

RURAL TOURISM – “AN APPLE OF THE EYE” OF RURAL POLICY IN POLAND

Maria Bednarek-Szczepańska

Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization

Polish Academy of Sciences

Twarda 51/55, 00-818 Warsaw: Poland

bednarek@twarda.pan.pl

Abstract. Since the beginning of political transformation in Poland, rural tourism was perceived as a versatile means for improving the economic situation of rural areas. It became a subject of excessive interest of politicians, scholars, various activists and the media. The aim of this article is to show the development and functioning of institutional and organizational environment over rural tourism in Poland. At first, development of rural tourism in Poland is presented, followed by the formation of a national and then a local support system. The multidimensional support for rural tourism and the accompanying enthusiasm for it allow for making a statement that tourism became “an apple of the eye” of the rural transformation process in Poland.

Key words: rural tourism, support for tourism, Poland.

Introduction

A distinctive feature of rural tourism is that it concerns areas of rural character and is based on typically rural attributes, such as small scale entrepreneurship, open space, direct contact with the natural environment, traditional communities and their customs. It is shaped and controlled by local communities (Majewski & Lane 2002), operates on a small scale, beyond the main centers of mass tourism, often in peripheral and economically vulnerable areas. Therefore, entities operating in the field of rural tourism face challenging development opportunities. They need to establish networks and take advantage of support tools at various levels, ranging from local, national to international.

Worldwide, rural tourism is commonly treated as a tool for improving the economic situation of rural areas and is supported by individual countries with various means. In the subject literature, there are examples presenting numerous approaches to this issue in many countries, e.g. in the United Kingdom (Bramwell 1991), Australia (Jenkins 1993), USA (Luloff et al. 1994), in Israel (Fleisher & Felsenstein 2000), Spain (Canove et al. 2004), China (Wang et al. 2013), Malaysia (Liu 2006), and Finland (Saarinen 2007).

The aim of this article is to show the development and functioning of institutional and organizational environment for rural tourism in Poland. The multidimensional support for rural tourism and the accompanying enthusiasm for it allow for making a statement that tourism became “an apple of the eye” of the rural transformation process in Poland. At first, conditions and outline

of rural tourism development in Poland are presented, followed by the formation of a national support system. The next section discusses the local level of rural tourism support and presents two examples of tourism development in agricultural municipalities.

Rural tourism in Poland

Rural tourism in Poland has a long tradition. According to J. Wojciechowska (2006), trips to the countryside for leisure and recovery purposes have taken place since the Middle Ages. In this initial phase, only a confined social elite would appreciate the assets of rural areas. Over consecutive centuries, a wider range of urban residents traveled to the countryside to rest. A significant intensification of this process occurred during the 19th century industrial revolution and escalating urbanization. At first, villages with summer houses emerged in the vicinity of largest cities; expansion of rural tourism was also determined by the advancement of railways (Wojciechowska 2006). Due to this factor, tourism started to evolve in villages located further away from urban areas. In the period of the communist regime (1945-1989), when in general private initiative was restricted, tourist services in farms were allowed, and in some most attractive areas they even became a large scale phenomenon.

After the political transformation, in times of market-oriented economy, the idea of supporting and developing rural tourism became common due to the following reasons. At the beginning of this period (1990), the number of employees in agriculture was about 4.4 million, while the number of farms over 1 ha in Poland was about 2.1 million. These were mostly small farms of low competitiveness and marketability with multidirectional production. It was clear that the development of non-agricultural activities in rural areas was necessary, because agriculture could not be the source of income for a vast majority of households, and the hidden unemployment became an extensive socio-economic issue. At the same time, the natural landscape and cultural assets of rural areas – especially of those situated outside the typical tourist regions (mountains, lakelands) – were increasingly noticed and perceived as resources that have the potential to build tourist products. Thus, there emerged the concept of promoting rural tourism, involving the provision of tourist services by rural population, especially farmers. Rural tourism is still considered by various groups (scientists, self-government authorities, opinion-forming activists) as an important remedy for economic problems and a development opportunity for many rural areas.

The number of facilities providing services in rural tourism was steadily increasing since the beginning of the 1990s (Jagusiewicz 2008). At this point, it should be emphasized that due to the lack of regular examination of this phenomenon, there are no reliable data on the current number of such facilities. Last inventory took place in 2007, when the number of rural tourism households was estimated at about 9 thousand. The data of Central Statistical Office (GUS) concerning rural tourism are fragmentary and not reliable. Therefore, it is difficult to estimate the share of rural tourism in the national tourism industry (in terms of number of tourists, number of nights).

