it is important to understand what enterprising insight could be captured beyond the survey questions.

[Table 1 here]

Results

The following result sections link to the theoretical context outlined above. In line with the focus of this study, the first section below addresses sense of community in Podgrađe Bač based on how participants perceive self and others. The next section looks at the sampled residents' perception of the attractiveness of Bač Fortress and local tourism development. The third section adds to the discussion of impacts based on residents' perceptions and observations of tourism potential. In addition, the open questions were asked at the end of the survey and these build on the points discussed in Part 3 of the survey. In each of these subsections, both the quantitative and qualitative responses are presented based on the outline of the survey. The conclusion section brings together findings that link back to conceptual understandings and the need for future research to work towards developing a local (tourism) economy in Podgrađe Bač that can reinforce a sense of community and lend to a socially sustainable future.

Understanding a Micro-Sense of Community in Podgrađe Bač

Table 2 presents survey results by question for Part 1 of the survey. Results in Table 2 are overwhelmingly positive with the response to most questions averaging at 'strongly agree', 'agree' and 'somewhat agree'. Some outliers in these responses include results surrounding commitment to this community. With the similar questions showing averages of 'neutral options' but with strong leanings into the disagree categories given the variance displayed. Because of the range in variance to most responses in this section especially, it was also important to show media results compared against the means to each question.

[Table 2 here]

Further statistical analysis was conducted to measure strengths of association between personal and shared characteristics of sense of community in Podgrađe Bač. Table 3 shows, out of 12 personal and shared community perceptions pairs, only five seems to be significantly associated. The analysis evidences that members of Podgrađe Bač are perceived to be friendly ($F=9.323^{***}$; $\eta^2=0.670$), believe their community to be safe ($F=3.285^{***}$; $\eta^2=0.283$) have good relationships between community members (expressed through helping each other) ($F=5.563^{***}$; $\eta^2=0.547$) and they maintain good relationships with their neighbours ($F=6.590^{**}$; $\eta^2=0.523$). These characteristics are considered strengths for future tourism development in Podgrađe Bač and an instrument for embracing locals into this development by working together. However, a social responsibility for community well-being needs to be developed through social programs and activities that will motivate individuals to take part in the life of community—with a view to contribute to community development. A strong local community can contribute to a strong local economy in this regard, but one of the key factors observed in Table 3 is, at the moment, community individuals are perceived to not feel involved in the life of the community ($F=4.325^{**}$; $\eta^2=0.419$). While there are good relationships, a greater sense of involvement needs to be achieved, speaking back to the framework presented by McMillan and Chavis (1986), so community members can work together to achieve shared deliverable outcomes. According to Bocken et al. (2015), communities need to build, create and deliver products that are socially sustainable and will benefit the community collectively.

[Table 3 here]

Residents stated that simply the fortress is what defines the significant identity of Podgrađe Bač, and potential UNESCO World Heritage designation will help make the destination known and accessible. Surveyed residents also note that the “authentic architecture of houses” (Participant 25) and the histories “surroundings and entrance to the fortress” (Participant 29) define the local identity of the community. From identity, is community, and residents mentioned that socialisation and collaboration amongst Podgrađe Bač residents help unite everyone. Relating to McMillan and Chavis (1986), a sense of community in Podgrađe Bač links to integration and shared emotional connections. Survey participants noted that a sense of community is reinforced based on “good relations with the neighbours” (Participant 21), “collaboration among all the inhabitants of Podgrađe” (Participant 25), which was a common response, and “the spirit of the community” (Participant 3) highlight sense of togetherness in this close-knit community. However, despite these comments, results in Table 3 suggest residents do not believe other residents are as involved, but overall good relationships help maintain a strong sense of community. Give the expressed integration among community members, this sense of cohesion needs to be utilised to assist and support members of the community.

