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**The Transformation of Tourism  
Model in the Polish Carpathians :  
Reporting on the Last 20 Years of  
Experiences**

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*Ekonomiczne Problemy Turystyki nr 4 (28), 285-306*

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*2014*

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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**THE TRANSFORMATION OF TOURISM MODEL  
IN THE POLISH CARPATHIANS  
– REPORTING ON THE LAST 20 YEARS OF EXPERIENCES**

**Abstract**

The Carpathians are the main Polish tourism destination, because of rich qualities as well as long tourism traditions in the region. The period of socialism in this region, as in the whole country, has however left a significant mark in terms of clear dominance of the socialist priorities in all aspects of tourism development. That period was mainly dominated by mass tourism, organized and financed by the state and social funds. The majority of accommodation was dominated by workplace-related recreational centers, predominantly located in the most attractive tourist destinations. It was however also a period of intensive development of private initiatives, especially in terms of rental accommodation. Therapeutic stays at spas were also characteristic for this area.

Socio-economic transformation, associated with the political changes after 1989, significantly changed the image of tourism, which today is in the process of adaptation to the model, characteristic for the developed countries of Western Europe. This system is based largely on the private accommodation facilities, as well as private services. The development of ski resorts is very intense. Competitive offers of neighboring Slovakia resulted in the development of the thermal baths based on local thermal

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water resources. Visible is the intensive development of agritourism offer. According to the observed trends in the world, the role of cognitive tourism based on cultural values (new attractions, cultural routes, etc.) has increased over the last years. These changes refer also to the spas and resorts (progressive privatization), which could be associated with the growing importance and popularity of the *spa and wellness* offer. Suburban recreation is also developing, which is strictly connected with vicinity of large urban areas (GOP, Kraków, Tarnów, Rzeszów). This closeness results in an increase in the number of second homes.

**Keywords:** mountains, the Carpathians, tourism, transformation

## Introduction

Tourism in Poland has undergone major changes in the past 20 years. The external conditions for tourism development in the country have significantly changed as a result of newly opened European borders in the early 1990s, European integration and related adjustment to the new rules imposed by the European Union, as well as the ongoing financial recession. The fundamental changes in tourism supply and demand associated with democratic and economic reforms had started in Poland in the 1990s. The tourism sector has undergone ownership transformation processes associated with the privatization of tourist facilities and efforts to transform the nature of tourism product, which involved tourist service provision enhancement and adjustment of the scope of tourist services to the global trends and solutions. This has significantly changed the model of tourism on the demand side. Long-term vacations have been substituted with weekend and one day trips. This has also led to the development of new forms of tourism (e.g. spa tourism, ski tourism). Lastly, the number of outbound trips have increased significantly.

The changes in tourism have had the most significant effect on the traditional tourist destinations, which have had to adapt to the new conditions. An example of such destination in Poland is the Carpathian Mountains, which represent the most important holiday destination in Poland after its Baltic coast, with a long-standing tourism traditions dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The purpose of this article is to identify the factors which have significantly altered the pattern of tourism development in the Polish Carpathians and to indicate the forms of tourism that have changed in the last 20 years, or play an important role in the modern tourism development in the Carpathians.

## **1. Tourism development in the Carpathians**

The modern state of tourism development in the Carpathians is primarily dependent on previous social, economic and political processes. The significant interest in the development of tourism in mountain areas, which had been first observed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had continued in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From the phenomenon of being an elite experience, tourism has gradually moved to being the phenomenon of a common experience. This was due to the increase in the importance of the working class in Europe and fast-growing developments (including the legal protection of labour, the reduction in working hours, holidays). Therefore, apart from the traditional forms of tourism, such as stays in spas, recreational trips for lower social classes, along with their families (especially in the 1930s) have started developing. During this time first group resorts, camps and centres for children and young people as well as sanatoriums already existed. Simultaneously, summer villages, providing recreation to city dwellers (e.g. Lanckorona in the Pogórze Wielickie, or Zawoja in the Beskid Żywiecki) have evolved. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the whole Carpathians, there existed dozens of holiday and recreational villages. Spas which have moved from being a form of elite tourism to becoming a more mass tourism experience, including spas of the Beskid Sądecki (e.g. Krynica) and the eastern part of the Carpathian Mountains, today in Ukraine (e.g. Truskawiec) had also played an important role in tourism development. The increased health awareness, especially among urban residents, the development of medical science and better access to health care (especially in cities) had made the largest contribution to their popularity. Furthermore, social organizations and associations played an important role in promoting tourism. They first occurred during the period of the partition of Poland, both in Warsaw (Polish Tourist Association/*Polskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze* in 1906), as well as in then Austrian Galicia (*Polish Tatra Society/Polskie Towarzystwo Tatrzańskie* founded in 1887 as *Galician Tatra Society/Galicyjskie Towarzystwo Tatrzańskie*). They cared for, inter alia, network of mountain huts in the Carpathian Mountains (including the current Ukrainian side), which today form the backbone of the whole system of shelters. The highest mountain tourism centres were Zakopane and Krynica. Other places, such as Rabka Zdrój, Szczawnica, Iwonicz-Zdrój, Ustroń, Muszyna, Wisła, had also developed. In 1939, the entire Carpathian Mountains located within the Polish

borders operated 288 accommodation facilities, which accounted for in total a 9651 bed capacity, of which more than 60% were in the Western Carpathians.<sup>1</sup>