Poland is a very interesting case for conducting research on rural tourism as a subject of manifold support. Although, as mentioned earlier, there was a long tradition to spend free time in rural areas, after the political and economic transformation rural tourism was subject to intense changes, adopting new organizational forms and its spatial expansion was expected.

Rural tourism as a matter of support

When considering modern methods of supporting rural tourism, it is essential to realize that establishing institutional environment for tourism in rural areas was initiated already in the 19th century (when Poland was not an independent state). In those times, the so-called sightseeing associations were formed, which initiated the development of tourism infrastructure in rural areas (Wojciechowska 2006). After regaining independence after the First World War, a dedicated department for tourism was established in one of the ministries along with a supervising institution. Regional tourist associations were formed that dealt with organization and promotion of tourism in rural areas. At the level of local government, tourist committees were appointed, acting in advisory and support (Wojciechowska 2006). From the 1950s onwards, in the period of centrally planned economy, private accommodation mostly functioned within socialized distribution systems (Chmiel 2010). The state, with the use of institutional apparatus of varying intensity, organized and controlled development of tourism in rural areas.

Particularly interesting are the processes that rural tourism was subject to after the political transformation. Its development was the result of a number of mutually complementary and co-related processes in such aspects as:

- political and institutional,
- legislative,
- financial,
- self-organization,
- transfer of good practices,
- scientific and educational,
- the media.

In terms of political and institutional dimension, the key issue certainly was the fact that rural tourism gained interest of the authorities at central level already in the first years of transformation. This has resulted in giving rural tourism a high rank in strategic planning at the national level, both by the administration responsible for tourism and by the department dealing with agriculture and rural areas. Rural tourism has been recognized by the ministry in charge of tourism as one of the five fundamental tourist products in Poland. Ministry of Agriculture was involved in numerous interventions aiming at rapid expansion of rural tourism and under the ministerial patronage the network of institutions offering consulting in the field of tourist services, preferential loans and other promotional activities was extended.

Another key process that essentially determined effective implementation of strategic objectives was the inflow of external financial means that had begun in the first years of transition. Under the PHARE Programme, targeted at the countries aspiring to access the EU, a significant share of resources was designated for the development of rural tourism. Financing was continued in the form of pre-accession funds. Since 2004, Poland as a member of the European Union has been benefiting from support means, which – through various programs – constantly promote the development of tourism function in rural areas.

Concurrently, an important legislative change has been introduced, which turned out to be crucial for rural tourism. Namely, a principle that still operates was implemented exempting farmers from income tax derived from the rental of maximum 5 guest rooms for tourists, including meals. In practice, the law on tax exemption is often abused. The number of rented rooms is either exceeded or running a farm is simulated (e.g. individuals providing tourist services buy or lease

agricultural land only for the purpose of avoiding taxation). Currently, a discussion is taking place on the legitimacy of this regulation due to the growth in the informal (grey) economy and restricted competition (avoiding taxation does not apply to non-farmers and urban citizens providing similar services). However, liquidation of this regulation would bring an adverse impact for rural tourism. This would contribute to the resignation of many farmers from the rental of rooms, especially those generating low income from this activity, including the ones operating in non-tourist sites. Liquidation of the tax exemption would not solve the issue of grey economy in tourism, but could even aggravate the problem.

Another process in the development of institutional environment for rural tourism was the mechanism of its self-organization. Entities began to be established that could have never existed under the communist regime, thus introducing new quality in Poland's socio-economic space. These were non-profit organizations, foundations and agricultural-tourism chambers. With time, there evolved a nationwide hierarchical structure of rural tourism organizations that sets tendencies for rural tourism development in Poland (Lichacy 2011). Poland became a member of the European Federation of Rural Tourism EuroGites. The functioning of all these organizations was largely conditioned by external funds.

Transfer of good practices, patterns and models of development and organization of rural tourism from the countries of Western Europe is another process that has taken place since the beginning of political transformation. This has been done through both public institutions and non-profit organizations. These units have cooperated with rural tourism institutions from different European countries in form of study trips, training and joint projects.

In the group of processes affecting the development of rural tourism, the role of media should also be emphasized (press, radio, television), which publicized this subject and promoted the idea of leisure in the rural environment among potential tourists (Zawadka 2010). Scientific and educational aspect in promoting rural tourism is significant as well. Enthusiasm of the scientific community towards this phenomenon has started in Poland in the early 1990s.