What is also important to note is challenges can arise when new opportunities and economic activities are introduced in small communities, because some residents may seek more rewards and benefits from tourism activity while others may struggle or wish to disconnect from the introduction of tourism. One resident commented that “it is important that the way of living does not change” (Participant 4) in Podgrađe Bač with the introduction of tourism and new developments around the fortress. Change may create contestation, and would significantly impact the strong sense of cohesion expressed during the current time. Residents also noted various issues in Podgrađe Bač are based on limitations surrounding the ability to make changes to their homes (to improve amenities). Because the area is protected by the Institution for Cultural Heritage in Serbia locals require permission from the institution for cultural heritage and this has taken a toll on attitudes, with participants noting: “I have no right to restore and build my own court” (Participant 13); “problems with the old houses” (Participant 20); “no permission to build or restore our own houses” (Participant 24); and “impossible to renovate the houses” (Participant 25). Participants are satisfied with the fact that they live in a community that has cultural significance based on local heritage, but there is still the desire to upgrade and utilise more modern amenities. Other concerns included geographical isolation, which results in a lack of employment opportunities given the decline in agricultural jobs and an aging community. Two residents who have a desire to get involved and promote tourism in the community are eager to gain more insight, as they state:

“[There is] not enough information about the importance of the fortress”
(Participant 28)

“Have not had enough information about the plans for the fortress, no collaboration with local government and people from the Petrovaradin Fortress in Novi Sad and the institution for cultural heritage” (Participant 29)

The application to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site was submitted in 2010, but during this time residents are eager to know more about what changes this will bring and how this will impact on the community both socially and economically.

Attractiveness of Local Tourism Development and Bač Fortress

Building on the focus of sense of community, it is important to understand what awareness local residents in Podgrađe Bač have of local tourism development. Table 4 displays

survey results showing that residents are aware of the significance of the fortress but do express concerns about tourism readiness. The first three responses in Table 4 are almost unanimous in that there is a need to focus on revitalising the Bač Fortress. However, there are mixed opinions given the range and variance concerning if the current revitalisation of the Bač Fortress is damaging the structure. Despite the positive results displayed in Table 4, the majority of residents are not fully aware of the existing development plans at Bač Fortress. Given that the proposal to designate Bač Fortress as a UNESCO World Heritage Site is under review, there is a collective sense that residents are ready to see tourists visit Bač. While there is a strong sense of community cohesion, referring back to results presented in the above section, this leads to points of concern that the majority of residents are not aware of the plans, and are not involved in planning discussions that could significantly impact the Podgrađe Bač.

[Table 4 here]

Beyond the insight offered in Table 4, participants were asked about their thoughts on revitalising the Bač Fortress. Results were overwhelmingly unanimous. Residents would like to see the fortress restored, and one participant clearly stated: “it has to be restored” (Participant 3). While some restoration is necessary to attract visitors, UNESCO status would mean strict guidelines on what and how the attraction can be restored. Two participants expressed doubts and were not particularly confident in restoration efforts or rumours, noting:

I would like it to be restored, but I doubt it will happen (Participant 23)

It would be nice if the restoration takes place, but based on my experiences I have my doubts of this (Participant 24)

Given the insight offered by residents, another respondent added: “restoration is needed, but just as well is more collaboration from the side of the local authorities” (Participant 29). This is the key element in this discussion and given the community’s proximate location and potential tourism intensions. Local residents also directed attention to the need to build collaborations to ensure the destination will be sustainable—opposed to simply making decisions without a clear vision or strategy.

A vision and strategy involves gaining rapport from local residents who will see their community impacted from increased tourism. This impact can affect quality of life both positively and negatively. Having an informed awareness of tourism potential and developments will involve the community benefiting from its own human and social capital—so that residents’ can also gain economically. Economic impacts can translate to social impacts (Wise 2016) if successful tourism products are developed in a manner that support the Bač Fortress as the main attraction. A main point expressed by a resident is the need to “employ young people and bring young people” (Participant 4). This supports the point noted above about rural areas across Vojvodina. Young people are departing rural areas due to a lack of opportunity and underemployment. While building a destination does require human capital, the costs-benefits are initially difficult to gauge since the future designation of the Bač Fortress is not yet determined. Moreover, it will take some time before visitor yields can signify what sort of ancillary tourism supply is needed. In addition to maintaining young people and employment, another resident spoke of the importance of “educating local residents who are interested in working in tourism” (Participant 29).

