

## **IMPACT OF TOURIST FACILITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE RURAL LANDSCAPE**

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**Abstract.** This paper presents an evaluation of landscape transformation resulting from tourist-recreational functional development, as based on an analysis of literature and own observations. The existing spatial assets have a direct influence on tourist development. The universal components are the accommodation and gastronomy (food and shelter) available in the area and transportation. The coastal regions have beaches, ferry and cruise ship infrastructure and marinas. Heritage, adventure and rural tourism, if developed in a balanced way, allow for the preservation of landscape assets. The most valuable, from an ecological and social point of view, are actions leading to the re-cultivation and revitalization of the tourism and recreation development of degraded areas.

**Key words:** tourism infrastructure, tourism regions, re-cultivation and revitalization for tourism and recreational purposes, heritage, adventure and rural tourism

### **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is an important (and sometimes, even the most important) branch of the economy in many regions of Poland, Europe and the world. The revenue generated by tourism forms the basis of existence for many communities. The success of this sector depends on many factors, but the most basic one is tourist attractiveness, defined as a set of natural and non-natural features of the given area, which interest and appeal to tourists. Those consist of tourist resources and tourist infrastructure – elements which form the basis of any tourist activity [Kurek and Mika 2007]. Kruczek [2005] lists various types of assets: leisure, special, landscape (both natural and anthropogenic) and reception assets. The presence of assets from a particular group stimulates the development of certain types and forms of tourism, but it also influences infrastructure investment. Without tourist facility development, it is impossible to make tourist assets accessible. But it also has some negative effects – well-developed infrastructure changes the landscape and lowers the quality of tourist assets [Lijewski et al. 2002].

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Tourist facility development consists of buildings and facilities, which form the equipment of the site that meets the needs of tourists. On the one hand, the elements of infrastructure help tourists to benefit from the area by making its tourists assets accessible and, on the other, they allow greater control of the tourist movement, which helps to preserve the area from over-exploitation. This control is especially important in areas of outstanding natural and cultural significance which are protected by law. Tourist infrastructure consists of accommodation, gastronomy, transportation and accompanying facilities.

The span and methods of tourism, leisure and recreational development of space depend on many factors, such as the decision-makers in the area, the consumers, the character, and the location and size of the project. Tourist infrastructure can be developed in both urban and rural areas. In the urban areas, because of previously-defined precise legal rules and because of constrained space, the new buildings fit better into their environment, as the area is usually already densely built-up. Moreover, many tourist attractions serve not only visitors, but also the inhabitants of the area. Tourist and leisure development of agricultural areas and forests demands a more profound interference with the environment and sometimes results in a complete transformation of the initial physiognomy of the rural landscape. The aim of this paper was to assess the influence of tourist development and expansion of tourist and recreational functions on the transformation of the rural landscape.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

This paper uses various types of sources: books and scientific papers about tourist infrastructure influence on the preservation of natural assets. An analysis of the literature allowed an assessment of the rural landscape transformation level under tourist development tailored for a particular product. During the research, the monographic method was used [Łobocki 2000]. The analysis involved listing the types and forms of tourism which are non-aggressive and non-invasive for the natural environment and their regional diversity. Own research and field observations were also used.

## THE RESULTS

### **The trends in tourist development of selected regions**

The tourist assets present in the region are the factor which determines the tourist development. The major specialist assets determine the regional character of particular tourist products because, although the natural and cultural places of interest are diverse, they are also evenly distributed throughout the country.