Research on rural tourism has been undertaken by universities and faculties of various profiles: tourism, economics, engineering, agriculture, pedagogy, physical education, geography. J. Wojciechowska (2003) reports that between 1990–2002 over 400 publications on agritourism were compiled in Poland, including scientific articles, books, guidebooks and workshop materials (excluding popularizing writings). As a result of scientific interest, in the period 1999–2009 as many as 35 doctoral dissertations were prepared, in which the main subject of analysis was rural tourism. This number makes less than 20% of all doctoral theses on tourism conducted at this time¹. This is a relatively high percentage, considering that research on tourism is broad and interdisciplinary. Most of publications, especially those issued before Poland's accession into the European Union, idealized the image of rural tourism as a tool for solving economic problems of rural areas and farmers.

Numerous universities have commenced courses with specialization in rural tourism, especially agritourism. A research on educational programmes of the Polish universities in 2010 showed that approximately 40 of them offered specialization in this field. For instance, in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship, in which rural tourism is considered insignificant compared to other regions, specialization in agri-tourism was offered by 8 academies! It was mostly provided within the programme of private universities, rarely in public institutions of agricultural profile. It remains doubtful whether

¹ Own calculation, based on the Polish Science Database.

there is a need in Poland for such a substantial number of university graduates specializing in rural tourism.

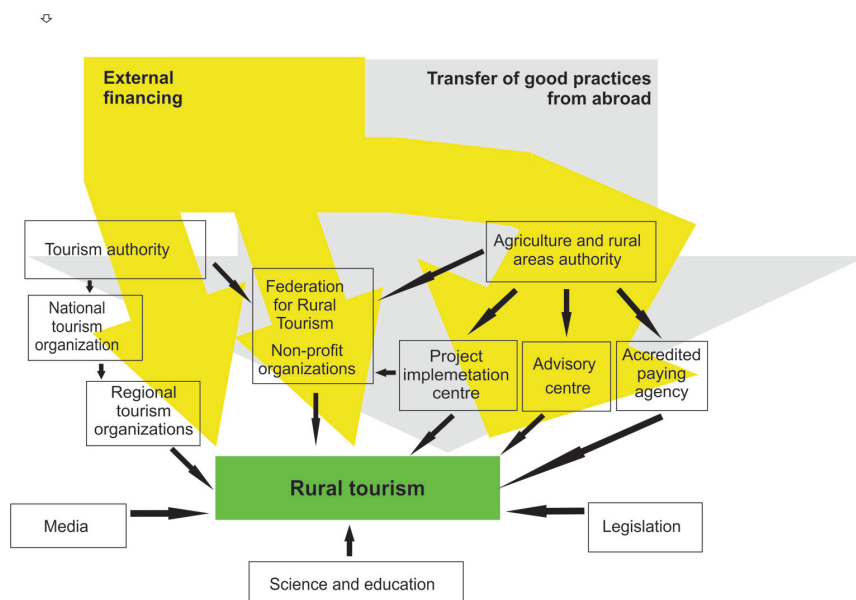


Figure 1. Polish model for supporting rural tourism after 1990 r.

Describing such multidimensional system of external support, which was formed around rural tourism, one should critically examine some of its elements and their actual role in the development of this branch of tourism in Poland. It is also worth to take into consideration the stream of external funds, which has flowed into Polish rural areas for tourism development. A research conducted in a typically agricultural region – seeking to revive its tourism function – indicates that rural tourism has become a popular, straightforward slogan that was used to obtain the EU funding for various purposes. The implemented projects have to a greater extent contributed to the improving residents' living conditions than to the development of rural tourism itself. Actions intended “for the sake of tourism” were diffused and carried out *ad hoc*. Their insufficient coherence and complementarity in the wider time and space context prejudged their irrelevance in the solid development of tourism economy (Bednarek-Szczepańska 2010).

As mentioned above, rural tourism is supervised by both the Ministry of Sport and Tourism and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. As proven by experience, the coordination between the ministries in terms of key interventions is insufficient. Moreover, due to a general lack of a comprehensive policy for rural tourism, its development is chaotic and impulsive. However, such dependencies are not exclusively a Polish case. Back in 1998, Middleton wrote that *rural business in Europe tends to be pursued within a policy vacuum* (Nylander & Hall 2005: 26).

