

## Post-peasant Economy Memories of Socialism in Zakopane\*

**Keywords:** Post-peasant economy, informal economy, ethnicity, post-peasants, tourism, Zakopane, Gorals

In this paper I discuss two key themes related to Zakopane, for decades the number one tourist destination in southern Poland. The first is the economy that might be described as informal. The second is ethnicity. Namely, I approach the relations between the Goral ethnic label and the local economy.

Concerning ‘room to manoeuvre’ with regard to the economy under a socialist state, I argue against the commonly assumed characteristics of Zakopane as an ‘exceptionally entrepreneurial’ place (and ‘free’ in the sense of market freedom) or as an example of ‘socialist pathology’ (as a local economy inappropriately benefiting from the redistributive state). I suggest we first take a more complex look at the livelihoods and ideas about the material world of the late socialist period in general and the entrepreneurial people of Zakopane in particular.

The second theme of ethnicity relates to the origin and present day role of the Goral identity vis-à-vis the local economy. Instead of discussing the obvious conventional parameters of the marginal Goral mountainous economy turning to tourism to make a living, I suggest looking at the more thorough interplay of what I define as the post-peasant economy and ethnicity, particularly how it developed since the late socialism period. From the perspective of this post-peasant economy, the market transformation of this interplay began only as a large-scale ‘non-ethnic’ investment decades after the end of socialism.

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## POST-PEASANT ECONOMY AS ROOM TO MANOEUVRE

I consider the post-peasant economy as room to manoeuvre under state socialism. This economy is the analytical category of what might be seen as the implicit socialist ‘folk model’ of the economy that people practice and understand without necessarily acknowledging its conceptual value, and which created an everyday livelihood in the socialism era.

For example, generations growing up in the late socialist period recall their stays at communist pioneer camps that had been designed to prepare students for life in the communism world, but instead, peer networks and informal social skills were cultivated. The Czech sociologist Ivo Možný famously explained how families originally dispossessed of private property by communists in 1950s in fact colonized the state in late socialism for their own benefit.<sup>1</sup> On a more general level, there supposedly existed a socialist redistributive economy, but allocation of welfare — universally progressing if compared to the pre-socialist past — or the parallel shadow market still depended on informal accessibility and networks.

It would be misleading to see this post-peasant economy as either capitalist (or a kind of shadow market during the socialist era) or as a sign of pathology of the socialist redistributive system. The room to manoeuvre always and in every complex society emerges on the continuum between the formal and informal, the market and community.<sup>2</sup> What makes the room to manoeuvre during the socialist era specific in this paper is the post-peasant quality of the economy.

Anna Malewska-Szałygin suggests that socialist and post-socialist characteristics are not the most appropriate to describe rural perception of power and government. She argues for concepts developed within the traditional peasant culture. She even proposes the term ‘post-peasant’ to describe the continuity of the local understanding of the state and power.<sup>3</sup>

The post-peasant economy in my perspective should not be seen as the direct remains of the agrarian past — the economy in Zakopane was not peasant or at least not exclusively — but a truly modern pattern of livelihood and a symbolic economy as developed in the advanced socialist stage. What made the economy post-peasant was the incorporation of former peasants into the official economy where they suddenly received regular wages and welfare benefits. While achieving huge structural changes in terms of industrialization and urbanization, the socialist economy itself nurtured practices reminiscent of an agrarian era. Kinship, ritual exchanges, and value circulation under a shortage economy further produced community relations reminiscent of the village commune.

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<sup>1</sup> MOŽNÝ 1991.

<sup>2</sup> cf. GUDEMAN 2016.

<sup>3</sup> MALEWSKA-SZALYGIN 2011.

The post-peasant economy might be seen from the perspective of what Susanna Narotzky defines as provisioning in/of economy: a complex process where production, distribution, appropriation, and consumption relations all are taken into account and where history defines available paths for obtaining goods and services. For Narotzky, provisioning integrates various aspects of peoples' lives that might individually be seen as separate, demonstrates the institutional underpinning of the flow of goods and services (state, market, family, etc.), and helps to understand the historical process in shaping economic life with its material, political and cultural components.<sup>4</sup>

What is most important for the purpose of this work, the concept of provisioning eliminates approaching economic realms as differentiated according to the leading perspectives of production, distribution, and consumption. The post-peasant economy is therefore a type of cultural economy. It concerns material as well as symbolic elements of the economy, both livelihood practices as well as ideas about the material world, and it complements the formal models of the economists.

It is this anthropological take on economy as everyday room to manoeuvre with regard to livelihood and economic symbolism (of how an economy supposedly operates in the popular perspective) that I wish to demonstrate on the seemingly divergent interplay of the economy and ethnicity, material and cultural economic components emerging via the historical process.