**The seaside.** The attractiveness of the Baltic coast is closely connected with the sea. Seaside tourism is one of the oldest forms of tourist activity and it was initially centred in spas [Faracik 2007]. The leisure value, i.e. sunbathing and swimming, has been exploited since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the beginning, it took the form of resorts in

cities: Świnoujście, Międzyzdroje, Kołobrzeg and then in Gdańsk. Nowadays, the seaside recreational zone has the largest concentration of tourist property in the country, mainly represented by accommodation and gastronomy [Szwichtenberg 2001]. As more than a half of potential tourists associate holidays with visiting the seashore, this situation is a natural response to demand [Michalska-Dudek 2002]. The ever-growing interest in this form of recreation has resulted in transformation of the landscape under the influence of the developing infrastructure. According to Gerstmann [2001], in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in some of the most attractive seaside areas, the built-up zones have witnessed vast expansion. Before the fall of communism, the majority of accommodation and gastronomy sectors were owned by the state. Although privatization allowed for a more sustainable use of those objects, profit-driven management has obscured the long-term goals. An excessive concentration of buildings has affected the irretrievably-transformed landscape, not only visually but also through a seasonal overproduction of sewage and waste. Equally adverse for the environment is the growing interest in second-house building among the regional inhabitants. Summer-house estates on the dune seashore in Dębki, which restricts access to a previously open area, is an example of that trend [Gerstmann 2001].

The condition of seashore development (or rather lack of such development) is a separate problem. Many of the Baltic beaches, especially in the small towns, lack even the most rudimentary sanitary infrastructure. As of spring, 2011 in the “Blue Flag” [„Błękitna Flaga”] project, conducted by the Foundation for Environmental Education, only 13 seaside towns fulfilled all the conditions needed to receive “flag” resort status.

Leisure tourism in the seaside is a very much seasonal matter. Only the health resorts of Świnoujście, Kołobrzeg and Tricity function outside of this pattern. Preparation of products based on cultural traditions connected with the sea-like character of the area might lengthen the holiday season and allow a more rational utilization of the existing accommodation and gastronomy infrastructure [Komorowski, Pietkiewicz 2009]. This also applies to the port infrastructure, which maintains ferries, cruise ships and sailing boats [Tubielewicz 2009].

**Lake districts.** The lake districts, with their high rate of natural beauty preservation, with their rich flora and interesting landscapes, are classified as areas of essential importance for holiday season leisure tourism [Lijewski et al. 2002]. These areas, because of their highly attractive landscapes were, and still are, a point of interest not only for tourists but also for potential summer-house plot buyers. These plots are very often developed in an arbitrary, unsolicited way, without any planning and without sanitary supervision. Such areas, if too densely build up and situated too close to the lakeshore, not only disturb landscape perception, but also restrict access to the area. Such processes (to a different degree) have been documented, among others, in the Olsztyn Lake District [Jaszczak and Marks 2009]. It is vital from an environmental and landscape protection point of view that tourist development of these areas is sustainable and balanced. Instead of individual summer-houses, there should be a network of open-to-general-use small hotels and guesthouses, build in a style in accord with the history of the region. In the lakeshore areas, it is vital to maintain the natural biological reserve, i.e. the shore rushes. The attractiveness of those areas will be surely raised by

local tourist products and existing natural and cultural assets, which can be made accessible as interesting trails [Młynarczyk 2008].

The situation is completely different in the Masurian Great Lakes District. It consists of the largest network of lakes in Poland, joined by canals, with a total area of over 300 km<sup>2</sup> and a water level at 116 meters above sea level. It consists of three groups of lakes, 24 of them in total: the Mamry group, the Niegocin-Tałtowisko lake and canal network and the Śniardwy group [Kondracki 2000]. This system allows considering most of the Masurian Lake District as an area of exceptional kayak and sailing value on an international scale [Lijewski et al.]. The macro-region is usually identified with watersports and does not need additional advertisement [Młynarczyk 2008]. The development of infrastructure will continue in that direction: ports in the biggest towns, rental shops and repair points. Along the main sailing routes there are more and more harbours with jetties and proper sanitary facilities. Such direction of development is very important in order to preserve the area's assets, as wild mooring along the most popular routes is a serious environmental hazard [Marks et al. 2009].