Since the beginning of the transformation period, in all regions of Poland, the Ministry of Agriculture initiated a grand scale action aiming to reach farmers, who would potentially be interested in providing tourist services. In practice, employees of agricultural advisory centers visited farmers at their homes, encouraging them to undertake the activity in tourism. Conducting such actions requires large expenditures incurred by public funds. This ministerial intervention was

aimed in particular at rural areas that do not possess specific tourist assets and where tourism has not evolved. At first, farmers, encouraged by advisors, undertook such activity but were often quickly discouraged, because the demand for their services was insufficient. Although the role of agricultural advisory services in promoting rural tourism in Poland is certainly significant, one may however consider to what extent was it reasonable to encourage as many farmers, often lacking the right conditions, to run agritourism activity. The Ministry of Agriculture, along with subordinate institutions, approached rural tourism merely considering the supply, to a certain extent ignoring the demand. There was no market research and no analyses of the need for such service in the Polish society. Why is this important?

Experiencing agriculture and rurality is common in Polish society. A significant share of urban inhabitants have roots in rural areas. J. Wasilewski (Perepeczko & Majewski 2004 after: Wasilewski 1986) estimated that taking into account the generation of grandparents, only about 15% of Polish families do not have rural roots. A nationwide representative survey (2003) proved that 86% of respondents had relatives, and nearly half were raised in the countryside (Perepeczko & Majewski 2004). Poles travel to rural areas on a large scale, but these are mainly visits to family homes and relatives. The assets of rurality are therefore well known and accessible to the Polish society (including urban residents) – due to the rural origin of the majority of Polish families. Thus, rurality *per se* is not a particularly attractive tourist product they want to buy, but a common experience.

The issue of demand was one of the crucial reasons for which hopes placed in rural tourism by decision-makers have only fulfilled to a certain extent, despite the launch of a powerful supporting “machine”. In less than 20 years from the beginning of political transformation, only about half percent of farms provided tourist services and the income derived from this activity accounted for a relatively slight share of their household budget (Bednarek-Szczepańska 2011). Moreover, the vast majority of rural tourism is still concentrated in the typically tourist areas, most attractive in terms of natural environment, despite the actions carried out on a large scale targeted at tourism revival in agricultural regions.

Support for rural tourism at local level

Local self-governments of rural communes in Poland have become enthusiastic for the expansion of rural tourism. A remarkably high priority has been given to this form of tourism in development strategies. To highlight the scale of this phenomenon, the following research was carried out. For this purpose, a query was performed examining development strategies of randomly selected rural communes, which were devoid of entities providing rural tourism services (81 documents were inspected – approx. 9% of all such communes). It turned out that 86% of examined communes included objectives for development of rural tourism in their strategies. It means that most of rural communes, having no tourism experience, expect its development in the future.

In the Polish case, municipal authorities administer a considerable potential of resources and have a wide range of competence. Self-government is an important – and often – the leading tourist investor (by investing in infrastructure and social-services). Moreover, local authorities administer municipal property and can become the direct producer of a tourist offer. Therefore, according to the concept of P. Zmyślony (2006), self-government can successfully act as a leader in a tourist region. Local governments support rural tourism operators in various ways. They finance publishing of promotional materials as well as trips to tourist fairs, they co-organize training, and provide room

for associations' activity; they also implement financial and formal facilities for entities investing in tourist undertakings.

Municipal cultural and sports centers – public entities administered by local authorities – are also involved in supporting rural tourism. A research conducted in the Lubelskie Voivodeship indicated that these institutions were active in the case of 80% of the communes in which rural tourism is developing. Local centers organize tourist events, issue promotional materials, supervise tourist information centers or even sports equipment rental. Municipal centers also run local museums and chambers of memory.

Institutions managing public forests or protected areas are also important actors in the local system of rural tourism. Cooperation between them and private providers of rural tourism has the form, for instance, of joint undertakings in marking out of tourist trails and viewpoints, as well as mutual support in promotional activities. Within the area managed by State Forests in Poland there are approximately 5500 educational and tourist facilities, including: forestry education centers, educational trails, arboreta, and facilities of landscape architecture (Ożga & Ożga 2010).

A formalized network of tourism operators in the form of local associations began to be established in rural areas as early as the first years of political transformation. Formation of agro-tourism associations can be considered as the initial step in developing local linkages for rural tourism. This certainly is a phenomenon worthy of attention, considering that in general the Polish society – living for 50 years under an autocratic regime – is not likely to associate formally. Only about 13-15% of Poland's population belong to any kind of organization or formalized group (Social Diagnosis 2005, 2009, 2011).

It has been estimated that in the period 2000-2010 (Fig. 2), there were approximately 190 associations of rural tourism accommodation providers operating in Poland (Bednarek-Szczepańska 2011). These were very diverse groups considering their number of members, as well as areas and forms of activity. Commonly, associations publish own folders, administer a website and participate in tourism fairs (Wojciechowska 2009). However, many of them are ephemeral, not particularly active, running primarily for social purpose and not having a significant impact on the development of rural tourism. A research carried out in Lubelskie Voivodeship showed that as much as 76% of examined accommodation providers declared a membership in associations for rural tourism.