Significant changes in tourism took place after World War II. One of the first signs of a new economic order was the nationalization of the tourism base, including accommodation facilities and sanatoriums, which were private before the war. Some of them were put under the management of the Employee Holiday Fund [pol. Fundusz Wczasów Pracowniczych "FWP"], an organisation set up in 1949 which, on behalf of trade unions, managed holiday houses. Unification of the rules for employees to take holiday packages was typical for centralized socialist system of citizens' participation in public life of the state. In the Polish Carpathians, FWP owned most objects in Zakopane and Krynica.<sup>2</sup>

Another distinct step in the development of the tourism sector in Poland, including the Polish Carpathians, is associated with the entry into force of the provisions under which workplaces provided social benefits funds for its workers for holiday and leisure purposes. As a consequence, a number of recreational centres were created, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. The largest number of them were located in the Beskid Śląski, in the Tatras and Podhale region and in the Beskid Sądecki. The proximity of artificial water reservoirs (e.g. Międzybrodzkie, Rożnowskie or Solina)<sup>3</sup> was the key factor which contributed to their development.

Intensive investment in Polish spas took place in the second half of the 1960s. The owners of buildings were unions and workplaces, as well as the ministries and other institutions of centralised government. New facilities were built mostly in large, most visited spas, such as Krynica or Ustroń, while small, underdeveloped resorts were neglected. A number of new spas had also emerged, such as Polańczyk with the Solina Reservoir. Curative stays were organized both within the national health system and the institution of an industrial nature.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Groch, W. Kurek, 1995, *Turystyka*, in: *Karpaty Polskie, Przyroda, człowiek i jego działalność*, J. Warszńska (ed.), Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków, p. 269.

<sup>2</sup> R. Okrasa, 1979, *Wczasy pracownicze. System organizacyjny*, Instytut Wydawniczy CRZZ, Warszawa, pp. 81, 83.

<sup>3</sup> B. Rogalewska, 1978, *Tendencje lokalizacyjne zakładowych ośrodków wczasowych w Polsce do 1971 r.*, Instytut Geografii i Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania PAN, Warszawa, pp. 39–57, 67–85.

<sup>4</sup> E. Pitrus, 2004, *Uzdrowiska karpackie – porównanie współczesnych problemów i strategii rozwoju*, mps. pr. doktorskiej, Zakład Gospodarki Turystycznej i Uzdrowskiej, IGiP UJ, Kraków.

Because of its environmental advantages, the Carpathians were the most significant Polish skiing resort, with the largest ski stations located in the Beskid Śląski, the Beskid Żywiecki (Pilsko), in the region of Zakopane and the Beskid Sądecki.

Concentration of the industry and urban population in the southern part of the country, especially in the northern foreland of the Carpathians, constituted the key factor in tourism development and its spatial variation in the Polish Carpathians. Direct proximity of the region to major cities and main urbanized areas (Upper Silesian conurbation, agglomeration of Kraków, Tarnów, Rzeszów) resulted in the development of tourism infrastructure also for weekend and short break holidays. The residents of GOP (Górnośląski Okręg Przemysłowy/Upper Silesian Industrial Region) and the district of Bielsko-Biała participated in tourism in towns of the Beskid Śląski and the Beskid Mały. The residents of Kraków and its vicinity mostly travelled to the region of the Beskid Średni (especially the Raba valley), Zakopane and Podhale, and the Beskid Sądecki.<sup>5</sup> The emergence of second homes, which covered this part of the Carpathian, located within the impact of large urban areas, was a distinctive feature of tourism development.<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, the Polish Carpathian area had unevenly developed in terms of tourism. The western part of the region was characterized by the significant development of tourist infrastructure, including accommodation facilities. Such regions as the Beskid Śląski, the Beskid Żywiecki, Podhale and the Tatry, or the Pieniny and the Beskid Sądecki, on a scale of the entire Carpathian mountains, both in absolute and relative measures (e.g. density) dominated over the eastern part. This is evidenced by studies on the development of tourism function in the Polish Carpathians.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> J. Warszyńska, A. Jackowski, 1971, *Turystyka w regionie krakowskim*, Nauka dla Wszystkich, 152, PAN Kraków, Kraków; J. Warszyńska, *Miejskie województwo krakowskie jako zaplecze rekreacyjne Krakowa*, "Folia Geographica, Series Geographica-Oeconomica" 1978, No. 18, pp. 87–105; J. Groch, W. Kurek, 1989, *Freizeitgestaltung der Werktätigen am Beispiel der Belegschaft des "Lenin-Eisenhüttenkombinats"*, Bochumer Geographische Arbeiten, 51.

<sup>6</sup> R. Faracik, 2006, *Turystyka w strefie podmiejskiej Krakowa*, IGiGP UJ, Kraków, pp. 60–67; Mika M., 2004, *Turystyka a przemiany środowiska przyrodniczego Beskidu Śląskiego*, IGiGP UJ, Kraków, pp. 105–115; M. Mika, *Kierunki i cechy rozwoju drugich domów w polskich Karpatach w świetle stanu badań*, "Czasopismo Geograficzne" 2012, No. 83, 1–2, 63–79.

<sup>7</sup> A. Jackowski, 1981, *Typologia funkcjonalna miejscowości turystycznych (na przykładzie województwa nowosądeckiego)*, Rozprawy habilitacyjne nr 53, Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków; J. Warszyńska, *Funkcja turystyczna Karpat Polskich*, "Folia Geographica, Series Geographica-Oeconomica" 1985, No. 18, pp. 79–104; W. Kurek, 1990, *Wpływ turystyki na przemiany społeczno-ekonomiczne polskich Karpat*, Rozprawy habilitacyjne nr 194, Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków.