**Highlands and mountains.** These areas have exceptional landscape value. In a temperate climate, their tourist functions are diverse and often they also serve as home to numerous spas which are open year-round. The most important method of accessing tourist assets in the mountains is mountain hiking on designated trails. Many authors maintain that it is a non-invasive form of tourism which preserves the exceptional landscape values [Pardela 2009, Staffa 2010]. Studies by the University of Silesia disagree on the basis of field work conducted in the Karkonosze National Park. Because the hiking trails are used year-round, nature has no time to regenerate. Similar conclusions have been drawn from research in the Bieszczady National Park, especially on trails outside forests and during increased precipitation [Myga-Piątek and Jankowski 2009]. In addition, the buildings (shelters, spas) are dangerous for the environment. Such facilities are necessary for regional development, but they are not always properly incorporated into the landscape [Balińska 2007].

Mountains are considered a natural area for skiing in all of its various form, including the most dangerous for the mountain landscape, alpine skiing. In order to allow people to ski, the ski runs have to be prepared and furnished with ski-lifts. Economic conditions demand wide-scale investments. Such activities are connected with drastic changes in the natural environment – deforestation and slope modelling. Such changes to the mountain landscape are irreversible and not only lower the value of the landscape, but they also increase the danger of avalanches and erosion of slopes [Marks 2011]. One can observe a certain fight for space, where the stronger contestant usually wins – a newly-built ski run with a lift divides previously-established hiking trails which run across the slope. Similarly adverse effects are seen in the accommodation and gastronomy infrastructure, which accompanies ski runs and lifts [Staffa 2010]. The same author maintains that mountain regions are exploited unevenly. Tourists overrun fashionable health resorts and larger towns with good ski infrastructure and smaller towns, often with a fascinating history, are slowly forgotten. The local folklore and customs are ignored. The infrastructure decays and cultural assets diminish – the churches are usually closed, local authorities lack funds for

maintaining museums and private manor owners are not interested in making their properties accessible for tourists. Revitalization of a formerly fashionable town might not only provide a new opportunity for their inhabitants, but would also lower the number of tourists in the most popular areas [Staffa 2003].

## **DEVELOPMENT AND SELECTED TYPES OF TOURISM**

**Heritage tourism.** According to Gaworecki [2000], heritage tourism is a social movement, whose aim is to gather and popularize information about a country or region, including through organizing trips. The main goal of heritage tourism is to learn about interesting places and buildings. Almost every region has its own assets, both natural (either primeval or man-made) and anthropogenic, so it is worth taking an interest in it. The main elements of development in heritage tourism are tourist trails, which combine particular assets into one product. Thematic educational paths have a similar function. Educational paths are usually local in character and trails can even be international in character. The accompanying infrastructure consists usually of street furniture: stopping places, viewpoints, footbridges in swamps, etc. A well-planned trail network allows for a balanced use of assets. Moreover, if accommodation and gastronomy infrastructure are located outside the most valuable natural areas, the negative impact of tourist trails on the overall landscape value is negligible [Żarska 2009].

**Adventure tourism.** Considered as the essence of modern tourism, it combines traversing space with physical exercise in many areas of activity – health and education [Gaworecki 2000]. The educational function of adventure tourism, presumes that heritage and ecological aspects will be included in a ‘real’ tourist’s consciousness. The way in which space is developed for adventure tourism depends on its form and the availability of special assets. Lowland hiking is considered the least harmful for the environment. Lowland trails are accompanied by infrastructure such as stopping places and viewpoints. The more difficult mountain trails require additional safety infrastructure, such as rope bridges, decks, stairs carved in rocks etc. Similar infrastructure is required for bicycle touring. Lowland hiking and bicycle touring can be pursued throughout the country. Equine tourism is similarly universal in nature. According to Krzymowska-Kostrowicka [1997], water tourism (both kayak and sailing) is also environmentally friendly, as long as the infrastructure (stopping places, jetties, harbours) is well-adapted to the landscape. The situation of ski tourism is different. Lowland cross-country skiing, pursued only when nature is resting, using the existing hiking trails is effectively harmless to the environment. The situation is, of course, completely different with the above-mentioned alpine skiing.