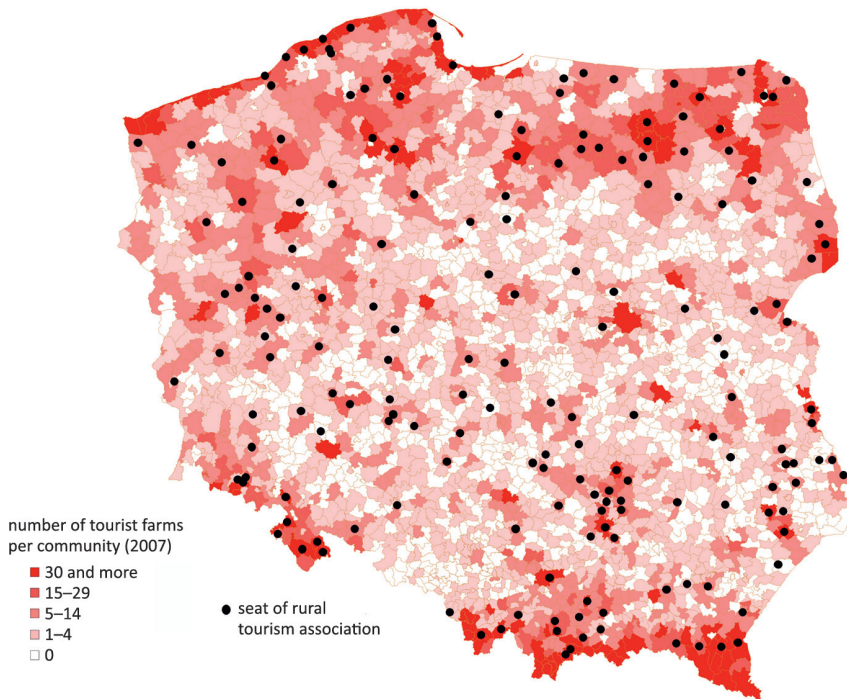


Figure 2. Rural tourism associations in Poland (2000–2010)

The next phase in developing organization for managing rural tourism took place at the beginning of the second decade of political transformation, when the so-called local tourist organizations began to emerge, mostly operating in one or a few municipalities. Their role was to integrate pro-tourist activities of local governments and stakeholders involved in tourism industry. The activity of local tourist organizations was mainly manifested in promotion of tourism. Such organizations were also formed in typically agricultural areas where development of tourism was at an initial stage.

The period after Poland's accession into the European Union should certainly be regarded as the next step in formalizing institutional background for rural tourism. In 2004, there emerged a possibility to establish Local Action Groups and co-finance their projects (in the frame of LEADER programme). The idea behind the LEADER programme was to encourage local communities to involve in bottom-up initiatives and enhance social capital. In practice, this programme has been perceived as another opportunity to finance various types of investments and activities. Within a few years of its operation, the LEADER programme was implemented in vast majority of rural areas in Poland – encompassing 91% of rural population (Kaminski 2011).

The LAG's (Local Action Groups) became extremely common. Why they can be regarded as another element of a local institutional background of rural tourism? According to studies from different regions of Poland, the development of rural tourism has become one of the main goals in the strategies of LAG's and the pro-touristic projects made a significant share of all undertakings (Gulc 2013; Czapiewska 2012; Bednarek -Szczepańska 2010; Brodziński et al. 2008). Moreover, some of these projects aimed to establish and fund the activity for new networks of actors in rural tourism. Thematic trails, ecomuseums and other forms of networking tourist attractions were developed in a great number. Thus, entities operating in a given area started to promote it through establishing a

joint and comprehensive offer. These networking products are formed not only within a particular Local Action Group, but also by entities belonging to two or three adjacent groups. Local communities have begun to rediscover, acknowledge and display their cultural (agricultural, craft, culinary and artistic traditions) as well as natural heritage. Communities started to believe – largely under the impact of processes described in the first section of the article – that heritage can contribute to success in tourism. The possibility of obtaining the EU funds has motivated communities to establish new types of networks. About two years after joining the EU there have been first attempts to develop clusters operating in rural tourism.