This state had become the starting base for the changes that took place across the country after 1989.

## **2. Factors of transformation in the last 20 years**

The 1990s had brought major political and socio-economic changes to Poland; these had significantly affected various spheres of life and economy, including tourism. The determinants of these changes were: moving away from a centrally planned model of economy to the free-market model, privatization of enterprises, transferring responsibilities to local governments, reducing the state's role in social care. The current model of tourism development has transformed from the social model (socialized/ state operators) to the free-market model, which assumes the private nature of ownership in tourism and full remuneration.

The development of tourism in the Carpathians was substantially influenced by the changes in the demand side of tourism. In the early 1990s, in connection with the economic crisis, the number of tourists had significantly reduced. The dominant role of the workplace or school as an organizer of free time for its members had been replaced by individual relationships: tourist – tourist facility, based on the market principles. This change had a significant impact on the condition of many tourist facilities which had to adapt to the new rules. In order to survive, state and company holiday centres which faced financial problems had to introduce market prices while maintaining the low standard of service. This meant that their offer became very attractive for Polish tourists. Many of these companies were privatized. The major changes in the structure of demand had also resulted in opened borders and the abolition of visas, not only in the context of Central and Eastern Europe, but also in the context of many West European countries. As a result, long-term domestic tourism had lost in favour of incoming tourism. Favourable price relations led to an outflow of guests from the Polish Carpathians to Slovakia, and people interested in a higher standard of services, especially those related to skiing, began to travel in the Alps. A growing number of foreign tourist arrivals to Poland in the 1990s did not offset the loss of domestic tourism in the Carpathians. Tourism offer in the Carpathians was unappealing, especially in relation to the outdated accommodation facilities. As a result, in the 1990s, there had been the continuous collapse of accommodation, which,



due to the limited access to capital, could not carry out work aimed at enhancing its attractiveness. This especially applied to old resorts and youth hostels. In the early 90s, such facilities existed in the entire Carpathian Mountains; there were about 600 (including 40.7 thousand beds), and in 2000 only 300 (26.5 thousand beds) of such facilities, while in 2012 the number had decreased to 180 facilities (15.4 thousand beds).<sup>8</sup> The change in funding rules for youth tourism had led to the collapse of the network of youth hostels. With more than 150 facilities operating in the Carpathians in the early 1990s only a little more than 30 objects had survived to date. This sharp decline was related to the transfer of this type of accommodation to local government regulations which, due to the lack of funds, prevented them from managing such facilities, located mainly in schools. The number of camping sides has also significantly decreased.

The higher standards of service as well as expansion of the consumer market have become the priorities since the end of the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The new Act on Tourist Services, which introduced the obligation of adaptation of certain types of objects to the defined standards of service, had also made a large contribution. These new realities resulted in the large transformation of facilities. The number of hotel-type facilities had significantly increased. In the middle of the 90s there were only 45 hotels in the Carpathians, today there are 192, including a dozen facilities of the highest standard.

Many of the objects have adapted their products to support business tourism, organizing conferences and training courses. The growing number of spa & wellness service can be observed. A response to changes in the demand side was to extend the scope of accommodation services.

Today, over 97% of accommodation facilities in the Carpathians are private. According to data from the Central Statistical Office, in 2012 in the Polish Carpathians there were 1.7 thousand accommodation facilities offering about 90 thousand beds. In the case of hotels, a typical customer profile is quite diverse, although many objects declare a special focus on business customers (especially when it comes to big buildings with conference facilities).

Bed & breakfasts and farmhouses focus on providing services to individual guests, especially those who visit in search of relaxation. Analysing the issue of the functioning of tourist accommodation facilities, it should be emphasized that it must refer to the current market trends, associated with shortening

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<sup>8</sup> According to data of Central Statistical Office/Local Data Bank ([www.sta.gov.pl](http://www.sta.gov.pl)).



the length of stay to increasing the frequency of travel. This is especially important in the case of the Carpathians as their main customer group is represented by the residents of nearby urban agglomerations who prefer short-term stays, including weekend and day trips.

Speaking about the factors affecting the change in the pattern of tourism development of the Carpathians, attention should be paid to the current perception of tourism as a factor which stimulates the local socio-economic development. Tourism has become one of the areas of the local economy, in which it is worth to invest the local capital. Its competitiveness against other sectors of the economy has significantly increased. The Carpathians are predisposed to the development of tourism due to their natural and cultural resources associated with environmental protection. The local authorities consider tourism development as a factor of economic recovery and as a solution to many local problems, especially those related to the collapse of agriculture. Creation of agritourism facilities was supported from the 90s, and these represent an additional source of income for farmers. It is estimated that currently in the Carpathians, there are about 2.5 thousand such facilities, offering approximately 30-40 thousand beds in total.

The development of rural tourism is supported by activities aimed at creating new objects (such as: open-air museums, cultural parks), roads and hiking trails (bike trails, horse riding, etc.) to increase the tourist attractiveness of the region. The model of management of tourism development had undergone a fundamental change. It is currently being implemented in cooperation with the local and regional level (provincial). Local and regional associations and other organizations of interest also play an important role in the promotion of tourism within the region. Contemporary management model of tourist development is strongly related to regional policy of the European Union and associated with the system of financial support. Tourism as one of the preferred directions of socio-economic development of the Carpathians, is covered by a broad system of funding. The financial support provided by the European Union for the tourism sector is one of the primary determinants for this region to achieve a competitive market advantage.