In a way, I define this cultural economy which Rudolf Bahro called 'actually existing socialism' for the socialist society.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the post-peasant economy works along with the official model of society, socialist or post-socialist. This vernacular of the economy therefore relies on the local knowledge and livelihood practices while also touching upon wider societal discourse on the economy, socialism, entrepreneurship, value and exchange and so on.

I did not have access to extensive historical material or tools and concepts of how to investigate how the material unfolded in its historical context, such as archive sources that help historians. I have solely relied on investigations in the present — of what people say about socialism from their present-day positions — and on anthropological theories of socialism and post-socialism, i.e. the concepts and perspectives developed by fellow anthropologists who studied 'actually existing socialism' and therefore had access to actual examples of room to manoeuvre during the socialist era.

I argue that in most socialist and post-socialist states the understanding of the economy as depending primarily on a peasant livelihood among the people has shown great vitality, a temporary revival as well as decline, but definitely a sort of continuity. This post-peasant economic model had a clear material basis in the way industrialization was introduced into an overwhelmingly agrarian setting. It nevertheless also relied on the communist ideology of creating a 'culture of the lower

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<sup>4</sup> NAROTZKY 2005.

<sup>5</sup> BAHRO 1978.

classes' via a symbolic and selective use of agrarian imaginary (the support of folklore and so on). The reproduction of this model has also been a matter of cultural transmission and the pressures of the communist shortage economy.

In my book I identified patterns of the social movement emerging from the post-socialist transformation and called it 'post-peasant populism'. As I argued, this post-peasant populism is not about the peasantry; rather, it can be defined as a type of modern political culture based on a non-urban social structure and imagined rurality. It is opposed to capitalist, cosmopolitan, and secular worldviews and lifestyles, and offers an alternative 'moral' model for economic development. In this paper I wish to argue for the economic underpinning of this post-peasant politics.<sup>6</sup>

I therefore argue for a fuller understanding of the ambivalent role that communist modernization had in developing a specific model of livelihood strategies, ideas, and practices which I call post-peasant. This economy is widely remembered regardless of or as an unintended consequence of communist modernization, not as an integral product of it. No memory of socialism, but in socialism, i.e. an understanding of the economy I characterize as post-peasant — neither capitalist, nor socialist by origin — has been transmitted across regimes that people actually remember.

Stephen Gudeman and Chris Hann recently proposed looking at the economy in relation to ritual. As they note, 'the shift from socialism to a market economy is not illuminated by the teleology of modernity and economic development'.<sup>7</sup> For authors such as Ernest Gellner, socialism was anti-modern by definition, as there was a drive to modernize backward agrarian society as quickly as possible; 'Stalin's "Taylorism" was as harsh as any capitalist', write Gudeman and Hann. 'Socialist economic life remained less "disseminated" from citizens' life-worlds than the outcomes of the "great transformation" wrought by capitalism.'<sup>8</sup>

In spite of its revolutionary pretensions, in many places, socialism came to allow for deeper continuity with the past, and for the efflorescence of older forms of religion and community and the values and solidarities they express.<sup>9</sup> As the authors stress, the household remains the final safety net and most economists miss the importance of bottom-up institutions for the operation of an economy. An economy exists through the sociality of the house, on which most people of the post-socialist European Union are dependent and which took on novel meaning during the socialist era.<sup>10</sup>

The post-peasant household is usually attached to the surrounding natural environment, political territory, and the work around the house all help to create the identity of its keeper vis-à-vis the others.<sup>11</sup> Activities like hunting, firefighting, or patriotic

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<sup>6</sup> BUZALKA 2007.

<sup>7</sup> HANN, GUDEMAN 2015, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> GELLNER 1994.

<sup>9</sup> GUDEMAN, HANN 2015, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> GUDEMAN, HANN 2015, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> GUDEMAN 2016.

events extend the meaning of the house to include the ethnic or village community, religious and national ‘imagined communities’.

Frances Pine analyzed the role of the house in rural Podhale. In her field, social groupings and hierarchies are established on houses rather than on other principles such as lineage organizations or overt political factionalization. In southern Poland, many people maintained their house organization in the late twentieth century despite being increasingly integrated into a highly centralized, industrialized nation state.<sup>12</sup>

According to Pine, the house is important not only in an intra-village organization but also in relation or opposition to the state and Catholic Church, another solidifying source of identity above the local level surviving throughout the regime changes. There is a common saying across villages of the Carpathians that “‘Here everyone is family”, implying that kinship provides the levelling element in village equality. On the other hand, houses represent difference, dividing kin and placing social groups in opposition to each other.’<sup>13</sup>

During the socialist era, priority was given to the domestic (second) economy and farming based on the house, despite its increasing incorporation into the socialist economy. In this way, the house represented resistance to the state.<sup>14</sup> The ideology of the house was reinforced via ritual, via reciprocity between houses, gender and the generational division of labour; it provided an alternative model to the state, and an alternative economy ‘which can diminish or increase in response to external change.’<sup>15</sup>