Education is another important social and economic impact because starting employment or initiating enterprises in a new industry is a risk if those involved do not have the necessary skills to succeed (see Wise and Perić, 2017). Residents are aware of the various

tourism infrastructures needed to build a local tourism economy, and beyond a few other local visitor attractions, there is little to capture and keep tourists in the community beyond the attractions. Referring back to the map in Figure 2, there is a Cultural Centre (which offers information for tourists), and the existing visitor attractions include the Franciscan Monastery, St Paul's Church (known as the White Church) and the Turkish Baths (which need restored). There are plans for a visitor centre to be built close to the pedestrian and biking bridge over the canal where visitors would enter Podgrađe Bač (see Figure 6). From Table 4, the average response was 'somewhat disagree' and the median response was 'disagree' suggesting there are enough attractive features beyond the Bač Fortress that would interest tourists (but there was high variance with a standard deviation of 1.43). There are plans to build a museum and education centre among the houses in Podgrađe Bač, but this will likely also require special planning and zoning permission given that residents face limitations on what they can do to the façade and structure of their homes. As seen from the map in Figure 2, there are plans to extend the tourism offer in Bač and immediately around Podgrađe Bač, but as expressed by residents in this survey they feel more collaboration is needed to ensure locals are aware of plans that will impact their local community and local economy. Despite the intentions, residents are indecisive as to whether internationals will visit the Bač Fortress, with the average to this question showing 'neutral opinion', the median at 'somewhat disagree', but there is some optimism given the variance in responses (standard deviation of 1.53).

[Figure 6 here]

Beyond the plans outlined on the map, residents were asked what they feel could be done to further benefit tourism in the local neighbourhood of Podgrađe Bač specifically. Respondents noted a range of necessary infrastructures and the need again to restore the old houses, as this would represent an aesthetic enhancement. Others mentioned the area lacks signs for both directions and information, in addition to shops, cafés/restaurants, hotels and guest houses. Residents noted that Bač lacks cultural facilities and hotel space to accommodate tourists (see results in Table 4). From the map in Figure 2, there is one hotel close to the Franciscan Monastery, but guest houses do represent a local enterprise opportunity for visitors who want to experience local life in Podgrađe Bač given the uniqueness and historical significance of the community adjacent the fortress. Given the range of potential developments and interest here, awareness through education is essential. There is a need to have a strong command of how to deal with local, regional and international tourists which involves a working knowledge of customer service and host-guest relations (because tourism is a service driven industry). The area is traditionally an agricultural area, so business relations between locals as suppliers and the wholesale distributors involve a different set of business standards and exchanges. Customer service and working in the tourism (and related service) industries rely on good feedback, and the exchange of information via the internet and social media can have an impact on business if they do not receive positive feedback from consumers.

Resident Perceptions of Tourism Potential: Impacts or Not?

From Table 2, above, residents on average strongly agreed or agreed that they feel a sense of safety and security in Podgrađe Bač in Part 1 of the survey (see also, Table 3). In Part 3 of the survey participants were asked a similar question as to whether or not they will feel safe with tourists in the community, and the results correlate well because average responses were also 'strongly agree' and 'agree'. International tourism is especially important for small communities but it is often difficult to attract visitors from around the world unless there is a significant attraction—such as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In Novi Sad, international tourism is linked to the success of the popular Exit Festival where international tourism meant

an opportunity for locals to meet internationals (see Wise et al., 2015). As noted in the intro, the Vojvodina Region is seeing increased interest and adding a UNESCO World Heritage Site may also help with the regions tourism appeal in the more remote parts of the region as people are attracted to Novi Sad for the popular summer music event. While events in Podgrađe Bač would be at a much smaller scale, residents do welcome the idea of hosting more cultural events in the community around the Bač Fortress (see results in Table 4). From a broader perspective, members of the community offered contrasting perspectives on how tourism might benefit Podgrađe Bač, mentioning “the community will not earn much from this development” (Participant 1), and alternatively “tourism is always a good thing, there will be something for everyone” (Participant 2). The contrast in perspectives noted throughout responses represents a concern because a few individuals may gain more than others. Results displayed in Table 5 are much more varied in this third section of the survey when compared to the first two sections.