Discussing the factors influencing the transformation of the tourism market, special attention should also be paid to the changing position of the Polish Carpathian region on the tourist map of the whole Carpathians. Polish accession to Schengen agreement and the associated removal of borders had enabled the Carpathians tourist resorts to maintain strong relationships with Slovak or

Czech centres. On the one hand, this emphasises the need for continuous actions aimed at achieving competitive advantages, on the other hand this creates possibilities to cooperate on the development of cross-border tourism. Cross-border cooperation can facilitate the realization of cross-Carpathians entrepreneurship, which can be shared with Slovakia to host the Winter Olympics Games. Equity joint ventures can also be formed. On the Polish side, there are intentions to invest into the Slovak Tourist Company – the Tatra Mountain Resort. The absence of boundaries also raises the possibility for the development of new streams of tourism. For example, in recent years the flow of tourists from the Czech Republic (mainly from the Karwina - Ostrava district) into the Beskid Śląski and Żywiecki has been observed; this is due to the more developed ski, sports and recreation facilities on the Polish side. Currently, the border villages in the Polish Carpathians derive significant benefits from trade tourism (via Slovaks arrivals), which are caused by price differences (euro in Slovakia). This situation will only last until the introduction of euro in Poland, however, today this important element stimulates the local trade. Similar phenomenon has evolved in the opposite direction in the 1990s, from Poland to Slovakia but it has disappeared by now.

### **3. The main directions of tourism development in the Carpathians**

#### **3.1. Rural tourism**

Since the 1990s there has been rapid development of rural tourism based on agritourism accommodation. This was the result of clear and effective actions to promote the multifunctional model of rural development, including tourism and recreation. Today, rural tourism is one of the most important segments of the economy in the Carpathians. It allows the urban population to relax away from stressful urban environment; it also stimulates rural economic development and improves living conditions of local residents. Therefore, the regional policies and development strategies of lower-level administrative units in Carpathian provinces have put special emphasis on the development of economic activities of the locals in order to maintain the original character and rural heritage of the Carpathians.

The goal of sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians and promotion of rural tourism was also displayed in the bottom-up initiatives under-

taken by the inhabitants in Małopolska voivodeship: Stowarzyszenie Turystyki i Agroturystyki Ziem Górskich, Góralskie Stowarzyszenie Agroturystyczne, Galicyjskie Gospodarstwa Gościnne; and in Podkarpackie voivodeship: Podkarpackie Stowarzyszenie Agroturystyczne Gospodarstwa Gościnne, Galicyjskie Gospodarstwa Gościnne Bieszczady. These initiatives provide the opportunity to: improve organization, more effective development and promotion of rural tourism, especially agritourism, activation of rural communities, promotion of various forms of relaxation on farms, caring for an increase in the level of services and reporting changes to the existing rules and opinions on draft laws relating to rural tourism and agritourism.<sup>9</sup>

Another phenomenon which contributes to the development of rural tourism is EU funds which have renewed interest in farming. It is worth mentioning that Carpathian agriculture always consisted of “traditional” and organic production.<sup>10</sup> Fashion for the production of regional products based on traditional and natural materials, distinguished the rural tourism offer in the Polish Carpathians.

The increasing popularity of agritourism and organic agricultural products has led to the growing number of tourism accommodation facilities, which are not directly related to agriculture. These facilities began to use the name of “agritourism” in marketing activities or formally operate under such a name. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, over 8 thousand objects operated in Poland in 2005 under the name “agritourism”. The largest concentration of these objects can be observed in rural areas of the Carpathians (about 2 400 tourist farms), especially in Małopolskie and Podkarpackie voivodeships, where approximately 30% of the total agritourism farms in the country are located. This is because the terms “agritourism” and “agritourism farm” are not properly defined in Poland. However, there are certain regulations related to tourism activities. They regulate the scope of services, responsibilities, such as tax or insurance for their owners, but also give many benefits of the various state poli-

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<sup>9</sup> J. Zuba, R. Domański, *Analiza struktur organizacji i działalności niektórych stowarzyszeń agroturystycznych w Polsce*, “Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska” 2006, Vol. LXI Sectio E, pp. 93–106.

<sup>10</sup> C. Guzik, 1995, *Rolnicze użytkowanie ziemi*, in: *Karpaty Polskie, Przyroda, człowiek i jego działalność*, J. Warszńska (ed.), Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków, pp. 239–252; R. Faracik, W. Kurek, M. Mika, R. Pawlusiński, 2009, *Turystyka w Karpatach Polskich w świetle współczesnych kierunków rozwoju*, in: *Gospodarka i Przestrzeń*, B. Domański, W. Kurek (eds.), Instytut Geografii i Gospodarki Przestrzennej UJ, Kraków, pp. 77–96.

cies aimed at promoting entrepreneurship in rural areas.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, it should be added that they do not sufficiently protect the interests of agritourism farm owners.

