



THE ROLE OF TOURISM IN MULTIFUNCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAIN RURAL AREAS

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Abstract

The paper aims at demonstrating the importance of tourism meant as an activity and economic activity in the multifunctional development of mountain rural areas. Multifunctional development of mountain rural areas appears as a composition of other, nonfarm functions, connected with agriculture and its environment. Taking over nonfarm functions by rural areas, including tourist function, enables decreasing agrarian unemployment and, furthermore, the emigration of local population. Approximating living standards of rural communities and city dwellers is connected with modernizing and development of technical-economic and social infrastructure, which has a stimulating impact on the development of off-farm activities in rural areas, which in turn positively affects economic development and increases the number of new jobs. Multifunctionality of mountain rural areas is therefore necessary not only from the economic perspective but also from the social point of view.

Keywords: rural areas, multifunctional development, tourism, mountain areas

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture plays a major role in the development of mountain rural areas. Its impact on these terrains has a positive social (and also cultural), economic and ecological dimensions. The existence of agriculture in the mountains

favours preservation of typical cultural values, which are not encountered in the lowlands. These values are the source of cultural goods which need protection, therefore supporting agriculture even at this moment should be regarded in a much different way than solely as an agrarian issue. The culture of traditional mountaineers manifests itself both in a non-material way (specific holidays and celebrations) and material way, such as e.g. regional food products, characteristic architectural forms, etc.

In the economic dimension agriculture constitutes a source of income for farmer population, although more and more often it does not provide the income adequate for the farmer families functioning in a changing reality, which incurs increasingly higher outlays, if only because of the education costs of next generations. Considering the function of providing income, agriculture in mountain areas is inadequate to meet the requirements of market economy because of increased costs of real goods production and services. Therefore, in the longer perspective it will be unable to retain the next generations of farmers to sustain the economic development of these areas. Agriculture may be regarded in terms of management and sharing the area owing to the fact that farming activities are conducted there and the necessary infrastructure (also transport) functions on the spot may be used also for off-farm activities. The close to nature dimension of agriculture in mountain areas is the most frequently noticed and emphasized. The literature of the subject indicates that agriculture is a key element determining the quality of rural area and natural environment (Biernat-Jarka 2005). Therefore, a question of both the nature protection and the landscape maintenance arises, together with the problem of limiting the possible dangers connected with the forces of nature. For instance, it has been suggested that farmers should keep grasslands on the slopes with 12 degree inclination (20%), whereas the owner of the land where anti-erosion or land reclamation devices are kept is under obligation to take care about their technical efficiency (Kodeks... 2004). The issues addressed above directly contribute to growing tourist attractiveness of the area.

All the positive impacts of agriculture on the mountain environment are strongly emphasized and used in the argumentation for the appointed directions of the policy supporting the development of agriculture in the mountain areas. However, it should be mentioned that agriculture in these areas also poses a number of hazards owing to improper management of the natural resources, wrong spatial planning or the use of inappropriate methods of production (Kostuch 1997).

Irrespective of the perspective from which the agriculture in mountain areas is regarded, it must be supported. In this context it should be emphasized that there are feedback links between tourism and agriculture. On the one hand, agriculture creates conditions (or serves to maintain them) for tourism development and providing services for tourists (cultural, economic, natural and landscape conditions, such as e.g. chessboard fields). On the other hand, tourism

provides extra incomes (as a form of nonfarm economic activity) and in this way makes possible increasing household incomes and motivating next generations of young people to stay in the country and take over the farms.

The paper aims to demonstrate the importance of tourism regarded as an activity and economic activity in the multifunctional development of mountain rural areas. The paper has a theoretical character and is a summary of the research carried out by the authors.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAIN RURAL AREAS – MULTIDIMENSIONALITY OF TOURISM IMPACT

Family farms operating in mountain areas are characterised by low incomes, which necessitates seeking additional sources of income outside agriculture. It has been estimated that between 40 and 60% of farms in the European Union countries derive incomes from work outside agriculture while the proportion of farms offering tourist services is on the level of ca. 8% (Ciodyk 2000). Rural tourism in Europe has a long tradition, but its rapid development was observed in the 80-ties and 90-ties of the pervious century. As stated in the studies of Frenkl (1997) and Zegar (2000), a slight increase in the number of people working in agriculture was noticed in Poland in the first half of the 90-ties of the 20th century. It was caused in the first place by job losses outside this sector of economy and considerably less possibilities of the workforce outflow from agricultural holdings. However, marketization of economy progressing in the subsequent years caused that the number of people employed outside private agriculture became to grow again. Currently, some of agricultural holdings possess free resources of labour force, land and capital, which makes possible to change the profile of their activities in the area of agricultural raw materials production towards e.g. special plants cultivation (e.g. herbal plants, fibrous plants, tobacco or plants for processing for energy purposes), or other off-farm activities, such as trade, rural tourism (including agritourism), catering industry and hotel services, agricultural product processing, handicraft and souvenir manufacturing (e.g. pottery, sculpturing or manufacturing household items of wicker or wood, folk painting, embroidery, etc.), construction, transport services, municipal services, landscaping (forest plantings, biotope maintenance) and other (Sznajder and Przezbórska 2006).