[Table 5 here]

Overall, respondents collectively ‘agree’ and ‘somewhat agree’ that the community is ready to see increased tourism, tourism will bring new benefits and that overall residents see the benefits of future tourism, but there is a bit more uncertainty in terms of if residents might invest in enterprises or seek other ways to get involved such as volunteering. While the mean response to volunteering was split, there was a standard deviation of 2.3 displaying high variance across the responses. Results in Table 5 are positive in that tourism will not drive them away from the community or disturb everyday life. Something that most respondents also agreed with was they see private investors as a threat to the community, as residents believe private investors will be interested in the Bač Fortress achieves UNESCO World Heritage status. Private investors in such rural areas can have negative consequences—both socially and economically. This is where it is important that the community mobilises in a manner where they invest in local businesses to support the local tourism economy and ensure money brought in is retained locally. With outside investors coming in, new jobs may be created, but the flow of profits will not necessarily filter down to the local community. This means financial impacts might be lost, and thus would reduce social impacts to enhance quality of life and wellbeing in Podgrađe Bač.

Building on the responses pertinent to sense of community and the noted awareness of what is needed to create a local tourism economy, those surveyed were also asked to address any issues or state any uncertainties of positive reflections on how they feel tourism would benefit Podgrađe Bač. One resident noted that tourism will allow them “to better appreciate more that we have the fortress and nice nature” (Participant 3). While residents included insight on income generation, future employment and enterprise opportunities, a number of residents believe tourism will bring aesthetic enhancement to the community in terms of improving the landscape and houses. While these are necessary to increase quality of life, compromise between planners, officials and local residents will need agreed, because policies will influence how much residents get involved in the future of tourism. Still when it concerns how tourism will benefit the community, one participant was concerned, mentioning: “the locals will have no benefits, only the environment will look better” (Participant 13). A number of other residents mentioned the environment will be enhanced, supporting the point about improving aesthetics. Another resident expressed similar concern: “the locals will not be better off, but the environment will be better conserved” (Participant 26). This is a more optimistic outlook highlighting that tourism is an opportunity to conserve (and preserve) the unique surrounding landscape and structures of Podgrađe Bač. The vast majority of responses pointed at economic benefits with varying insight from “economic benefits will lead to cultural benefits” (Participant 29) to “I think the community will have no benefit, but tourism can bring in some

money” (Participant 5). This last remark with overwhelming emphasis on financial benefits points to the fact that residents do acknowledge the economic benefits of tourism, but are not yet aware of the supplemental social impacts that tourism can bring to a small community.

Conclusion: Towards A New Local Tourism Economy in Podgrađe Bač

As Jimura (2011: 290) notes “tourism has become a community development tool for many places, especially rural and/or isolated areas, because in many of these areas, primary industries which local people were dependent upon have declined.” But as addressed in this study, it is about communities working together to identify strengths and make use of human and social capital to build local capacity. Entrepreneurial and enterprise opportunities can lead to positive economic impacts, but the community will need to rely on gaining UNESCO status to see an influx of visitors and to attract supplemental finances from the regional and national government and outside investment. Such research is important to conduct to pre-assess local readiness and the state of the community. Local insight gained from understanding attitudes and interest of the community allows researchers to inform policy makers about the extent of involvement and interest in future tourism planning and development (see Higgins-Desbiolles 2011; Yen and Kerstetter 2009; Wise and Perić 2017). The results suggest that there is a lack of interest in terms of getting involved in tourism, but this can be interpreted as a lack of knowledge as well. Of the participants who identified as unemployed, only two expressed interested in starting a business—opening a guesthouse. A majority of the residents are retired or currently employed away from the community so this would also limit time and investment in tourism related services. Harrill (2004) highlighted the important role that local residents play in tourism development in rural areas, and this is especially important in rural areas. While much emphasis is put on economic impacts, it is social impacts and the opportunity to build local capacity that will help communities to unite by gaining from local heritage and work towards a greater sense of community by working together to build tourism services.

Future work will involve continued efforts with the community along with the local and regional tourism authority to help develop a new tourism agenda that links to community needs and concerns in an enterprising manner. This also has potential to lead to service based consulting and educational development in underdeveloped tourism areas in Serbia to help small communities create new local economies. Given the difficulties that rural communities continue to face, especially in the Vojvodina Region of Serbia, there is potential to revitalise local economies through tourism. However, this will also require ample efforts to inform and train locals of the benefits of a burgeoning service sector economy that may face resistance given the more traditional economic conditions. Podgrađe Bač was an ideal micro-local case study to assess, not only because of the adjacent fortress but also because of the community’s heritage itself and its location along the canal path. Podgrađe Bač’s unique features are in line with efforts to capture a wave of heritage tourist or slow tourists who want to take their time in destinations and immerse themselves in an authentic setting. Local residents can benefit socially and economically by investing time in new skills and operating a small enterprise that will support tourism to the fortress and those who are interested in the local communities across Serbia’s Vojvodina Region.