The number of agritourism farms and the tempo of their development had increased in the 1990s.<sup>12</sup> Today, the number did not change significantly. Further transformation of rural tourism and agrotourism in the Polish Carpathians in the last 20 years was caused by a number of issues. The primary issue is the seasonality of this type of accommodation. Tourists benefit from tourist farms mostly in the summer season. This is explained by the duration of the farming season which takes place in the summer-autumn season, and which serves as the main attraction of an agritourism farm. In addition, visible is the decline in interest in this form of summer recreation. This means that tourists are willing to visit farms for recreation, not are not necessarily willing to participate in farming. More and more agritourism farms entirely abandon agricultural activity or keep them just in this area, which allows to run a favourable tax policy. The research show that almost 1/3 of all agrotourism farms in Małopolska were not visited in the last 3 years by any tourist. This unfavourable situation is vindicated by the competition from newly established, modern accommodation facilities, which have different, innovative products, compared to the traditional offer of rural areas: pensions, B&Bs, private accommodation facilities and hotels. It contains extensive leisure (including a spa) and sports facilities, which become a powerful competitor for agritourism farms. One such example is the ski station Białka Tatrzańska where farm owners resign from rural profile of farms, introducing guest rooms and B&Bs instead. This is caused by new tourist types who visit Białka Tatrzańska for skiing which is an “expensive” and specialized sport, so if a customer decides to ski, they should also be able to pay for other attractions, which can offer accommodation (physiotherapy, massage). In this changing climate farmhouses are forced to raise their competitiveness by introducing new offers, except accommodation and nutrition (treatment and rehabilitation stays for the elderly and disabled, Nordic walking, hippotherapy, hypnotherapy, martial arts, meditation and relaxation stays, yoga, herbal medicine, diet stays,

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<sup>11</sup> M. Kubal, M. Mika, *Agritourism in Poland – the legal model and the realities of the market*, “Current Issues Of Tourism Research” 2012, Vol. 1, No 2, Presov, pp. 4–11.

<sup>12</sup> K. Szpara, 2011, *Agroturystyka w Karpatach Polskich*, in: *Prace Geograficzne*, M. Mika (ed.), z. 125, Instytut Geografii i Gospodarki Przestrzennej UJ, Kraków, pp. 161–178.

stag and hen parties) and for finding new niches in the market. The direction of changes forces simultaneous search for new audiences for new products. It is worth to add that only a small number of agritourism farms are able to successfully diversify its products while maintaining agricultural production to counter the force of the impact of accommodation and having a number of other complementary services as well. It is in recent years an important, if not the most important direction of agritourism development. Otherwise it becomes a form of rural tourism, without a clearly defined marketing product.

Transformation of rural tourism that took place and is still ongoing in the Polish Carpathians, requires continuous support from central and local governments as well as new and effective projects of a regional nature. Examples of such initiatives in the implementation of regional policy in the area of Małopolska are the creation and promotion of projects aimed at elderly audiences of rural tourism but “in the new edition.” In Małopolska the most well-known projects are: Małopolska Village Fragrant Herbs [Małopolska Wieś Pachnąca Ziołami], Małopolska village for Children [Małopolska Wieś dla Dzieci] and Małopolska village for Senior Citizens [Małopolska Wieś dla Seniora]. These projects are based on the heritage of rural areas of the Carpathians; they use rural accommodation facilities, promoting them to specific groups of customers, not excluding anyone. There are many examples of local rural and village politics (Zubrzyca, Wysowa, Lipnica Wielka, Lipnica Mała), where investments in local infrastructure (sidewalks, roads, sewage systems) had a positive impact on the perception of these areas by tourists.

The activities of a growing number of regional associations of agritourism in Poland are a factor that accelerates and strengthens rural tourism development.<sup>13</sup> Successful projects of a local nature are taken more often by active members of the local action groups (LAGs, [pol. Lokalne Grupy Działania LGD]). These new actors in the development of rural tourism and agritourism are a form of local partnerships, which are next to public sector entities formed by private entities in collaboration with civil society organizations. An example of a successful initiative of LGD is cyclical - already 6th “Święto Rydza”, held in September in the Beskid Niski.

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<sup>13</sup> A.P. Wiatrak, 2003, *Baza agroturystyczna w Polsce i uwarunkowania jej rozwoju*, Zeszyty Naukowe Akademii Rolniczej im. H. Kołłątaja w Krakowie nr 402, pp. 9–18.

### **3.2. Spa and health tourism**

The Carpathians are the main spa region in Poland (12 cities with a spa status), which contribute to both environmental values and long traditions of functioning spa treatment. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during political transformations, the management system of spa treatment had become more and more cumbersome. On the one hand, the outdated infrastructure, constantly decreasing financial outlays on this form of treatment, had worsened the situation among all Polish, as well as Carpathian, spa resorts. In 1990, the Polish spas hosted the maximum number of bathers (about 800 thousand). Currently, at the number is down to about 530-550 thousand, of which about ¼ are attributed to the Carpathian spas.<sup>14</sup> A particularly large drop in the number of patients has been noticed among children, whose residence requires large expenditures (mainly in Rabka Zdrój, Rymanów-Zdrój). The scope of administrative and legal operation of spas had also changed, which is associated with the entry into force of the new law in 2005<sup>15</sup>, which had replaced the earlier act of 1966.