Increased entrepreneurship observed currently in rural areas is connected with greater variety of undertaken projects, which may be grouped in the following way (Żmija 1999):

1. Agricultural marketable commodity production – a typical agricultural activities, e.g. keeping of cattle, pigs, alternative agricultural enterprises – production of: rapeseed, asparagus, sweet corn, mushrooms, medicinal herbs and spices, keeping of goats, rabbits or beekeeping, etc.
2. Off-farm activities directly connected with agriculture:
 - a) provision of agricultural inputs,
 - b) production services,
 - c) purchases, storage, sorting and packing, transport, wholesale and retail of agricultural products,
 - d) agricultural product processing (mills, feed mills, bakeries, slaughterhouses, butcheries, dairies, fruit processing plants, etc.).
3. Off-farm activities not directly connected with agriculture:
 - a) agritourism,
 - b) forest management,
 - c) landscaping and environment protection,
 - d) horseback riding and hippotherapy,
 - e) all other activities for rural dwellers not connected with agriculture,
 - f) regional museums, monuments, recreational areas.

So, tourism is one of the forms of off-farm entrepreneurship, which may be undertaken and realized in mountain rural areas, in this way contributing to the diversification of local economy, enabling a multifunctional development of these areas. This kind of nonfarm activity is particularly preferred for mountain areas considering additional financial support for agricultural activity.

Considering the economy diversification in a given area, it is possible to conduct other kind of activity, more or less connected with agriculture, e.g. processing of agricultural products. This kind of activity would undoubtedly reduce the costs incurred by marketing products by private farms. It would be another kind of activity requiring the State support, therefore the costs of starting this activity and its conducting would prove higher than the costs incurred by the enterprises situated on the lowlands (e.g. due to higher costs of construction or market turnover). Although in this way some problems which mountain agriculture faces would be transferred to the economic subjects conducting the off-farm activity, yet they would be solved. The remaining problems would pose a barrier to mountain areas development.

Tourism is particularly emphasized in terms of multifunctional rural development. In comparison with other areas of multifunctional rural development, such as trade and other services or processing, tourism has better chances of success because it is not focused on the local market characterized by a limited purchasing power of rural dwellers. Rural tourism is a product of regional – supralocal importance – the tourist product offered in rural areas is consumed by city dwellers. Especially the tourist product from mountain rural areas has an

additional competitive advantage on the tourist market, because it is specific not only in relation to cities, but also in comparison with other rural areas in Poland (the lowlands).

Tourism is the activity, where the costs of product delivery to the market do not play a major role in the operational whole costs (however, one should remember the promotion costs). In this case the product purchaser – the consumer – comes in person to the place where the tourist goods offered for sale (material and non-material) are produced. Due to both natural and cultural values, unique in the country offered by the mountain areas and local communities, but also because of possible associating the specific character of the country with tourism, the tourism becomes a particularly attractive alternative, not only in relation to agricultural activity, but also to other off-farm sources to supply farmers' incomes.

Both in the literature of the subject and in the documents stating the strategic framework of the development (on various levels) and its directions, or in the legal regulations concerning rural development, particularly in the mountain areas (as the less favoured areas), the necessity of developing tourism has been very strongly emphasized. The main premise for such approach to tourism in mountain (but not only) rural areas is the problem of inadequacy of financial means in the families engaged in agricultural activity. In general and most simplified terms, the question boils down to giving the farms a possibility to find additional sources of income, so that they do not cease their agricultural activities, which would have unfavourable (ecological, economical and social) results for these areas (Chudy-Hyski 2009).

Expectations connected with rural tourism development focus not only on the increase in the number of various jobs and reducing the unemployment. They also apply to supporting rural areas while maintaining their specific character but also extensive development of the local economy and upgrading living standards of all social groups (Krupińska 2003).

Tourism is usually regarded in two basic aspects, i.e. socio-cultural and economic. In terms of the first, tourism is considered (Przeclawski 1986) as specific way to realize various human activities. However, the specificity of tourism involves: the willingness to be in a different natural, cultural or social environment, change of everyday life, personal contacts with nature, culture of people. Economic sciences emphasize such issues as: movement, temporality of the place of residence, aims of tourist trips; the sphere of services and economic effects caused by this phenomenon are also included (Gołembski 2006).