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Figure 1. Location of Bač in Vojvodina, Serbia (source: Google Earth).



Figure 2. Case study of 35 homes in Podgrađe Bač neighbourhood and the location of the Bač Fortress (Source: Zavod za Zaštitu Kulturne Baštine, the Association for the Protection of Cultural Heritage)



Figure 3. Images of attractions in Bač: Franciscan Monastery (top images), St. Paul's Church (known as the White Church) (bottom left) and the Turkish Baths (bottom right) (photos by Nicholas Wise).



Figure 4. Images of the Bač Fortress adjacent to Podgrađe Bač (photos by Nicholas Wise).



Figure 5. Entrance to Podgrađe Bač and the neighbourhood (photos by Nicholas Wise).



Figure 6. Bridge over the canal to the entranceway to Podgrađe Bač. There are plans to build a visitor centre close to the pedestrian/biking bridge to the neighbourhood entrance to direct tourists to the fortress who are traveling along the canal path (photos by Nicholas Wise).

Table 1. Survey demographics of residents in Podgrađe Bač (N=29).

Gender	Male	12
	Female	17
Age	18-30	3
	30-49	8
	50-70	12
	70+	6
Years lived in Podgrađe Bač	<25	17
	25-39	1
	40-54	7
	55+	4
Employment Status	Employed	6
	Not employed	10
	Retired	8
	Agriculture	4
	Student	1
Experience working in Tourism or Hospitality	Yes	4
	No	25

Table 2. Sense of Community in based on personal and shared perceptions.

Item	Statistics		
	mean	med	SD
Podgrađe has a strong community spirit	3.03	3	1.4
This is a friendly community	2.10	2	1.1
People help each other in this community	2.45	2	1.32
People do not mix much in this community	5.03	5	1.1
There is a lot of cooperation in this community	2.66	3	1.16
People here are not committed to this community	4.31	5	1.28
There is a lot of neighbourliness in this community	2.1	2	1.31
I personally put a lot into community life here	2.93	2	1.9
I find this community very attractive to live in	2.17	2	1.37
I intend to stay living in this community	1.69	1	1.27
I feel a sense of safety and security in this community	1.76	1	1.03
I do not feel involved in the life of this community	4.38	5	1.36
Most people think that Podgrađe has a strong community spirit	3.86	4	1.34
Most people think that this is a friendly community	3	3	1.22
Most people think that people help each other in this community	3.13	3	1.12
Most people think that people do not mix much in this community	4.21	5	1.21
Most people think that there is a lot of cooperation in this community	3.97	4	1.28
Most people think that people are not very committed to this community	4.45	4	0.99
Most people think that there is a lot of neighbourliness in this community	2.97	3	1.12
Most people appear to put a lot into community life here	4.24	4	1.47
Most people appear to find this community very attractive to live in	2.31	2	1.21
Most people intend to stay living in this community	1.55	1	0.84
Most people appear to feel a sense of security in this community	1.9	2	0.83
Most people appear not to feel involved in the life of this community	3.72	4	1.1

Table 3. Measure of Association between on personal and shared perceptions on Podgrađe Community.

Measures of Association	R	R ²	η	η^2	F*
Podgrađe has a strong community spirit	.003	.000	.234	.055	0.265
I do not feel involved in the life of this community					
This is a friendly community	.636	.405	.818	.670	9.323***
Most people think that this is a friendly community					
People help each other in this community	.714	.510	.740	.547	5.563**
Most people think that people help each other in this community					
People do not mix much in this community	.330	.109	.518	.268	2.199
Most people think that people do not mix much in this community					
There is a lot of cooperation in this community	.435	.190	.494	.244	1.485
Most people think that there is a lot of cooperation in this community					
People here are not committed to this community	.380	.145	.460	.212	1.613
Most people think that people are not very committed to this community					
There is a lot of neighbourliness in this community	.671	.450	.723	.523	6.590**
Most people think that there is a lot of neighbourliness in this community					
I personally put a lot into community life here	-.187	.035	.504	.254	1.569
Most people appear to put a lot into community life here					
I find this community very attractive to live in	.206	.043	.351	.124	.846
Most people appear to find this community very attractive to live in					
I intend to stay living in this community	.162	.026	.192	.037	.318
Most people intend to stay living in this community					
I feel a sense of safety and security in this community	.482	.232	.532	.283	3.285**
Most people appear to feel a sense of security in this community					
I do not feel involved in the life of this community	.415	.172	.647	.419	4.325**
Most people appear not to feel involved in the life of this community					