Therefore, at the local level, a fairly complex and multidirectional networks of linkages between different actors developed, whose activity focuses on increasing the attractiveness of rural areas and promoting rural tourism. In some areas there is an agritourism association, a tourist organization, a Local Action Group, as well as different forms of networking of tourist attractions. On one hand, this is perceived as a desired process – proving cooperation and maturing of local communities – through the acquisition of important civic competence and seeing the point of joint action. On the other hand, one may note an evident disproportion between the high level of developing organizational structures around rural tourism and its actual size (the number of service providers and the number of tourists). Each organization operating in rural tourism implements projects aiming at development of tourism, mainly because there are financial means – public money (especially the EU funds) for these purposes, and not because they are in demand. There is a lack in coordination of various initiatives as well as a comprehensive view at the entire process, and in particular some reflection on the need and validity of converting almost all rural areas in a tourist space. It is difficult to expect that – wherever desired by a community – there will come enough tourists to generate a significant income for local economies. How many people after all might be interested in rural attractions in every other municipality in Poland?

At this point, it is worth to analyze the case of a typically agricultural commune, located at the eastern fringe of Poland (Hrubieszów). Due to the weak growth prospects and ineffective agriculture, municipal authorities decided to introduce rural tourism, and thus such objective is to be found in development plans development strategies enacted in 1998 and 2004. Local self-government in cooperation with the management of a landscape park situated in the commune, paved and marked out hiking trails and adapted one of the communal facilities for a point of tourist services. Collaborating with a neighboring self-government, the Local Tourist Organization was established. Together with several adjacent communes Regional Association of Municipalities was formed, which published a travel guide. Local Cultural Center published a variety of promotional materials and two tourist information points were set up. As a result of cooperation between local authorities, regional academic center and residents' association, an attempt was made to develop a tourist product basing on local archaeological artifacts (a museum was found presenting the life of the Goths and an annual festival has been organized). In 2006, a Local Action Group was established, which raised external funds for the implementation of this project. Numerous municipal organizations began to obtain funds for the pro-tourist projects, such as: bike rentals, restoration of historic equipment intended for tourist use, marking out local cycling routes, labeling vantage points and other.

Despite all the activities and enthusiasm of local leaders for rural tourism, its importance in the economy is negligible. In 2008, that is a decade after the adoption of tourism as one of the strategic objectives for development for almost 30 villages in the commune, there were only 6 agritourism farms, offering several beds. A research conducted in 2008 shows that the average number of overnight stays was about 150 per year and the income derived from tourism accounted for over a

dozen percent of accommodation providers' income. In the years 2008-2015, only 3 new agritourism farms were established and the tourist offer was not expanded by other forms of accommodation.

The measures taken have not brought the expected results in the form of considerable growth in economic significance of tourism for the local economy. Museum of Goths, which is regarded as the most important tourist product in the municipality, is an attraction at the local level. Although the museum is frequently visited on the occasion of regular events – considering the few years of its operation – it has not become an anticipated driving force behind the development of tourism.

There are merely few rural, agricultural communes, which having similar conditions, lack of tradition or typically tourist assets, managed to turn tourism into a development factor. An exemplary case is a municipality located in the central-eastern part of Poland (Bałtów). As a result of a difficult economic situation in 2001, a group of residents formed an association and began to consistently and actively obtain external grants. At first, these were minor projects such as: creating adequate conditions for canoeing and river rafting as well as promotional activities. The turning point came with the idea of creating a dinosaur park. The association has taken a close cooperation with another thriving local organization and the self-government. A key role was played by the association leader, who was also a local entrepreneur, involved in a different economic sector. Due to his creativity and management skills and – above all – the will to take the risk and take advantage of investment opportunities, the first Jurassic Park in Poland was established. Together with entities from adjacent municipalities a partnership was formed that began investing external funds. According to Gramzow (2008), in 4 years as a result of cooperation between local associations and self-government more than 400,000 euros was acquired for investment and development oriented projects in the community.

The Jurassic Park was a big success, and within a few years became well known all over Poland. Other attractions, apart from the already mentioned rafting, were introduced: ski slope, prehistoric aquarium, amusement park, zoo, horse riding school and other. One of the biggest tourist complexes in Poland was formed. The Jurassic Park along with other attractions operating in the tourist complex created about 120 jobs primarily for municipal residents and this reduced the unemployment rate from 30 to 8% (in 2008). New accommodation places were developed, reaching the number of 30 in 2015, most of which are agritourism farms, but also a motel and cottages. New stores were built up in the park's vicinity, whose clients are largely tourists. There has been an increase in tourist movement, which already in 2007 exceeded 300,000 people per year (Ziomek 2009).