Spas were affected by privatization. So far, only two Carpathian spas had been privatized (Iwonicz-Zdrój and Ustroń), and one had been returned to the heirs of the pre-war owners (Szczawnica). In the future, it seems desirable to undertake further privatization. It may represent the best way to acquire the capital for modernization of existing and development of the new infrastructure. It should be noted, however, that privatization of spas raises social controversy. A model is also considered which assumes operation of two types of spas: the so-called national – which remain in the state hands and are aimed at the realization of medical services financed from public funds, and private spas which have a wide range of offers. So far the Carpathian spas have focused on domestic customers, practically they are not visited by foreigners, as it is the case with most spas in the Sudety. It is worth mentioning that the Carpathian spas are under strong competitive pressure from the Slovak spas, which contributes to the enhancement of their services. No innovation can lead to an outflow of domestic spa visitors abroad, including to Slovakia.

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<sup>14</sup> *Lecznictwo uzdrowiskowe w Polsce w latach 2000–2010*, GUS, US w Krakowie, Kraków, p. 49.

<sup>15</sup> *Ustawa z dnia 28 lipca 2005 r. o lecznictwie uzdrowiskowym, uzdrowiskach i obszarach ochrony uzdrowiskowej oraz o gminach uzdrowiskowych*, Dz.U. 2005, nr 167, poz. 1399.

Through the progressive changes in the way of spending free time and a new healthy lifestyle, the spa & wellness sector offers become more and more popular. These offers are provided both by pre-existing entities of a strict spa character as well as by the newly created, private, specialized centres with high standards of service, which are located in especially popular resorts (e.g. Krynica, Szczawnica, Piwniczna). More and more centres, specializing in health stays, are located in tourist areas which do not have the spa status.

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century had brought a number of specific changes to the use of groundwater for recreational and medicinal purposes. The trips to thermal baths to Slovakia and Hungary which are very popular with Polish tourists have forced investments in this field in the Polish Carpathians. Until then, the thermal water has been used on a relatively small scale, only in the key centres of spa treatment (Ustroń, Rabka Zdrój, Iwonicz-Zdrój). Today, 4 geothermal centres located close to each other: Zakopane, Szaflary, Bukowina Tatrzańska and Białka Tatrzańska, operate in the Polish Carpathians.<sup>16</sup> They supplement the ski offer, provided by these and neighbouring villages. These places also provide services of disease prevention and recuperation. The development of this type of offer is also reflected in the changes in the landscape and village functions, which is particularly noticeable in Białka Tatrzańska.<sup>17</sup> More and more centres arise that use heated water (including geothermal energy).

Development of water recreation facilities on the basis of thermal waters seems to be one of the possible directions for tourism development in the Carpathians. Nowadays there are a lot of projects which deal with the construction of new water recreation complexes in many parts of the Carpathians, including Orawa and the Beskid Sądecki.

### 3.3. Ski tourism

Carpathians are the best developed skiing region in Poland. The tradition of skiing in the Carpathians dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>16</sup> E. Hałaj, B. Kępińska, 2013, *Stan i perspektywy rozwoju geotermalnej balneoterapii i rekreacji w Polsce*, in: *Rekreacyjne wykorzystanie wód geotermalnych w krajach Grupy Wyszehradzkiej*, M. Dej, M. Huculak, W. Jarczewski (eds.), Instytut Rozwoju Miast, Kraków, p. 80.

<sup>17</sup> M. Heldak, J. Szczepański, 2011, *Wpływ rozwoju turystyki na transformację krajobrazu wsi Białka Tatrzańska*, *Infrastruktura i Ekologia Terenów Wiejskich*, 1/2011, 151–161.



in the Tatra Mountains (Zakopane). An important stage in the development of skiing in the Carpathians took place in the 1970s and 1980s, when more than 240 facilities for downhill skiing were founded in the area. The main ski regions were then Tatra Mountains and Podhale, the Beskid Śląski (mainly Szczyrk) and the Beskid Żywiecki (Korbielów). Since the early 1990s, ski resorts in the Carpathians have undergone significant transformations which include the modernization and construction of new, high-quality ski lifts and cableways, introduction of the ski infrastructure in towns without the ski traditions, creation of new ski resorts based on partnerships and local initiatives, increase in the role of artificial snow and the accompanying development of ski tourism.

More than 500 ski lifts and 560 ski runs with a total length of 320 km are currently located in the Polish Carpathians. The spatial distribution of the major ski stations has not changed significantly, compared to the 1980s and earlier, but the significant increase in the number of places with single lifts (up to 120 localities) can be increased. The most important centres are located in the regions with the most favourable natural conditions for skiing, e.g. in the Tatras and Podhale (Zakopane, Białka Tatrzańska) and in the Beskid Śląski (Wisła, Szczyrk); the role of the ski centres in the Beskid Sądecki (Krynica) has also increased.<sup>18</sup> Ski resorts in the Carpathians are characterized by a different functional profile. The most important centres, such as Zakopane, Krynica, Szczyrk and Wisła are multifunctional and ski tourism is part of the local tourist economy. An example of centers specialized in skiing are Białka Tatrzańska and Bukowina Tatrzańska. The infrastructure for cross-country skiing has also been developed in the Carpathians. It consists of 4 trails with a total length of 150 km. Objects of this type are located in 20 towns and the best cross-country trails are located in Istebna in the Beskid Śląski and Wetlina in the Bieszczady Mountains.

