

## **NAPKOR – POSSIBILITIES OF A SETTLEMENT IN PERIPHERY FROM THE ASPECT OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Napkor is a small village close to Ukrainian and Romanian border. Geopolitical situation causes many disadvantages, but local people have many plans to develop their environment. It is a typical place for carrying out rural development programs and their impacts may be the basis of economic and social future. In our paper we try to introduce situation and survey some developable ideas presented in SWOT-analysis. We highlight the possibilities of the LEADER program relating to Napkor and how local people can take part in development.

**Keywords:** rural development, LEADER Program, Napkor, SWOT

### **INTRODUCTION**

By the turn of the millennium regional development has become the second pillar of the Common Agrarian Policy for the member states of the European Union which aims to transform the agrarian structure and to improve the regional conditions.

The primary aim is to find people and communities who are not only able to but also want to perform changes, something new and development. Processes of renewal start only when the individuals find prospective in life, if they can participate in development with their own vital processes. The question is how much the hope for changes, the fear from changes the intention to participate in them are possessed by certain layers of the local society.

Our examination was motivated by the wish to get to know more about the given region: the small village of Napkor. It is a big challenge since this settlement has never been examined thoroughly. It is a new area and we are aiming to analyze its regional development and village tourism.

### **METHODOLOGICAL THEORETICAL APPROACH**

It is a determinant factor for each settlement how it can obtain sources. The settlements which can utilize the possibilities of different financial applications can expect spectacular development while the others can fall behind. Today settlements, mainly the smaller ones are rather in a vegetative level so they are not up to innovation, that is why we are carrying out elaborate studies and striving to reveal more about the generally hidden reserves of the past, recent past and present of the society in order to be able plan for a reasonable time.

It is advisable to concentrate on relations between past and present, on their elements which carry renewal. There is a real reason for social renewal if we can examine the real

relations between people. People very often define themselves according to the village, town or region they were born or live in. Besides individual conscious, we have to pay attention to the settlement-regional awareness level, too. It is more expedient to examine development based on organic traditions. Openness, locking, traditions or the settlement's past, besides all similarities, form the local societies different. That is why in this present examination, we are aiming to reveal conditions, state of supply, new and old functions, recent past tendencies of the region chosen by us in details. Also, its self-organization which makes it possible for us to observe the regional differences, which are to say, what barriers, and obstacles have been conserved. How much are future, long view integrated into people's thoughts? In addition, it is a question to be answered how many the institutions of contacts, the activity of interest integration, directions, proportions and sources of thoughts carry and communicate renewal. What cooperation has been formed in the region? How much is the link to the region presented? Is it 'in the air' of the local society? What relations do the élite of the local society have? What effect do they have on the local decisions? How much do they help or support the activities of social groups? (Szoboszlai Zs. 1993)

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE SMALL SETTLEMENT CALLED NAPKOR**

Napkor (Picture 1) is located in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, in the heart of Nyírség, about 15 km from the county seat, Nyíregyháza, by the main road 41. (Tóth E. 2009) Here emerges the highest hill of the central area of Szabolcs, called mount Golyóbis at the top of which there is a meteorological station. It can be easily reached on roads from the directions of Nyíregyháza, Nagykálló and Baktalórántháza, and it is possible to drive up to the motorway about 3 km from Napkor. The railway line Nyíregyháza-Vásárosnamény crosses the settlement where passenger trains and 'Inter Pici' trains run. The territory of the settlement is 6515ha out of which 3749 ha is the inner-city area. The settlement with population of 3838 people belongs to the Region of the Northern Plain, or more exactly to the small region of Central Nyírség (Közép-Nyírség) where the employment problems of the region can be considerably experienced. (Tóth E. 2009) The unemployment rate attains 18% in the settlement; the proportion of people belonging to the Roma ethnic group is high within the active but not employed population.