What is the reason that Hrubieszów failed to develop tourism on a larger scale whereas Bałtów was successful in this field? After all, examined municipalities had neither tourist tradition nor outstanding attractions, and in both cases local economy is based on low marketability agriculture. In both communes local associations and organizations for tourism development were formed. It seems that in Bałtów a decisive role was played by the leader – a very enterprising person having a clear vision for developing tourism and an innovative idea of creating a unique tourist attraction. This concept required immense investments and was fraught with risk. In the case of Hrubieszów municipality, local government acted as a coordinator of subordinated public entities. There was a lack of a charismatic leadership, bold decisions and investment. The pro-tourism projects consisted in the implementation of common and typical infrastructure: trails and museums, which are not capable of generating large scale tourism. The success of Bałtów was also contributed to by a more favorable location – a distance of 150-250km from several large agglomerations, while Hrubieszów is located at a distance of over 300 km from the major tourist centres, which drastically reduces its significance in the very common weekend tourism.

Hrubieszów represents the traditional understanding of rural tourism: Its development was based on natural and cultural assets of the place, while in the case of Bałtów local leaders focused on the specific tourist activities rather than on the place (Nylander & Hall 2005). Hrubieszów represents a typical model of rural tourism development in agricultural areas of Poland: great hopes and enthusiasm but unsatisfactory effect. Bałtów is a rare and unusual example.

Conclusion

At the beginning of political transformation in Poland, rural tourism was perceived as a versatile means for improving the economic situation of rural areas. It became a subject of excessive interest of politicians, scholars, different activists and media. Over the years, certain elements of support policy were introduced, although a coherent policy for rural tourism has not been established yet. This issue has only been approached primarily considering the aspect of supply, and supporting initiatives of entities aiming to provide “rural” tourism services. The issue of demand was somewhat ignored – lacking a reflection on the demand for these services in the society. Rural tourism in its classic, most common form, remains rather off the basic continuum of tourist needs evolving from “3S” (sun, sea, sand) to “3E” (entertainment, excitement, education).

Rural tourism has become the leading idea in many local communities. They began to treat their local natural and cultural heritage as a fundament of a tourist offer for urban residents. Under the heading of tourism, there developed extensive networks of local actors representing public, private and social sectors. Striving for development of tourism was a kind of a leitmotif for various joint activities and projects undertaken by local communities. However, in most cases, it is difficult to speak of any tangible results of these activities in terms of a significant increase in the numbers of visitors or economic benefits for the local economy. In contrast, numerous profits can certainly be observed in the socio-cultural sphere, such as: strengthening local identity, integrating community, revealing and appreciating local natural and cultural resources as well as improving the living conditions. Infrastructural projects implemented for the purpose of tourism development *de facto* primarily serve local communities, rather than tourists.

There are a few examples of rural areas situated in non-tourist regions, where rural tourism became a significant pillar of local economies despite the considerable support dedicated to its development in most non-tourist rural regions.

References

- Bednarek-Szczepeńska M., 2011. *Mit o agroturystyce jako szansie rozwojowej dla polskiej wsi*. Czasopismo Geograficzne, vol. 82, no. 3, pp. 249-270.
- Bednarek-Szczepeńska M., 2010. *Rola podmiotów lokalnych w rozwoju turystyki wiejskiej na wybranych obszarach Lubelszczyzny*. Studia Obszarów Wiejskich, vol. 23, Warszawa: IGiPZ PAN, PTG.
- Bramwell B., 1991. *Sustainability and Rural Tourism Policy in Britain*. Tourism, recreation, research, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 49-51.
- Brodziński Z., 2008. *Strategie lokalnych grup działania na rzecz poprawy konkurencyjności obszarów wiejskich*. Roczniki Naukowe Stowarzyszenia Ekonomistów Rolnictwa i Agrobiznesu, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 34-38.