**Rural tourism.** The shaping of a rural area to fit the needs of tourism and recreation depends on the intended spectrum of services offered and specifics of the project. A single agritourist farm will not change the general character of the countryside. Such an offer by definition uses the already existing resources and relies on initiative and attractions connected with the farm and its environs. The majority of accommodation is

offered as rooms in the owners' houses, so there is no intensification of development. There can also be new elements in the rural landscape, built in order to improve the product: tennis courts, fishponds, football pitches and golf courses. These elements permanently transform the agricultural production space but they do not impair its visual value. There are instances of rural tourist products on a grand scale, which gave the space a new, better natural and landscape value [Marks 2011]. The improvement in farmstead aesthetics is a welcome development, as it is rather hard to imagine a positive agritourist product with chaos and mess [Marks 2006]. Field studies show that not all farmsteads are surrounded by properly-designed greens. There are numerous mentions of changes in the character of house gardens and the unification of villages, suburban and urban gardens, but usually those changes do not apply to agritourist farms [Chojnacka and Wilkaniec 2011].

Sometimes, whole rural communities cooperate in order to create a common product. Thematic villages have been created in such way and usually the village image changes completely [Łacka 2005]. Worth mentioning are competitions for the most beautiful farmstead and communal efforts to take care of common spaces: football pitches, playgrounds for children, village parks, school environs and church greens. Such areas both serve the inhabitants and raise the tourist attractiveness of the village [Młynarczyk et al. 2009].

## **TOURIST AND RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS AN EFFECT OF LANDSCAPE RENOVATION**

Landscape renovation activities, which lead to tourist and recreational development, are a wholly separate question. Areas degraded as a result of various types of industrial activity (aggregate extraction, open-pit mining and dumps of industrial waste) have to be re-cultivated and one of the possible future uses is tourist and recreational development. Re-cultivation activities, on the one hand, help to improve the landscape visual value and, on the other, are an expression of a fight for space – which is becoming less and less accessible. This is why all such initiatives are extremely important from the social point of view [Biernacka 2009, Rachwał and Szpakowska 2009].

Kasztelewicz [2010] showed that aggregate excavation does not have to be considered as a necessary evil, even though it is perceived as such by society. After fulfilling its main economic role, such areas (if properly re-cultivated and developed) can become interesting recreational facilities, which sooner or later, would have been built even in an unspoiled landscape. The author refers to the example of Kryspinów, where in the area of a former sandpit, a new, better-prepared bath was created, known as 'Cracow's Balaton'. The problem of appropriate development of former open-pit mines after the excavation of sand, gravel or clay has finished is very important. Such places, if visited without supervision, without proper infrastructure and sanitary facilities and without proper studies of the banks' accessibility and the bottom of the reservoir, as well as without a water purity analysis, can be very dangerous sites for visitors.

Pancewicz [2009] presents a similar viewpoint, stressing that development of degraded areas for recreational purposes is socially much desired, but unfortunately still uncommon in Poland. The author lists the most spectacular developments of this kind: The Culture and Recreation Park in Chorzów, the inclusion of slag heaps into sport and recreation complexes (such as “Góra Kamieńsk” around Bełchatów and the „Sportowa Dolina” in Bytim and Sosonowiec).

The revitalization is also very beneficial for the cultural landscape. It is a comprehensive process of space, social and economic transformation in degraded parts of cities or villages, which aims at improvement of the inhabitant’s quality of life, restoration of spatial order, reconstruction of community ties and economic revival. Cities and villages are separate structures, which have different functions and different levels of investment in infrastructure. Czarnecki [2005], while analysing the socio-economic situation of the Podlasie countryside (the so-called ‘Eastern Wall’), does not see a need to revitalize the technical infrastructure outside the further development of this discipline. But many communities have lost their cultural identity. That is why revitalization of socio-economic infrastructure, in terms of regional culture, is considered necessary for tourism revival and identity rebuilding.

On the other hand, Land [2003], describes English and Canadian examples of constructing specific ‘rail’ products. Closed rail lines, falling into further obscurity in the countryside, unable to be restored to their former function, are revitalized and transformed into hiking, cycling or ski trails. Domitrz [2004] presented a similar idea, while conducting research in the Ełk Lake District. The tracks of a former narrow gauge rail (nowadays, mostly nothing more than embankments) are perfectly suited for cycling trails.