As Juraj Podoba reminds us on the basis of his research in rural Slovakia, the ‘single house’ in a small town is a pan-European ideal, but under socialist conditions this ideal in particular represented the creation of the ‘petty bourgeoisie’ from peasants instead of socialist citizens, promoted by the communist state. In other words, writes Podoba, the country person in the second half of the twentieth century looked for something that he or she imagined had been the lifestyle of ‘better people’ from earlier, pre-socialist times.<sup>16</sup> In any case it is important to keep in mind the fact that modernization changes such as in the areas of housing and mass (over)consumption began in socialist times in an overwhelmingly agrarian setting.<sup>17</sup>

As I argue in this article, ethnic co-existence has always been related to the peasant economy in post-socialist Eastern Europe and the key transformation that established post-peasants was state socialism. The empirical case through which I would like to demonstrate my theoretical approach relates to the Gorals, the Tatra highlanders on the Polish-Slovak border, whose tourist economy in Zakopane integrated them into the majority society while also keeping them apart from the Polish majority.

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<sup>12</sup> PINE 1996.

<sup>13</sup> PINE 1996, p. 448.

<sup>14</sup> PINE 1996, p. 456.

<sup>15</sup> PINE 1996, p. 456.

<sup>16</sup> PODOBA 2013, p. 57–58.

<sup>17</sup> PODOBA 2015.

## TOP DESTINATION ZAKOPANE

Zakopane, a city of thirty thousand permanent inhabitants, is the largest tourist resort in the High Tatras and all of southern Poland. Its inhabitants include the majority population of Poles and the minority ethnic group of Gorals, comprised of five thousand individuals; this makes Zakopane one of the largest Goral settlements. The folk definition of Gorals which I gathered among the locals is as follows:

Goral must come from blood. There is a profound difference between a Goral and Zakopianin [a local resident of non-Goral origin, JB]. There are a handful of Gorals, the rest are Zakopane people. Gorals stick together and when they travel abroad, for example to America, they continue to stand together ... They make weddings in Goral style, horse carts are reserved for Gorals and so on.

Jan Karpiel-Bułecka (born in 1956) is a famous Goral. He comes from a well-known family of artists and builders in Zakopane. This musician, builder of folk instruments, dancer, raconteur, and popularizer of Goral folklore, architect by training and activist in the preservation of regional folk architecture of the Podhale region lives at an exclusive address in a quiet street stretching from the middle of Krupówki, the major and most popular promenade of the resort.<sup>18</sup> He designed his splendid modern wooden house by himself with the clear intention of following the patterns of folk architecture.

After entering this house he invites us to a room with a tiled stove, wooden furniture, and many items of folk art. Paintings of Tatra nature and portraits of family members, Goral folk costumes, and books abound. The host generously offers 'Goral tea', as he calls the herbal tea into which he pours vodka. Jan Karpiel's mother in law is watching television in another room and his teenage son is moving around the house with a mobile phone on his ear.

Many musical instruments, a wall clock, an old heavy wooden cabinet, the smell of herbs and wood create an atmosphere fitting for the images this marvellous mountain city aims to represent for tourists. Even the Giewont peak that dominates the city landscape has been romantically described as revealing the head of a sleeping knight who, according to legend, wakes up in order to help people in trouble.

Besides the Goral tea, there are other artefacts on the table. The partiture of the Opera Halka, one of the canonic Polish operas composed by Stanisław Moniuszko based on the libretto written by Włodzimierz Wolski, first performed in 1854. The romantic opera tells the story of tragic love between Janusz, a Polish nobleman and Halka, a Goral girl whom the nobleman abandons to wed a girl from among his equals.

Next to the partiture stands a bust of Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph I. (1830–1916). The grandfather of Jan Karpiel's wife was a soldier, and later the mayor

<sup>18</sup> <https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/jan-karpiel-bulecka>

of the town; he befriended the leading Slovak Catholic priest-politician Andrej Hlinka. Continuing to speak in Slovak he comments: 'It [the monarchy] was a sort of small European Union back then.'

Their dog, a cross between a Labrador and Pitbull, lazily enters the room when he explains the history of his estate and how he married into his wife's family. Pouring some more vodka into our tea, he recalls sheep and cows grazing on the field where in the 1990s he built their new house. Next door, a new hotel and restaurant stand on the land of their ancestors. The parents in law

...did not give up the land ... cut grass here until 1993, even though it wasn't worth it. But it was theirs. Cows and horses ... that's the power of tradition and attachment, that's honour — it is a mental issue that I have this, this is mine, this hectare or two belongs to me ... [People from outside were, JB] attracted to work in these houses [the hotels in Zakopane, JB] but our people did not want to work there. Either he was a farmer or he worked on his own as a craftsman. To serve someone else is not honourable.