Domestic visitors are essential for the development of ski tourism in the Polish Carpathians. The share of foreign tourists is marginal and associated mainly with the arrival of visitors from Eastern Europe during the Christmas holidays at the beginning of January. The study by K. Krzeziwo<sup>19</sup> shows that the primary factors for choosing ski resorts in the Carpathians are: the distance between a ski resort and the place of residence, quality of ski infrastructure

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<sup>18</sup> K. Krzeziwo, 2013, *Rozwój i funkcjonowanie stacji narciarskich w Karpatach Polskich*, mps. pr. doktorskiej, IGiGP UJ, Kraków.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

and word of mouth recommendations. It should be emphasized that the Polish ski centres have to compete with the ski resorts in the neighbouring Slovakia, as well as centres in the Alps, for domestic customers. All this raises the need to strive for a high standard of service, similar to world standards, and the development of a comprehensive tourist package. The combination of skiing with water recreational (water parks: Bukowina, Białka Tatrzańska, Istebna) and spa & wellness offers can be observed in the region at the moment.

The development of skiing in the Carpathians faces a number of barriers of organizational and legal nature. The lack of the so-called Mountain Act, which would regulate the relations between landowners and outline rules for the use of land on the slopes in the winter is very visible. Significant constraints are related to the issue of environmental protection, such as the location of the centres in the direct vicinity of protected areas and the restrictions on investments (the ability to block projects and extending procedures in time by environmental organizations). The other important problems are the limitations associated with the communicational accessibility.

The share of ski tourism in the structure of tourism in the Carpathians will increase and this is closely connected with the increasing popularity of downhill skiing with Poles. The current trends in tourist demand indicate that a strong correlation between water recreation and skiing can be expected.

### **3.4. Suburban recreation and second homes**

Due to their natural potential, the Carpathians area is a desirable resort area, especially for the residents of nearby urban agglomerations, such as Kraków, Tarnów and Rzeszów. There is a growing area of suburban recreation, especially the settlement of second homes.

The rapid growth in second homes in the Carpathians is primarily due to the two factors: the natural environment and the immediate proximity to large urban agglomerations. This has found reflection in the location of second homes, especially setup by the inhabitants of the Upper Silesian conurbation and cities such as Kraków, Tarnów and Rzeszów. The origins of the phenomenon of second homes date back to the time before World War II. On a large scale this phenomenon began to develop only in the late 1960s and 1970s. The first second homes were formed mainly on the basis of family ties. Some objects in the late 1980s and 1990s were built

in specially designated, recreational zones. These were small buildings, in many cases unheated, used mainly for recreational purposes, during the summer season. These are particularly noticeable in the Beskid Śląski and Żywiecki, the Beskid Średni or the Pogórze area, found directly on the back of each agglomeration.

In the 1990s construction of buildings in outdoor seating areas and gardens became popular. This practice was held without legal and planning arrangements. There were brick buildings for recreational purposes, often multi-stored buildings, with a large usable area.<sup>20</sup>

Today, significant changes are observed in both the location, and use of second homes. Many of the objects created in the 1970s and 1980s, after expansion and modernization, took over the function of main homes for their owners, who were retired and passed their houses in the cities to children and grandchildren. Since the 1990s, newly built houses were created as buildings, often of residential character. They may at any time be used as a principal residence. The localization trend has also changed. Today, these objects are built in the middle of villages, not standing out from the rest, without “summer” features, which was typical for the previous period. More and more often the great mansions of the highest standard are constructed in the areas characterized by high-class natural, including view values. Apartment complexes, located in the major mountain resorts, are also becoming very popular.

Nowadays, about 15-20 thousand individual recreational homes are located in the Polish Carpathians. There is a new trend to build second homes by the inhabitants of the Carpathian medium-sized towns, such as Nowy Sącz and Nowy Targ. The goal of informal and commercial hospitality is a new form of use for second homes.<sup>21</sup>

### **3.5. Cultural tourism**

Rural tourism and agritourism are closely linked to cultural tourism, taking into account the cultural heritage of rural areas. So far, the cultural tourism offer has been based mainly on the passive, traditional forms of exposure: regional chambers, museums, open-air museums. The changes in the travelling model

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<sup>20</sup> R. Faracik, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>21</sup> M. Mika, *op. cit.*, pp. 68, 73.

and leisure activities that have influenced the transformation in the agritourism offer, in the case of cultural tourism offer a number of opportunities. These changes are related to the innovative presentation of local traditions and cultural heritage. The basis for this type of presentation is the direction of “out” of the room - outside the museum to the public. This means a radical change in the pattern of cultural tourism - cultural tourism now goes from the classical model of cognitive tourism model to active learning which is delivered in conjunction with entertainment and recreation. The transformation of the model of cultural tourism has resulted in the “kinaesthetic”, active model of presentation and promotion of the Carpathians’ cultural heritage by:

- creation of new and better adaptation of existing cultural facilities (e.g. the outdoor archaeological museum “Carpathian Troy” [“Karpacka Troja”], the regional museum “Galician Town” [“Miasteczko Galicyjskie”]);
- investments in open-air museums, engaging in learning process not only the vision, but also other senses, such as hearing, touching, smell. These projects are implemented through the reproduction of traditional bread baking process, preparing herbs, crafts and ceramics workshops, etc.;
- organizing regular, annual cultural and folklore events (e.g. the International Festival of Folklore in Zakopane, Beskid Culture Week (Istebna, Maków Podhalański, Wisła, Szczyrk), Parada Gazdowska i Gońba Kumoterska in Biały Dunajec, Sabałowe Bajania in Bukowina Tatrzańska, Tatrzańskie Wici in Zakopane, the Carpathian Feast in Piwniczna;
- creation of cultural routes, which, in addition to enhancing the general fitness levels, aims to provide an innovative and interactive learning opportunity to get better familiar with the regional cultural heritage. More than 30 cultural routes, including the most famous Wooden Architecture Route [Szlak Architektury Drewnianej], Amber Trail Greenways [Bursztynowy Szlak Greenways], Crafts Trail [Szlak Rzemiosła], Pottery Road [Szlak Garncarski], Carpatho-Galician Oil Trail [Karpacko-Galicyjski Szlak Naftowy], Malopolska Romanesque [Małopolska Romańska], Malopolska Wine Route [Małopolski Szlak Winny], Chassidic Trail [Szlak Chasydzki], Carpathian Robbers Trail [Szlak Zbójników Karpackich], were set up in Malopolska part of the Carpathians alone.