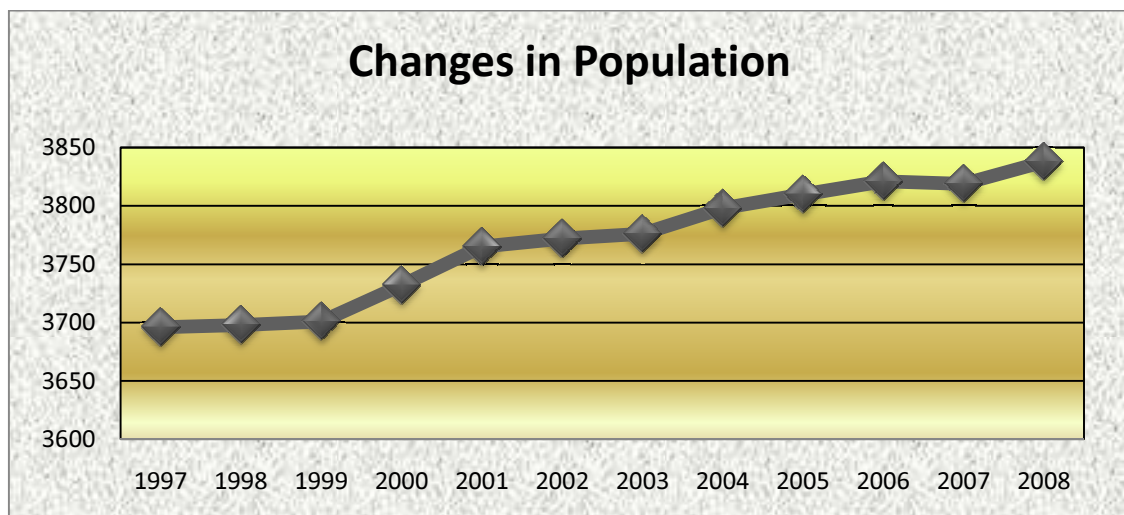


**Picture 1** *Napkor on the map*  
Source: [www.napkor.hu](http://www.napkor.hu) 2011

Although unemployment is lightened by the seasonal work coming from the agricultural characteristic of the settlement, it, of course, does not motivate the youngsters to stay in the settlement as they lack the conditions of employment because of the structure of the agricultural production. Cultivation includes, besides corn and cereals, production of intensive vegetables, tobacco and potato, and nursing the traditional apple, sour cherry and peach plantations. Also, there are acacia and pine forests in the surroundings.

By today the former, separated parts of the village have met thus forming the typical, stretched structure of settlement.

The hills are area-forming, geographical factors. The soil was formed by the sand carried and then deposited by the wind and it declines to the direction of S-N. Its flora and fauna are characterized by the generally spread species. There are many foxes, hares, roaders, boars and pheasants. According to geo-botany, it belongs to the Pannonia Flora Territory Plain Flora District Great Hungarian Plain Flora.



**Diagram 1:** *Changes in population*  
 Source: Napkor Mayor's Office, 2009

In the last 10 years the rate of birth decreased to 40-45 children a year, however, the death rate is much higher, the growth in population is due to the immigration (Figure 1). Thus, the natural increase and loss, and the immigration difference is still of positive value. The majority of population is Hungarian but there are people in small number who belong to the Romanian and Ukrainian minority groups, too (Table 1).

Ethnicity	Hungarian	90.81%
	Romanian	0.2%
	Ukrainian	0.2%
	Gipsy	6.09%
	Did not answer	2.7%

**Table 1:** *Ethnic groups*  
 Source: Napkor Mayor's Office, 200

A settlement's economy is considerably influenced by the qualifications of people living there. In Napkor, 6,8% of the population do not have any qualifications. 16,2% finished primary school (8 grades). The proportion of those who have passed the school-leaving examination is small: 15,2%. 7% of the population has a degree which hardly differs from the county average. However, illiteracy is very rare in the older generation. The others learn trades in training centers.