- Chmiel A., 2007. *Turystyka w Polsce w latach 1945-1989*, Warszawa: Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczna Alkamer.
- Czapiewska G., 2012. *Lokalne Grupy Działania a kreowanie rozwoju regionalnego w województwach pomorskim i zachodniopomorskim* [in:] M. G. Woźniak (ed.), *Rozwój zrównoważony i problemy obszarów wiejskich*, Nierówności społeczne a wzrost gospodarczy, vol. 29, pp. 261-272.
- Diagnoza społeczna. Warunki i jakość życia Polaków*, 2011, 2009, 2005. J. Czapieński & T. Panek (eds.), Warszawa: Rada Monitoringu Społecznego.
- Gramzow A., 2007. *Oddolne inicjatywy jako szansa poprawy jakości życia na wsi? Wyniki studium przypadku w Bałtowie*, Discussion papers, vol. 103. Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Central and Eastern Europe, Leibnitz.
- Gulc A., 2013. *Wdrażanie oddolnych inicjatyw lokalnych na obszarach wiejskich na przykładzie podejścia Leader*. *Ekonomia i Zarządzanie*, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 225-245.
- Jagusiewicz A., 2008, *Kwatery agroturystyczne i pokoje gościnne w latach 2005-2007*, Instytut Turystyki, www.intur.gov.pl [24.05.2010].
- Jenkins J. M., 1993. *Tourism Policy in Rural New South Wales – Policy and Research Priorities*. *GeoJournal*, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 281-290.
- Kamiński R., 2011. *Partnerstwa w programie LEADER. Czy można stwierdzić, że LEADER nie buduje kapitału społecznego na polskiej wsi?*. *Polityka Społeczna* (special issue), pp. 27-30.
- Lichacy J., 2011. *Podnoszenie jakości usług w turystyce wiejskiej narzędziem rozwoju ekonomii społecznej*. *Folia Pomer. Univ. Technol. Stetin.* 201, 1, *Oeconomica*, vol. 288, pp. 215-220.
- Liu A., 2006. *Tourism in rural areas: Kedah, Malaysia*. *Tourism Management*, vol. 27, no. 5, pp. 878-889.
- Luloff A. E., Bridger J. C., Graeffe A. L., Saylor M., Martin K., Gitelson R., 1994. *Assessing rural tourism efforts in the United States*. *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 46-64.
- Majewski J., Lane B., 2003. *Turystyka wiejska i rozwój lokalny*. Warszawa: Fundacja Edukacja dla Demokracji.
- Nylander M., Hall D., 2005. *Rural Tourism Policy. European Policy* [in:] D. Hall et al. *Rural Tourism and Sustainable Business*, Cromwell Press, pp. 17-40.
- Chojnacka-Ożga L., Ożga, W., 2010. *Znaczenie edukacji przyrodniczo-leśnej dla turystyki przyjaznej środowisku*, *Acta Scientiarum Polonorum, Oeconomia*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 91-100.
- Perepeczko B., Majewski E., 2004. *Poglądy na rolnictwo w świetle zagregowanych wskaźników* [in:] I. Bukraba-Rylska (ed.), *Polska wieś w społecznej świadomości*, IRWiR PAN, Warszawa, pp. 113-134.
- Saarinen J. 2007. *Contradictions of Rural Tourism Initiatives in Rural Development Contexts: Finnish Rural Tourism Strategy Case Study*. *Current Issues in Tourism*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 96-105.
- Saxena G., Ilbery B., 2010. *Developing integrated rural tourism: Actor practices in the English/Welsh border*. *Journal of Rural Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 260-271.
- Saxena G., Ilbery B., 2008. *Integrated rural tourism. A border case study*. *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 233-254.
- Wojciechowska J., 2003. *Agroturystyka w dziedzinie nauki i praktyki*. *Zeszyty Naukowe Akademii Rolniczej im. H. Kołłątaja w Krakowie*, vol. 402. Kraków, pp. 79-92.
- Wojciechowska, J. 2006. *Geneza oraz ewolucja turystyki na obszarach wiejskich w Polsce*. *Folia Turistica*, vol. 17, pp. 99-119.
- Wojciechowska J., 2009. *Procesy i uwarunkowania rozwoju agroturystyki w Polsce*. Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź.

- Zawadka J., 2010. *Ewolucja działalności agroturystycznej w Polsce i typologia wiejskich gospodarstw turystycznych*. Acta Scientiarum Polonorum, Oeconomia, vol. 9, pp. 627-638.
- Wang L., Cheng S., Zhong L., Mu S., Dhurba B., Ren G., 2013. *Rural Tourism Development in China: Principles, Models and the Future*. J. Mt. Sci.,10, pp. 116–129.
- Ziomek A., 2009. *Partnerstwa lokalne w Polsce – uwarunkowania i kierunki rozwoju* [in:] B. Skrzypczak, M. Grygorczyk (eds.), *Pomiędzy tożsamością a skutecznością*. Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie CAL, pp. 7-14.
- Zmyślony P., 2006. *Samorząd terytorialny jako przywódca w regionie turystycznym* [in:] B. Raszka, S. Bosiacki (eds.), *Gospodarka turystyczna w XXI wieku: globalne wyzwania i zagrożenia*. Poznań: Wyd. AWF, pp. 111–124.