It should be noted that these routes are designed not only for the promotion and maintenance but also in order to carry an important educational function, taking into account the customer needs, including the “kinaesthetic” active model of learning in movement and *through* movement. The way to arouse interest in cultural heritage is to organize urban games which are implemented in the full commitment of the organizers and the audience.

Such initiatives on a regional and local level are desirable for raising consumers’ interest in preserved heritage, which is extremely rich in the traditions of the Carpathians’ rural areas.

## **Conclusion**

The last 20 years have had a significant impact on many spheres of socio-economic life of the Polish Carpathians. The actors of the tourism sector which had arisen during the socialism and got adapted to the rules of the market economy, had made a number of quantitative and qualitative changes, including ownerships. The lack of these changes had usually led to the collapse or withdrawal from the market.

The approach to the role of tourism in the local economy had significantly changed. Tourism as a way of development is seen not only through the developed tourist resorts with long traditions, but also through the areas that have developed agriculturally. Tourism activities, especially in rural areas of the Carpathians, are one of the important issues of the regional policy.

Along with urbanization, an increase in the social role of natural areas, including national parks, has been observed. Natural space has a paramount importance for recreation, so increasing pressure from tourism can be expected. This emphasizes the need for better management of space in protected areas.

The Carpathians cease to be a traditional long-term tourism area. The significance of short stays and weekend stays increases. This requires more attention to different forms of tourism in order to increase the competitiveness of the region. Rural areas should seek to link their agritourism offer with cultural tourism or recreational specialization.

Spas face the problem of adapting its offer to the modern market requirements - including modifying therapeutic profiles, as well as introducing other functions to the spas. As the Carpathian mountains remain under a strong influ-

ence of the nearby city agglomerations, the development of the tourist sector is bound to follow. Amusement parks in Andrychów or Zator located on the edge of the Carpathians represent a good example. Business tourism may also develop, especially in the conference sector.

Due to its natural and landscape attractiveness, the Carpathians are becoming a place of living for the residents of nearby urban areas. This especially applies to the areas in the western part of the Carpathians, located relatively close to the Silesian agglomeration or Kraków. This, in turn, can lead to conflicts between different groups of users.

Further development of tourism in the Carpathians should refer to the changes in the globalizing European market, especially in the sphere of tourism demand and new technologies. The main aim of policy development in this area will be to keep the important position in the structure of domestic tourism, because it will determine the existence or the collapse of the tourism function of the Carpathians.

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## PRZEKSZTAŁCENIA MODELU TURYSTYKI W KARPATACH POLSKICH. DOŚWIADCZENIA OSTATNICH DWÓCH DEKAD

### Streszczenie

Karpaty należą do głównych regionów turystycznych Polski, czemu sprzyjają szczególnie walory turystyczne oraz długie tradycje rozwoju turystyki. Okres socjalizmu w regionie tym, podobnie jak i w całym kraju, zaznaczył się wyraźną dominacją nurtu socjalnego w zasadzie we wszystkich aspektach rozwoju turystyki. Dominował głównie wypoczynek i turystyka zorganizowana i dofinansowana ze środków państwowych i społecznych. Większość bazy noclegowej stanowiły zakładowe i branżowe ośrodki wypoczynkowe, zlokalizowane najczęściej w najatrakcyjniejszych miejscowościach turystycznych. Jest to także okres intensywnego rozwoju prywatnej inicjatywy, zwłaszcza w zakresie wynajmu kwater. Charakterystyczne były pobyty lecznicze w uzdrowiskach.

Transformacja społeczno-gospodarcza związana ze zmianami politycznymi po 1989 r. zmieniła znacząco obraz turystyki, która współcześnie przyjmuje model charakterystyczny dla rozwiniętych krajów Europy Zachodniej. System opiera się w dużej mierze na prywatnej własności zarówno bazy noclegowej, jak i towarzyszącej. Szczególnie intensywny jest rozwój infrastruktury narciarskiej. Oferta sąsiedniej Słowacji spowodowała rozwój kąpielisk termalnych w oparciu o miejscowe zasoby wód cieplicowych. Widoczny jest także intensywny rozwój oferty agroturystycznej. Zgodnie z obserwowanymi na świecie trendami wzrasta rola turystyki poznawczej, opartej na walorach kulturowych (nowe atrakcje, szlaki kulturowe itp.). Zmianom ulegają także uzdrowiska (postępująca prywatyzacja), co wiąże się z ze wzrostem znaczenia usług typu *spa* i *wellness*. Rozwija się także wypoczynek podmiejski (weekendowy i świąteczny), czemu sprzyja bezpośrednie sąsiedztwo dużych aglomeracji miejskich (GOP, Kraków, Tarnów, Rzeszów). Przekłada się to na wzrastającą liczbę drugich domów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** góry, Karpaty, turystyka, transformacja