The economy of Napkor is under development. According to the data from 2009, 28 economic companies and 176 private ventures carry out activities based on agriculture. The number of primary producers is 1128. 256 people are employed locally, and 1513 people commute to other settlements, mainly to the county capital to work. The employment is shown in the following table (Table 2):

<b>Employment</b>	Employed (person)	1769
Employment (in case of people of working age)	Registered unemployed	282
	Out of which: long-term unemployed	70
	Number of active employees	1180
	People who regularly live on social benefits	63
	People who get annuity from the local government	98
	Total number of people of working age	2267

**Table 2:** Employment on the basis of data from January, 2009  
 Source: Local Government of Napkor, the social administrator

There are 1320 houses in the settlement which is a relatively high number regarding the population.

As we have mentioned earlier, Napkor is connected to the main road 41. The motorway M3 is close to the village. The settlement has a railway station, too.

There are 32 streets in the village. Most of them are covered with asphalt. The length of road network is about 25 km the half of which is built up. The length of roads in the outskirts is 15 km out of which 1 km is built up. The number of streets can be considered appropriate but there is something to be sad against their quality.

By entering the European Union the region has been slightly revaluated from economical viewpoint, mainly from the logistic aspect. Although these effects cannot be experienced in the settlement, with development of transportation and communication infrastructure, there is a hope for economic development of both the region and the settlement in the future.

The settlement is improved with every public utility, with the exception of sewerage the construction of which is an important task for the forthcoming years. The possibility for selective waste management is under process. Drinking water supply is suitable. The length of water-mains is 25 km, 99% of the houses are connected to the system. Construction of gas-mains is relatively completed which is important from the viewpoint of air pollution. The length of electricity network is 25 km.

Possibilities for communication in the village (Table 3)

Possibility	Yes	In progress
Tele-house	x	
Cable TV		x
Internet access	x	
<b>Type of Internet access</b>		
By phone	x	
Cable network		x
Microwave-connection	x	

**Table 3:** Communication possibilities in the village  
 Source: Data from the Mayor's Office

In the village there are two GP surgeries, and also a district nurse service. The hospital is in the county seat.

Approximately 400 students learn at Josika Miklos Primary School. There are 24 classrooms in the school. 27 qualified teachers work here.

In 1992 the Association of Forest Owners in Napkor opened a new prospective in the village life establishing the basis of private forest owners and hunting. The Association established the Forest School of Harangod which aims to let its visitors get to know the people living here, the forest and its flora and fauna. Besides the educative function, it has a role of public welfare since it works as a hunting lodge, and it intends to serve as an example for the sustainable regional development. The forest school expects classes from primary and secondary schools with colorful spring, autumn and winter programs. The purpose of these programs is the active acquisition of knowledge; children can learn the norms and rules of behavior in natural environment.

The Culture House, Library and Village House are being modernized according to the expectations of our times by the local government by means of financial applications.

It is indispensable to analyze the position of the village to be able to aim at the possibilities of rural tourism, concentrating on the new elements which determine the future.

### **A STEP TOWARDS FUTURE: THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE VILLAGE AND CHANGES IN TOURISM**

Among the basic principles of LEADER regional development modernity, novelty and innovation have an important position. They can open new bounds in regional development in which the local participants can create strategies, generate projects which have been ignored so far by the attention of central decision makers. The village Napkor joined the program in 2008. It is important to emphasize that it is not the technical innovation which is a determinant factor in connection with LEADER. They do not expect completely new technologies, scientific results due to the position of countryside and its conditions (low density of population, the quality of human capacity, lack of knowledge centers), though they are not really excluded. In case of regional development novelty can be manifested in a new subject, a new relation or cooperation, as well. With it, it is possible to find solutions for programs important, primarily, for the local population.

However, they can be determinant not only in the given small region but they can expand to wider territorial units, too. For example, building a refuse dump together, implementation of sewage disposal or investments, developments, creative ideas realized by means of applications, tenders. They all have contributed to improve the level of programs so far. It can be closely related to the tourism in Napkor.