## CONCLUSION

Several factors influence the way in which space is developed for tourism and recreation: level of services, availability of tourist assets and regional diversity. Tourist infrastructure allows making recreational, special and landscape assets available and, at the same time, directing the tourist traffic in order to protect the most valuable areas from over-pressure. The basic elements of tourist development are accommodation and gastronomy facilities, which transform the landscape irrevocably. But if they are well-adapted into the already existing built-up areas of the region, with moderate density, they do not have to impair the visual effect. It applies to all kinds of regional leisure tourism: seaside, lakeshore and mountains. Large-scale space transformation, usually having adverse effects, causes excessive development of individual recreational housing. The infrastructure accompanying tourist trails depends on the trail’s type and its localization (viewpoints, stops and rests, footbridges in swamps, jetties along sailing trails, safety infrastructure on mountain trails). In seaside areas, the harbour infrastructure is also common. Kayak and sailing assets in the lake districts require investment in harbours, jetties, piers, rental shops and service stores. In the mountain landscape, the alpine ski runs are accompanied by lifts.

Elements of tourist development introduced into the landscape do not necessarily have to be a degrading factor. Heritage tourism and some forms of adventure tourism are environmentally friendly and can be pursued even in protected areas. The most important condition is not to exceed the environmental carrying capacity and combine new buildings with those already existing. Hiking, cycling and equine trails laid out in the field, if aesthetically marked, have a very low impact on the surrounding landscape. Kayak and sailing trails do not affect the environment as such and the accompanying infrastructure is usually developed on a smaller scale as compared to leisure tourism. Alpine skiing is a fine example of a most extreme intrusion into the natural mountain environment, usually with adverse effects. The influence of tourist stimulation of the rural areas on landscape changes is definitely positive. There are sometimes instances of permanent transformation of agriculture land into a recreational area, but those changes usually affect areas with a low agricultural production value. Farmstead's aesthetics have increased and so has the concern for common spaces and ecological safety. These changes have improved the perception of the countryside. All initiatives connected with the re-cultivation and revitalization of degraded areas for recreational and tourist purposes are very valuable for the economy and society.

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## WPŁYW ZAGOSPODAROWANIA TURYSTYCZNEGO NA PRZEKSZTAŁCENIA KRAJOBRAZÓW WIEJSKICH

**Streszczenie.** W pracy przedstawiono ocenę przekształceń krajobrazów w efekcie rozwoju funkcji turystyczno-rekreacyjnych, dokonaną na podstawie analizy literatury przedmiotu i obserwacji własnych. Na sposób zagospodarowania turystycznego mają bezpośredni wpływ istniejące w danej przestrzeni walory. Składnikiem uniwersalnym jest występująca na każdym obszarze baza noclegowa i żywieniowa oraz komunikacja. W regiony nadmorskie wpisują się plaże, infrastruktura portów żeglugi promowej i statków turystycznych oraz mariny żeglarskie. W krajobrazie pojeziernym Mazur widoczna jest przybrzeżna infrastruktura w postaci pomostów, przystani i portów jachtowych. Z kolei największą presję na otaczający krajobraz na obszarach górskich wywiera narciarstwo zjazdowe (pozbawione drzew trasy narciarskie oraz towarzyszące im wyciągi). Turystyka krajoznawcza, kwalifikowana i wiejska, rozwijane w sposób zrównoważony, pozwalają zachować walory krajobrazu. Najbardziej cenne ze względów ekologicznych i społecznych są działania związane z rekultywacją i rewitalizacją terenów zdegradowanych na cele turystyki i rekreacji.

**Słowa kluczowe:** infrastruktura turystyczna, rejon turystyczny, rekultywacja i rewitalizacja na cele turystyczno-rekreacyjne, turystyka krajoznawcza, kwalifikowana, wiejska