Zakopane was discovered for the wider society by Polish intelligentsia at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Stanisław Witkiewicz (1851–1915), a painter, architect, and writer, spent his best years in town and based on Goral folk architecture, he created the style also known as Witkiewicz Style (*styl zakopiański*). In a similar style a few years later, Dušan Jurkovič (1868–1947) emblematically created high architecture out of folk inspiration in Czechoslovakia. They both attempted to balance the Alpine style proliferating from the German speaking areas by strengthening what they considered domestic tradition. Many members of the intelligentsia thought they were preserving Polish tradition, even though the same folk style was common throughout the Western Carpathians regardless of ethnicity.<sup>19</sup>

This boom of interest in folk tradition went hand in hand with entrepreneurs who purchased land and built summer houses for tourists. Gorals also began offering accommodation for the growing number of tourists, complementing their peasant occupations of forestry and animal husbandry. Many built large new houses according to the Witkiewicz model.

Bachleda [the grandfather of Jan Karpiel's wife, JB] built three large houses. It means already back then that the peasant-shepherd mentality had begun to change. We always had an additional job. A trade, for example ... they [the ancestors] managed to go with horses to Tokaj, from there they traded wine to very distant Wrocław while protecting it from bandits and from themselves. They have always had some sort of business to live from, working on building sites in Cracow, in America. They travelled always thinking to earn money and return...

<sup>19</sup> See LANGER 1997.

In the interwar period, the time in which Poland regained its independence, the railway connected Zakopane with the rest of Poland. The number of tourists increased. The incoming local population grew, including the Jewish community whose many members invested in sites on the main street, only to be exterminated a few years later. In the neighbouring villages of Poronin and Kościelisko richer peasants also extended their offer. 'Gorals sold their land, as money was needed ... nobody's heart was broken however. Then came communism ... the nicest places were nationalized ... in the original plans the land was to be arable land ... the communists changed their plans and took the land to create accommodations for the working people...'

The grievances of the locals grew as a result of this socialist development. Even there they found some opportunity to benefit, says Jan Karpiel. Many people did not want to stay in socialist hotels whose places were distributed on allocation as in the famous local joke: 'Listen Kowalski, do you like warm beer? No! And do you like sweating women? No! Here is your holiday voucher for November!':

The guests did not eat well in socialist hotels, they always needed something else ... We built a wooden house in Goral style ... mum cooked in the basement even for one hundred and twenty people at once!... meat was provided by grannies from the village, cheese, butter from beyond Gubałówka ... The tourists crowded through windows and doors. There were times ... that I had to leave my room under the roof ... Professors, doctors, they all stayed in private houses and thanks to that we had contact with the big world ... Father made a nice interior in the Zakopane style ... there were no pubs back then ...

Today the major investment in the city is via private developers from outside Zakopane. 'Our people continue to own the building companies, so they have some share of the development business ... today only bans from above can break this up [the booming tourist housing development — JB] ... Once I looked on the map and Zakopane looks like New York under the Tatras.'

Although the development of tourism was not accompanied by the creation of a proper infrastructure, an impressive number of people from all around Poland kept buying apartments and cottages in Zakopane. The everyday livelihood also changed. Jan Karpiel remembers:

In older times, the good life meant having something to eat ... There has always been some sort of hunger for land here. Today some people manage to make such a good life. They run two or three hostels but they don't manage to enjoy their lives. They have money, build another house, but don't go abroad ... because they think it's expensive... I work, my wife works, and we rent something for tourists ...

This Zakopane livelihood shows how economy and ethnicity are embedded in the post-peasant setting. It does not depend on a movable, flexible asset, but is tied to the territory, to a house in a tourist resort, to the land one has inherited. A strong ethos survived with regard to this property regime, developed in socialist times: hard

work, thriftiness, the ability to follow any opportunity available has turned into key elements of the Goral identity, and it is recognized by outsiders as well as Gorals themselves.

There are five or six Goral families that supposedly own the largest share of the property on the main promenade. Nevertheless, the perception of the size of Goral property in town and its surrounding is greater.

Who are the Gorale today? Hotel Kasprowy [the most emblematic and largest luxurious hotel on the hills overlooking the city built during the socialist era and later privatized], owned by the Bachleda-Curuś family: velour, crystal, lustres ... Nuevo riche — village boorishness. They sit around the table, pretty black hair, four handsome sons in armchairs with their daughters sitting on knees. [Kasia, 68]

Referring to one of the most well-known local families described by the tabloid media as Goral aristocracy, my informant recalls her own family roots, similar to the ones of the richest Gorals today. Born into a family of seven sisters and one brother in the regional town, Kasia grew up in a furrier family, a common craft of Gorals. The craft earned her father enough during the socialist era to buy a large house not far from Krupówki for her daughter. Kasia then got married and gave birth to two sons and one daughter and expanded the house so that it could accommodate tourists.