Rural tourism is the kind of tourism connected with rural areas. In the simplest terms, often used but also contested in the subject literature, rural tourism is the kind (are the kinds) of tourism realized in the country. This approach to rural tourism is reflected in the definition by Wiatrak (2000), who indicates it as the entire tourist economy in rural areas, i.e. connected with rural recreational

space. It is the broadest, but the least precise approach to rural tourism. Other, more descriptive definitions attempt at characterizing some kind of specificity differentiating this kind of tourism from the others.

RURAL TOURISM AS A STIMULATOR OF THE AREA DEVELOPMENT

Tourism, as a socio-economic phenomenon impacting a given area, is connected with many external effects, which positively or negatively influence economic development of the area. The power and direction of this impact depend on the intensity of tourist traffic (in relation to absorbability of tourist region) and the kind of tourist activity. Therefore, tourism performs some defined functions, regarded as the outcomes of its development in relation to many spheres of life: economic, social, ecological, spatial, psychological and cultural (Przeclawski 1986, Krawczyk 2007).

Generally, external effects generated by rural tourism may be divided into economic, social or those concerning the natural or cultural environment and additionally, due to the direction of impact, into those which have the nature of benefits or are regarded as costs (dysfunctions) (Majewski and Lane 2003). The most important economic benefits include the following aspects: a) providing funds for the local economy, therefore reinforcing financial condition of agriculture; b) creating new off-farm jobs, not only in tourism itself, but also in services, provided for the incoming tourists; c) increasing the State incomes, especially in view of tourist export; d) assistance in diversification of rural economy, which makes it more stable and resistant to negative trends in any of the economic activities pursued in a given area; e) providing opportunities for local enterprises development, which come into being owing to tourism, e.g. by providing tourist services; f) attracting small and medium-sized businesses from other regions, which contributes to an increase in incomes of the local government; g) favouring innovative attitudes, creativity and entrepreneurship through good example and demonstrating that self-employment is an efficient way to make a living; h) influence on the maintenance of local craftsmanship, trade and services which owing to tourism gain a wide market; i) improvement of the area image as the area with efficient economy characterized by local initiative and entrepreneurship.

Economic costs involved in tourism development in a given area are connected particularly with the following issues: a) development of tourism and the associated activities which require additional infrastructure and new terrains for public service causing a greater burden on the communal budget; b) high marketing costs born by the local authorities because of the imposed obligation of the area promotion; c) increased trade risk of the economic subjects due to greater

competition on the local market; d) mainly seasonal or part time employment because of accumulation of employees' leaves during summer or winter vacations; e) high sensitivity of tourism to ambient factors, which greatly remain out of local community's control – it increases the risk for their activity and makes difficult its management; f) increased maintenance costs borne by the permanent residents due to higher prices of property, commodities and services in tourist localities; g) destabilization of local economy and local business failure in the case of excessive intensity of tourist traffic.

Social benefits generated from rural tourism development comprise basically the following issues: a) development of local general and specialistic infrastructure for tourists which also serves the permanent residents; b) a sense of pride and satisfaction from the place of residence due to improved area image; c) lower inclination for emigration because of better opportunities to get additional sources of income supporting farming activity; d) favouring cultural exchange and contacts, penetration of new ideas contributing to better entrepreneurship of local dwellers; e) community spirit stimulating common endeavours and starting local initiatives; f) better conditions for preserving local culture and increased awareness of its importance.

Negative external social effects (costs), resulting from rural tourism development concern among others the following problems: a) appearance of conflicts due to different lifestyles of tourists and local people; b) trivialization of culture, vanishing of traditional values and lifestyles, appearance of artificial manifestations of culture; c) increase in crime and other pathological phenomena; d) overpopulation or crowding and other inconveniences connected with excessive intensity of tourist traffic; e) sharing important local resources with tourists; f) institutional, social and individual competition and envy; g) uneven shares of the inhabitants in the benefits from the development.

The most important benefits for the environment resulting from rural tourism (treated as an alternative towards mass tourism) comprise the following: enforcing pro-ecological behaviours in all spheres, encouraging landscape protection, protection and restoration of relics and other forms of cultural heritage.

Tourist traffic, especially too intensive, in rural areas involves costs to the environment mainly in the areas such as degradation of the natural and cultural environment because of inappropriate investments, wrong functioning of objects and excessive number of tourists, their behaviour, but also greater pollution of the natural environment by solid and liquid municipal waste, petrol fumes, noise, increased water consumption, etc.

Nonfarm economic activity in the shape of tourism compliant with the idea of sustainable development fits into multifunctional development of mountain rural areas. Sustainable tourism regards tourism in the target areas as a three-sided dependence between the areas of tourist reception and their natural environment together with local dwellers and holidaymakers and tourist industry. In

fact, these are three contradictory interests (however, they may harmonise and contribute to common success). Sustainable tourism aims to reconcile tensions in the relationships among three partners and minimize the harm to the natural environment and culture, as well as to gain optimal satisfaction of the visitors and maximize a long-term socio-economic development in a given area. This kind of tourism is therefore a way to gain the balance between the potential tourism development and the necessity for the environment protection (Majewski and Lane 2003).