In case of village truism the LEADER Program is exclusively limited to large-scale programs, events. Being a middle-sized village, earlier only 8 thousand people were interested in the slaughterers' competition, today the number of visitors is over 40 thousand. From year to year the participating teams are organized by friends, colleagues from different companies and settlements.

The Napkor Trophy Cup is a novelty in the line of events. That is why both the number of participants and visitors is high. Perhaps, it is due to the fact that youngsters are getting more and more quad maniac. With the improvement of life standards this sport has become accessible.

In Festivals of Military Engineering Technology means of military engineering technology of the past and present are on display. It was primarily preferred by fathers with sons.

Competition of Camp Patrols serves to establish friendly relations with those who love sports.

Days of Acacia Blooming, of Nyírség Flavors and Honey attract more and more visitors from year to year. Every year several settlements of Szabolcs participate in it where typical local dishes and honey produced by the local bee-keepers are offered to taste and buy.

Every year the villagers organize the hunters' and kindergarten balls of May, Day of Elisabeth and Day of Catherine. The earliest one is the ball of the Foundation of Elementary School.

It is the eighth time that they organize the tradition-preserving wine competition. This year 37 farmers from Napkor with 50 wine samples entered the competition.

In 1992 the Association of Forest Owners in Napkor was established with 86 members aiming to unite the forests owned by the members and thus to manage them more professionally and more efficiently.

In 1997 the Hunting Co-operative obtained the right to hunt around the settlements Napkor, Apagy, Nagykálló, Semlyén, Sényő and Nyírtura. The growing stock of game preserves attracts hunters from the USA, from the Arabian countries, France, Spain, Germany and Austria. Once even, the Spanish king was welcome here. The hunter tourism is a big attracting force for the village.

Application at present and under progress can be seen in Table 4.

Number	Object of public procurement	Type	Estimated value
1.	Renovation of the Old People Home	Building investment	27991000HUF
2.	Enlargement, renovation of the school building, attachment of an assembly hall to it	Building investment	12420000HUF
3.	Park, play ground	Building investment	17215000HUF
4.	Renovation of the Village House	Building investment	48000000HUF
5.	Building, improvement of roads, draining off the rainwater	Building investment	17000000HUF

Table 4. Applications under progress 2009  
 Source: <http://www.napkor.hu/hirdetotabla/palyazatok>

By means of SWOT-analysis (Figure 2) it is possible to formulate easily the priorities which are in the real interest of the village. They pay attention to avoid threats the most efficiently; their actions are directed to neutralize the weaknesses, to utilize the strengths and possibilities in the most efficient way. Their importance lies in that they initiate a chain reaction in the field of development, so they can generate newer and newer elements of development and can start more positive processes. In case of initiated or operating elements it is necessary to think them over and over again, to check and analyze them. It is indispensable to actualize the purposes and programs of development. (Napkor Község Fejlesztési Archívuma, 2010)

The settlement needs considerable resources in order to perform its duties, realize its aims. Most of the local governments cannot execute them from their own sources, their budget restricts them to realize their aims. Different opportunities for applications put up by Hungary or the Union serve the goal that lack of sources cannot hinder development. Regarding EU-applications, partnerships are of great importance in performing duties. They serve the aim that the given projects can be accepted in a wider community, so they can be based on a bigger layer of society. A good example for this is the Sewage Disposal Program in County Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg in which a greater emphasis is put on the drainage of the settlement. They can increase their chances in application with it. These common projects are useful not only because of the available resources but also the partners can get to know each other's viewpoints while preparing and discussing them. In an ideal case they can agree on setting the aims which serve the interests of a wider or narrower community and thus they can elaborate a common program of action.

The developed regions of the country have a good infrastructure while in case of peripheral regions which are far from Budapest it is the serious factor which hinders development. A special problem is that it is difficult to get to places by coach where there is a possibility of work (in bigger cities). Development of the road network implies such big expenses that cannot be provided in the settlements involved without central subsidies.