As in the case of other local houses of Gorals and non-Gorals alike, the large house was expanded especially in the basement. Several small rooms with low ceilings were added there and several more under the roof. The rooms were designated for authorities as cellars or places for storage or housework. Not only were these opulent, self-built houses significantly transformed by the local economy — along with the fur craft and foreign work migration for remittance — they changed the city landscape enormously.

The wooden cottages and villas in the folk style of the socialist era were replaced by uniform self-made edifices, built without regard to the distance from their neighbours' buildings or the limited capacities of the local infrastructure. As Kasia remembers that period, 'you could make a living from anything. There was no competition back then.'

#### 'SOCIALIST PATHOLOGY'

During the late socialist era, Zakopane was officially considered to be a site of economic pathology. A thorough communist investigation was carried out in the city in the early 1970s. Historian Jerzy Kochanowski made the major parts of the report public and discussed the exceptionally honest, professional, and detailed investigation of how private business sponged upon the socialist economy.<sup>20</sup> Kochanowski

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<sup>20</sup> See also KOCHANOWSKI 2007, and a paper in this volume (KOCHANOWSKI 2018, pp. 611–650).

refers to the specific ‘mikroklimat’ that created room to manoeuvre in Zakopane during the socialist period. The local society enjoyed informal autonomy, treating every existing government in a utilitarian way, taking advantage of ethnic differences as well as the surrounding natural resources.<sup>21</sup>

In the perspective of the peoples’ economy, the report confirms the gradual continuation and reinvention of economic patterns known from the agrarian era. While many locals continued in small-scale agriculture and circular work migration, the small-scale family businesses expanded to the tourist sector — especially thanks to infrastructure improvement financed by the state — that pushed people to new areas of informality and mutual help at the expense of the state. New socialist enterprises had to rely on the import of a non-Goral workforce.

The popularity of illicit trade and ethnic autarky in Zakopane has usually been explained in popular as well as expert discourse by the ecological and historical marginalization of the region that defined the social and economic organization of local communities. From this perspective, the highland economy created and depended on the size and structure of the family as well as on small-scale production with the importance of self-subsistence and specialization in limited craft production such as furriery or weaving for the market.

This image of a ‘marginal/highland economy’ was not fully applicable during the socialist era. The locals — Gorals and their neighbours — nevertheless identified with it and utilized even the romantic images of the national awakening period for making up the ‘marginal freedom economy’. The particular strategy of resilience based on mobility — either to North America or industrial centres of neighbouring regions — in this classical model helped not only to live from remittances from abroad but expanded this marginal economy image.

‘Traditional culture’ — including religious conservatism, as well as the local dialect — has also been considered essential for this society vis-à-vis modernized centres. The utilitarian treatment of official principles as well as unspoken agreements between the state and local communities about them — according to this dominant explanation — created ‘a pathology’ in the eyes of the state and establishment, but also a sort of independence and freedom.<sup>22</sup>

Most of my informants in Zakopane agreed with the saying expressed by one of my older interlocutors that ‘communism was hard but people managed to survive it quite well.’<sup>23</sup> This opinion follows the ‘pathology thesis’, as tourism provided

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<sup>21</sup> KOCHANOWSKI 2015.

<sup>22</sup> KOCHANOWSKI 2015, p. 146.

<sup>23</sup> I collected fifteen long interviews with self-employed people during the late socialist period, most of whom in their thirties and forties in that time. Thanks to my local gatekeepers, I had a chance to carefully select my interlocutors. The questions concerned their biographies, private businesses during the socialist period, livelihood practices and ideas about the economy, as well as issues of personal and regional identity.

the locals with high revenues even in the hard times of economic shortage. Nevertheless it does not make out of Zakopane a particularly special room to manoeuvre vis-à-vis other socialist cities in Poland and Eastern Europe. It neither is the non-economic component — transmitted as ethnic culture developed close to mountainous nature — that makes the Zakopane economy special. In other words, the Zakopane ‘pathology’ is not special because of the size and scale of the illicit economy but — as I argue throughout this paper — due to the interplay of economy and ethnicity as developed in the post-peasant setting of the socialist period.

Any analysis of local self-identification as well as the external image with regard to this economy has to differentiate from what comes from older romantic images of Goral pastoral economy and what emerged as a result of the socialist transformation which created post-peasants. Talking to a famous local emigrant (born in 1948 to a Goral mother) I began to understand the mutual connectedness between Goral identity and the economy during the socialist era. ‘I came here with my father who was sent here in order to establish a factory in Biały Dunajec [a village close to Zakopane]. He created the first ‘proletariat’ there ... I had a hard youth here, as I suffered among the Gorals ... I was still a stranger for them...’