Note: F statistics combines between groups (Linearity and Deviation from Linearity) and within groups mean. Significant at $p < 0.1^$, $p < 0.05^{**}$, $p < 0.01^{***}$; For Standardized parameters Intercept is set to 0

Table 4. Residents' awareness of tourism potential in Podgrađe Bač.

Item	Statistics		
	mean	med	SD
The Bač Fortress is an important local attraction	1.1	1	0.31
More investment is needed to revitalise the Bač Fortress	1.31	1	0.76
The current revitalisation of the Bač Fortress is restoring the structures significant cultural heritage	1.07	1	0.26
The current revitalisation of the Bač Fortress is damaging to the structure	4.31	4	1.21
The current revitalisation of the Bač Fortress will bring more tourists	1.31	1	0.82
UNESCO Designation will bring more tourists to the Bač Fortress	1.62	1	1.13
People from across Serbia would visit the Bač Fortress	1.86	2	0.65
People from across the Balkans would visit the Bač Fortress	2	2	0.9
People from across Europe would visit the Bač Fortress	2.41	2	1.07
People from around the world would visit the Bač Fortress	4.48	5	1.53
The community has enough rooms to hosts tourists	6.62	7	0.73
There are enough cultural facilities to cater to tourists	5.07	5	1.28
Bač and Podgrađe is easily accessible	2.07	2	0.94
Podgrađe has attractive features beyond the Bač Fortress that would interest tourists	5.59	6	1.43
I am ready to see increased tourism	1.28	1	0.71
People in Podgrađe are ready to see increased tourism	2.82	2	1.51
I would like to see cultural events held at the Bač Fortress	1.34	1	0.73
The people in Podgrađe would like to see cultural events held at the Bač Fortress	1.62	1	1.13

Table 5. Residents' desire for tourism in the community.

Item	Statistics		
	mean	med	SD
Podgrađe is ready to see increased tourism	2.72	3	1.59
Tourism will bring new benefits to the community	2.52	2	1.23
I understand the benefits of tourism	2.17	2	1.09
People in the community understand the benefits of tourism	3.21	3	1.31
I would welcome tourists	2.34	2	1.28
People in the community would welcome tourists	2.72	3	1.38
I would get involved in tourism	2.79	2	1.94
People in the community would get involved in tourism	2.69	2	1.38
I would invest in tourism development	5.07	6	1.85
People in the community would invest in tourism development	5	5	1.52
I would volunteer my time to assist the development of tourism	4.28	5	2.3
People in the community would volunteer time to assist the development of tourism	3.86	4	1.36
I would leave Podgrađe if tourism increases	6.69	7	0.55
People in the community would move away from Podgrađe if tourism increases	6.59	7	0.84
I feel tourism will disturb life in Podgrađe	6.31	7	1.3
People in the community feel tourism will disturb life in Podgrađe	6.31	7	1.18
I will feel safe with tourists around the community	1.97	2	0.86
People in the community will feel safe with tourists around	2.1	2	0.97
I will feel safe with tourists staying in the community	2.13	2	0.85
People in the community will feel safe with tourist staying in the community	2.52	2	1.14
If some people benefit from tourism and others do not will this impact community life in Podgrađe	3.59	3	1.91
Private investors would be interested in Podgrađe	3.41	4	1.03
Private investors represent a threat to the community in Podgrađe	6.34	7	1.19
Tourism will make people in the community more interested in the revitalisation of the Bač Fortress	2.21	2	1.21
Tourism will make people more aware of environmental conservation and preservation	1.83	2	0.8