<b>Strengths</b> Internal and positive conditions, circumstances		<b>Weaknesses</b> Internal and negative conditions, circumstances		<b>Possibilities</b> External and positive conditions and circumstances		<b>Threats</b> External and negative conditions and circumstances	
<b>Politics, geographical position</b>	- favorable geographical position, close to the county seat, Nyíregyháza (three borders are close, too)	- there is not enough capital to build bicycle roads - there is less need to study because of the lack of workplaces	- regarding the wider environs of the settlement, the motorway and the highway 41, as axis of development, can have a developing effect, since they are very close and they also imply the possibility of transit traffic - to keep connections with the First Development Society of Nyírség	- because of the vicinity of Nyíregyháza, there is a possibility to become a sleeping settlement - the village is connected to the neighboring towns by bicycle roads			
	- in the last few years the immigration balance became positive, immigration increased - living communication between ventures, the school and the job centre	- the young professionals leave the settlement - the immigration gain covers the fact that the older generation return back to the village. It increases the aging process. - low qualification of labor force - different living standards between the ethnic groups	- to strengthen the identity of the youngsters - positive difference in immigration: the number of people who move into the settlement is growing - the possibility to study at higher education is ensured in the region - cheap labor force: a great number of public workers and day-laborers	- they did not manage to stop migration of young professionals - they did not manage to retrain the labor force supply in a modern structure - unemployed career-starters			
	- suitable infrastructure of public utilities. Building of the sewage system is under progress. - suitable transport possibilities, the vicinity of the highway 41, railway, public transport possibilities - vicinity of the motorway M3 and the bypass road of Nyíregyháza	- the road network of the settlement is old, in certain smaller streets it is incomplete - the pavements are aged, lack of bicycle roads, bicycle lanes - low number of public parks - the complete sewage is unsolved, placement of the communal waste is disturbing	- there are potential areas in the inner-village area in order to form parks or office buildings - the accessibility of the village can be improved by building the planned bicycle roads - vicinity of the county seat	- the economic areas are still not utilized – there is no sewage system built - use of broadband Internet has not been expanded completely			
	- manufacture of products of good quality - positive touristic conditions: vicinity of 'sights' in county Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, hunting possibilities, accommodation - programs of country or county level to improve village tourism	- the capital attractive force of the settlement is small - the sector of entertainment and services is less developed - immigration of well-qualified young generation is significant - industrial branches of innovation and development do not represent themselves in the village	- Formation of village tourism: tradition-preserving programs, events, festivals - keeping the more qualified young generation at place can have a pulling effect on regional development	- emigration of young professionals, specialists - improvement of the ability to attract capital has not been successful so far - the economy is narrowing down			

**Figure 2: SWOT-analysis**  
 Source: data from the Mayor's Office

Development towards information society is going on in conditions where the social-economic processes exceed the framework of states and force the states to integrate both in continental and global level. In our region it is the European integration which determines the possibilities and speed of going on the way of development. With this present essay we aimed to show the position of Napkor in the way of globalization which forces the



companies, institutions, towns, settlements, regions to cooperate. Reliance on local factors, among the priorities of territorial policy, will appear with a bigger emphasis in Hungary, too.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The village of Napkor has favorable conditions from several viewpoints. The settlement is developing from the aspects of economy, society and infrastructure. This village is an excellent example for realization of regional development and village tourism. However, it can be seen from the example of the settlement that there are application sources to perform most of the duties of local government provided the projects are planned professionally, based on real needs and the necessary financial resources are available.

As investments and developments, creative executions from application resources have contributed to increase the standards of programs, they are in close connection with the village tourism, as well. The people involved strive to give information about the possibilities for a wider public. The emphasized fields will be development of infrastructure, transport and green economy which is a step towards future. (Új Széchenyi Terv célja..., 2011)

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