Another non-Goral informant, a successful entrepreneur (born in 1946) who began his business in the 1980s, stated: ‘Gorals don’t like strangers very much even though they make a living out of them.’ Still another reference (by a formerly self-employed trader — a Pole born in 1950 — with significant emigration experience) remembers his work in the city’s house of culture as ‘kombinowanie’, the local concept of semi-legal or illicit activity that was well-defined by Nicolette Makovicky as ‘a vernacular practice of “making do” which took place in the cracks between large-scale economies and state projects regardless of their ideological flavour’: ‘From morning to evening we were “making do” [kombinowaliśmy], how to get a quarter of vodka or a few cents to buy vodka — thus the friends’ life was flourishing.’<sup>24</sup>

In a nostalgic mood an entrepreneur (born in 1949) remembers: ‘I remember Zakopane of the past that should look like this today. Those old cottages, the atmosphere that used to be here back then.’

Today he finds new development projects with people from far away buying and renting apartments unbearable. A famous emigrant (born in 1948) says:

Zakopane is not Zakopane any longer. There are people from somewhere who came to do business, to buy a BMW ... In my memory Zakopane is different ... there were many remnants from Austria-Hungary — cafes, restaurants. People used to treat each other with respect, now only money counts ... competition makes everything cheaper. And if everything gets cheaper, the clientele also becomes cheaper.

One more account by Agata (born in 1960) on the ability of the locals to survive.

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<sup>24</sup> MAKOVICKY 2018, p. 2.

When unemployment in Poland was reaching twenty percent we always used to have it lowest here. I laughed that here everybody, even those who owned one meter of something, is in a situation to make a living. Here it has never been an expectation that somebody will give me something, that something is due to me. I will work myself or otherwise manage and I do not need anything from the outside. People here are very entrepreneurial, ingenious even at the edge of the rules of law...

It is clear from this handful of quotations that it is imprecise to address peoples' memories as sharply evaluating the past in terms of socialist/capitalist difference. Most probably, none of those interviewed would positively evaluate late socialism as a political-economic system, despite the fact that socialist modernization created a booming tourist economy, incomparable in size and scale to the situation from the pre-socialist era.

This socialist development nevertheless made people reflecting on the reliance on themselves and others from among the community not in a capitalist entrepreneurial sense but as an enduring certainty that had not changed since agrarian times. At the same time, the romantic images of the supposed past — that are imagined even back to Habsburg times — refer to the early years of the socialist period.

One of the repeating topics in the interviews was survival, durability, the ability to make one's own living. The peoples' memories of the particular knowledge and virtue of life in the socialist era represent an alternative to ideologically constructed, socialist and post-socialist economies and politics. More importantly, it is rather the agrarian and not the socialist-modernist parameters of economy that people are nostalgic about.

The modernist ideology and large-scale technical modernization during the socialist era — most of the hotels and public infrastructure were built back then — went along with nurturing informal networks, familism, and — in the multi-ethnic setting in particular — even helped to define ethnicity while ethnicity also referred to the economy. The myth of the Goral and Podhale country that I discuss in the following section shows this interplay of economy and ethnicity in the post-peasant setting.

#### THE ECONOMY OF GORAL LABEL

Every foreigner in Zakopane sooner or later notices the symbolic prominence of artefacts and narratives related to what is commonly referred to as the 'Goral tradition'. Sooner or later the foreigner can meet a person claiming to be Goral and stressing his or her autochthonous origin in the area. One of my informants, a local middle-aged businesswoman, makes a joke about this identification of others as well as the locals: '...if something wrong happens and the need for isolation from the rest of country emerges, in one night the Goral Republic will be established here, everybody will be armed and life will go well. Not only economic differences but also the cultural and mental differences of the local people compared to other regions of Poland are enormous.'

This perception is coupled with the romantic ideas of freedom, as originally created by the national awakeners. In the 1950s, there was a great demand for workers in the emerging socialist tourist sector. Even in the newly established hotel school, only people from outside were trained. A former employer of the socialist house of culture remembers: 'To see a Goral band playing for dinner was impossible. Armstrong played but they did not. It was not honourable. Gypsies could play ... Klezmer bands could but a Goral band playing? At a folklore event they might have played but they did not play in a pub. Today they play everywhere.'

An influential local businessman in his early fifties refers to the property attachment of the locals: 'Once I asked the lady who cleans my house what will happen to their fields. She said her grandson is building a house on his father's land and after him his grand grandson will; it never ends.'

The social anthropologist Frances Pine makes the argument on the 'hybrid nature of Goral culture'. Marginality in her opinion, which was tied to the borderland position and temporal-spatial location between cultures,<sup>25</sup> encouraged the development of hybridity in the modern period via the self-conscious fabrication of 'invented tradition' by Gorals and their neighbours. In this way, Gorals had a series of identities: 'as (variously) Vlachian shepherds, Polish serfs and Austrian peasants, as subsistence producers and migrant traders and wage labourers, as excluded and marginalized peasants 'at home' but simultaneously as travellers regularly moving far beyond home borders into other places and other economies'.<sup>26</sup>

In the rural setting that Pine has researched since 1970s, there was a hostile environment for the urban culture, the socialist state, and the Catholic hierarchy. The self-image of the 'stupid poor' impoverished mountaineer was often combined with the 'autonomous, wild, clever and individualistic' entrepreneurial qualities of the locals and have always been part of identity building among those who call themselves Gorals as well as their neighbours.