The role which tourism plays in the socio-economic development of the area (Hyski & Chudy-Hyski, 2018) depends on the interaction of three factors, i.e. the character of the environment, local policy and decisions made by the entrepreneurs in the tourism branch (Telfer 2008). Therefore, development of tourism in mountain rural areas should take into account the phenomena which influence the effects generated by rural tourism and the fact whether it will fulfill its role in supplementing farmer incomes, in this way supporting multifunctional development of mountain rural areas. These problems comprise particularly (Sharpley 2008):

- a) rusticity – which is the basis of rural tourism (tourists seek the place offering a temporary change of climate from city to rural); so, the rural character of the area should be strengthened, because it is a condition of the tourist traffic intensification);
- b) development including local needs and possibilities – it is important to subject economic goals of tourism to the overall goal, i.e. development of mountain rural areas through creating jobs, increase in the inhabitants' incomes, attracting investors, extension of service infrastructure, stimulating economic cooperation among local subjects, etc.;
- c) including tourism in the local development strategy – rural tourism should not be marginalised by the authorities at various levels; the framework of its development should be explicitly outlined to avoid incongruities with other area functions;
- d) the balance between tourism and other functions of mountain rural areas – the interests of tourist entrepreneurs, local dwellers and the environment must be accommodated;
- e) safety of the natural and cultural environment;
- f) adjustment of the forms of tourism to local conditions;
- g) development of enterprises.

From the point of view of mountain rural areas multifunctional development, the most important is the economic function of tourism. It is the outcome of the consumptive character of tourism, influencing various spheres of management. Tourist consumption applies not only to tourist but also to non-tourist goods, which results from the fact that the household consumption realized at the

permanent place of a tourist residence is moved to a target place. Each effect of production process (generated as a result of goods manufacturing or service providing) and purchased by a tourist is referred to as the tourist product. Satisfying diverse needs of tourists falls over the whole period of their travel (round trip), causing a multitude of economic (also social and environmental) consequences, however their highest accumulation occurs at the travel destination, i.e. at the tourist reception point (Dziedzic 1998).

Multifunctional development of mountain rural areas provides additional, beside agriculture, sources of income due to realization of new functions in a given area and contributes to the improvement of living standards and work conditions for the local communities. In this way it supports agriculture, providing the opportunities for its further positive impact in the economic, ecological and social sphere. Therefore, the multifunctional development is the condition and not merely an alternative for mountain rural areas development.

CONCLUSION

Specificity of mountain rural areas consists in a particular combination of the natural and economic conditions characterizing those areas. Both types of conditioning differ from the situation on the lowlands. A considerable diversification of the land forms and elevation above the sea level impact other elements of the natural environment, such as the climate, soils or water resources. Character of the natural environment influences the socio-economic human activities. The influence manifests itself as decreasing range and less diverse forms of economic activity progressing with the land elevation above the sea level. The same is observed for the population density. However, an opposite dependence is also noted – economic activity is associated with both positive (proper utilisation of the natural resources) and negative (environmental degradation) effects in the mountain natural environment.

Mountain areas in Poland have special natural economic and cultural conditionings. Each poses both limitations and chances for the area development. Environmental conditionings involve increased management costs, mainly in agriculture but also in construction or transport. Features which are tourist attractions are also connected with them, enabling through tourism development, compensation of at least some of the limited opportunities for generating incomes by local dwellers. However, it should be mentioned that tourism cannot be treated as “a golden mean” for all problems of mountain areas, because not all parts possess goods enough to make them tourist attraction. Economic and cultural conditionings result from the historical socio-economic development, particularly from: the level of infrastructure (tourist, recreational, sport), agrarian structure, settlement network and demographic relationships.

Multifunctional development of these areas looks like a skillful including into the rural space of still new nonfarm functions, or connected with agriculture and its environment. The main objective of multifunctional rural development is to improve living standards and working conditions for the local population. Increased diversity of jobs leads to increased incomes of rural dwellers and therefore better attractiveness of the country as a place of residence and work. Taking over off-farm functions, e.g. tourism, by rural areas makes possible diminishing the agrarian unemployment and therefore emigration of the local population. Approximating living standards of rural communities to city dwellers is connected with the modernization and extension of the technical and socio-economic infrastructure, which stimulates the development of nonfarm activities in rural areas, which in turn impacts economic development and increases the number of new jobs. Multifunctionality of mountain rural areas is therefore a necessity not only from the economic, but also from the social point of view.

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