Pine noted that the constant reinforcement of Goral identity took place via performance, especially folk culture for an outside audience. Goral houses, on the other hand, were conspicuous, especially if built by the returning emigrants, but Zakopane — due to the development of tourism — served as a good example of (over) consumption of space in its own right. As I show in this paper, the size and cultural content of this tourist economy (the value of nature and Goral ethnicity), contributed to the development of Zakopane, especially under state socialism.

The capitalist intrusion like the socialist intrusion was experienced as attempts to regulate the local economy or transform it, appropriate Goral culture, and take over or endanger Goral land and landscape.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the Gorale of the capitalist present are 'far more mobile and their economy far more flexible, than these static pictures sug-

<sup>25</sup> PINE 1999, p. 63.

<sup>26</sup> PINE 1999, p. 64.

<sup>27</sup> PINE 1999, p. 69.

gest.’<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, ‘Goral culture, communicated in the shorthand of wooden huts and horse-drawn sleds situated in the High Tatras, to sell the world a particular notion of Poland’<sup>29</sup> is adjusted by the contemporary market. Finances from outside are definitely transforming post-peasant Zakopane, both in terms of scale and speed.

Obviously, the romantic image of Goral employment — today symbolized in the profession of a mountain guide, folk musician or a shepherd — does not meet the present condition. National awakeners, writers and other artists as well as folklorists and anthropologists ventured to the region in order to define these historically pastoral people, marginal to the modernizing societies of nation states that surrounded them.

Social historian and museologist Jiří Langer argues that diverse ethnic communities in the valleys of the Northwest Carpathians comprised a new folk tradition long before the times of nationalism, and this tradition survived well until the twentieth century.<sup>30</sup> In Zakopane — as I argue in this paper — this tradition was re-defined not only by national romanticism but particularly via the development of tourism during the socialist era. Socialism further defined Gorals via their livelihood, either as romantic inhabitants of Tatra nature or as those who profited from tourism.

The ethnic revival since the end of the socialist era can easily be connected to the consumption of ethnic particularities under increasing market proliferation, and I argued in favour of this perspective when explaining the Ukrainian folk revival in Southeast Poland<sup>31</sup> or the national branding of wine in Slovakia.<sup>32</sup> In this paper, however, I approach ethnic identity as developing in an interplay with the economy in a longer time frame as socialist room to manoeuvre.

The ‘Goral question’ came out as one of the key issues among my informants. Nearly all of them consider themselves native to Zakopane but only three openly declared themselves to be of Goral origin. The general perception of making a livelihood on one’s own followed the opinion of a small sportshop keeper (born in 1945) who — in the meantime — developed many more trade specializations, including a bar and amusement store, in order to make a living.

The agent was ... seemingly employed, he did his own business and bureaucratic controls were countless ... To be honest, however, my business under communism went very well. Everything was missing then and everything was possible to sell, if one had an idea... After one year of trading I realized that in order to sell something it is not needed to wait for the distributors but to drive for products by ourselves, wait in queues where others were queuing, as this was the product that will be easy to sell. Today it is possible to get everything, as products lie on the shelves...

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<sup>28</sup> PINE 1999, p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> PINE 1999, p. 71.

<sup>30</sup> LANGER 1997, p. 32.

<sup>31</sup> BUZALKA 2009.

<sup>32</sup> BUZALKA 2013.

A son (born in 1969) of entrepreneurs has also vivid memories:

Nice times! The joy was seen in people who came to the shop. They were smiling. They didn't have much money but liked the fact that they could buy something for themselves in the store. Now people come to the store, look at stuff and leave for another store, and even one another, and everywhere they have the same ... In communist times the business was simpler, there was no worry about whether the products would be sold. The only stress was to have something to sell ... Now you can have a full store of products and you worry that somebody will buy something. With the tax office it has never been down the road.

An older emigrant (born in 1946) who keeps his family ties with Zakopane alive, compares then and now in the following way: 'Earlier people didn't have resources for living. It was possible at best to buy half a litre of vodka, to arrange (*zalatwić*) shoes in the store — to arrange, there was nothing to buy ... And now we have everything and it depends only on the person's greed if he still wants more. If he manages to stop and say — I have enough.'

The man of a thousand skills, who I learned, was a customs officer, private trader, officer in charge of cultural affairs in the town hall, a guest worker in America, and a frame maker (born in 1950) confesses the wisdom that in capitalism it is enough to have either money or acquaintances. 'If someone likes you in capitalism, he or she helps you. In communism you need both, money and acquaintances.'

Most probably, none of those interviewed — considering their private activities — would positively see socialism as a political-economic system. People nevertheless reflect positively about the reliance on themselves and others from among family members and friends during the socialist years. For many, paradoxically, there was more room to manoeuvre in many areas of life than now. It seems from their recollections that in many aspects late communism in Poland required one to be far more 'entrepreneurial' than is commonly assumed from the dominant narratives.

Last but not least, 'capitalism' in the sense of a 'free' entrepreneurial economy, initially grew out of the community; it depended on local relations, and wealth was locally created due to the fact that enterprises were owned by the locals. The recent large-scale financial investment in the tourist economy, however, is considered as coming from outside, from big cities and from abroad. Nearly all my informants consider this late capitalist development as destructive of earlier social relations and 'culture' in Zakopane.

This locally embedded economy is widely remembered regardless of or as an unintended consequence of communist modernization, not as an integral product of it. No vernacular economy of socialism, but in socialism, the belief in and practice of a model of livelihood developed in the period of late socialism I call post-peasant. The memories people do not show any nostalgia for the socialist economy or politics, but for the particular knowledge and virtue of life of those days. Socialist modernization created an economy I refer to as post-peasant: the modernist ideology and large-

scale technical modernization went along with nurturing informal networks, familism, and even a high level of self-subsistence. As Dominic Boyer mentions, nostalgia today does not long for socialism *per se* but ‘as a desire to recapture what life was at that time’.<sup>33</sup> Although Boyer diagnoses the popularity of nostalgia in Eastern Europe as a sign of external influence over Eastern Europe and as a possible way to make claims for future self-determination,<sup>34</sup> my perspective highlights the autochthonous origin of nostalgia for the post-peasant economy. It is not nostalgia for communism but nostalgia related to the times in the communist period, for the room to manoeuvre developed in the setting I define as post-peasant.

Another breaking point — and a truly novel kind of nostalgia — began with the transformation decades after socialism. While earlier tourism in Zakopane generated significant resources for the local economy, with the advancement of larger capitalist processes the locals faced the inability to control these economic forces. The room to manoeuvre that developed during the late socialist era and further revived under post-socialism, therefore, has been vanishing *vis-à-vis* the large-scale investments into the Zakopane tourist economy.

## CONCLUSION

In most of Eastern Europe, industrialization was born in the middle of the twentieth century in overwhelmingly agrarian situations and under state socialist planning and coercion. Despite significant and fast development — or perhaps because of this particular development — even the late socialist decades did not cause the entirely ‘modern’ condition to flourish. This paper analysed these parallel temporalities — socialism and post-socialism before large scale investments in the local economy — which need to be taken into account as room to manoeuvre in the form of a post-peasant economy.

In the case of Zakopane, the prominent tourist resort in post-socialist Europe, I showed how the Goral ethnic label and tourist economy mutually reinforced each other. I argued that without considering the ‘post-peasant’ patterning of the ethnicity/economy relationship during the socialist era we cannot have a satisfying explanation of this room to manoeuvre between what was officially called socialist ‘pathology’ and the supposedly inherent patterns of freedom and natural entrepreneurship of the locals.

As Jerzy Kochanowski points out, ‘we do not have an analysis of “underground” Zakopane from the 1970s and 1980s’<sup>35</sup> and therefore the information recorded as memories of those who survived socialism help to paint a fuller albeit inaccurate

<sup>33</sup> BOYER 2010, p. 18.

<sup>34</sup> BOYER 2010, p. 25–26.

<sup>35</sup> KOCHANOWSKI 2015, p. 150.

picture of how this ethnicity/economy interplay worked. The idea of a post-peasant economy avoided the socialist/capitalist dichotomy and stressed the kind of economy closely connected to the small-scale community, which in East Central Europe — as in the case of Gorals — is often an ethnically defined group. This post-peasant economy developed as room to manoeuvre during the socialist era.

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### Summary

In most socialist states, ethnicity was treated as a constitutive element of the peoples' culture, i.e. as the culture of the lower classes who aimed to help promote loyalty towards the communist state. The link of ethnicity with the economy has therefore either been ignored by communist regimes as a separate element of culture or at most it has been presented as the cultural remains of the pre-socialist agrarian economy. The economy, on the other hand, was officially organized as if it did not have any relation to ethnicity, except for a minor role perhaps as a budget item dedicated to support the 'high culture' of the minority ethnic groups. In this article, I argue for the room to manoeuvre during the socialist era that was nevertheless constitutive for the interplay of both the economy and ethnicity, as there was no ethnic identity without the socialist economy and no economy without ethnicity in many socialist contexts. I use the everyday post-peasant economy to show the room to manoeuvre during the socialist era, i.e. I show how this interplay of ethnicity and the economy was transformed in late socialist Zakopane in southern Poland.