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## The impact of the perception of leisure on recreational and tourism spaces in an urban area

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## THE IMPACT OF THE PERCEPTION OF LEISURE ON RECREATIONAL AND TOURISM SPACES IN AN URBAN AREA

**Abstract:** The purpose of the present paper is to attempt to identify relations between the changing perception of leisure and the creation of tourism and recreational spaces in urban areas. The authors focus in particular on changes associated with the so-called 'third wave' (TOFFLER 2001), time compression (NIEZGODA 2017), and departure from synchronization. These considerations are illustrated by an analysis of the recreational activity of Szczecin residents and of tourists, and attempt identifying the relations between recreational space and tourism space. With the constant compression of leisure time, tourism activities become more similar to the leisure activities of residents, which means both types occur in the same environment. Urban recreational and tourism spaces overlap in a way that makes it impossible to separate them, but still allows the distinction of certain sub-spaces where either tourism or recreational behavior prevails.

**Keywords:** leisure, tourism space, recreational space.

### 1. BACKGROUND

The existence of leisure time is considered a prerequisite for participation in recreation and tourism. However, the impact of leisure time on participation can be analyzed more broadly. It is associated with the changes occurring in time organisation and divisions, a departure from synchronization (i.e. blurring of differences between work and leisure time – TOFFLER 2001), and time compression (CZAJA 2011, GOLEMBSKI, NIEZGODA 2012, NIEZGODA 2017). On the other hand, participation in recreation is increasingly common and linked to the emergence of new recreational activities and their associated spaces as well. Diverse leisure opportunities, and the broad spectrum of services offered, mean that recreational and tourism spaces increasingly overlap.

Due to these processes, the relation between leisure time and recreational activity should be analyzed more broadly, instead of simply viewing leisure time as a traditional prerequisite for participation in recreation. The use of time and its value for individuals parti-

cipating in various forms of tourism and recreation, contributes to dynamic changes in tourism and recreational spaces, and to their growing common aspects.

The purpose of the article is to attempt to identify relations between the changing perception of leisure and the creation of tourism and recreational spaces in urban areas. The authors focus in particular on changes associated with the so-called 'third wave' (TOFFLER 2001), time compression and departure from synchronization. The paper proposes a thesis that processes associated with common tourism and recreational spaces may result from widespread changes in the role and perception of leisure in modern society. Selected theoretical aspects of the paper have been illustrated by the results of a pilot study concerning the recreational behavior of the inhabitants of Szczecin and tourists visiting the city. This study was conducted as a part of a project titled '*Miasto jako obszar aktywności turystycznej i rekreacyjnej mieszkańców, na przykładzie Szczecina*' [The city as a space

for the recreational activities of its residents and for tourists: as exemplified by Szczecin], undertaken between 2012 and 2017 by researchers from the Tourism and Health Resort Economics Workshop at the Department of Tourism Management, Faculty of Management and Service Economics, University of Szczecin. In the study, a diagnostic survey was undertaken in a randomly selected sample of 390 Szczecin residents (the population of Szczecin at the time was 408,172) and 248 visitors to Szczecin (between June and September 2015).

## 2. LEISURE – NATURE AND DEFINITION

The perception of time and ways of measuring and classifying it, including the division into work and leisure (also termed 'free time'), have been affected by civilizational changes, including in particular the development of a capitalist economy. Views on leisure have changed: Veblen considered it to be an attribute of the so-called 'leisure class', while puritan ethics viewed 'wasting time' as a transgression (WHITROW 2004, p. 239). The capitalist system of work forced a clear separation of work and leisure; while 19<sup>th</sup>-century social processes led to the emergence of legally guaranteed free time. Therefore, certain traditional behaviors and rituals associated with leisure are deep-rooted in the social consciousness of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (BOMBOL 2008, p. 7).

Leisure time is commonly defined in opposition to working time – as a domain of pleasure, voluntary activity, and freedom. This manner of defining leisure time means that a list of activities undertaken cannot be developed (MYŚLIWSKA 2011, p. 136). As stated by S. CZAJA (2011, p. 229), relations between work and leisure can be defined in a variety of ways. Some researchers consider preparation for work to be the primary function of leisure. In another approach, leisure is viewed as a reward for the alienating effect of work. A third approach places leisure in the context of transforming work into 'non-work'.

The approaches to leisure listed above mean that only a combination of all these dimensions produces definition: "leisure time is, therefore, time that a definition. M. BOMBOL (2005, p. 15) proposed the following an individual uses to their own satisfaction through free choice, filled with activities resulting from relatively free internal or external circumstances. It is thus free from any restriction." However, in the modern world, a distinction between entirely free activities and forced ones is difficult. Relations between freedom to choose activities and the will to undertake them become complicated.

## 3. LEISURE TIME AS A PREREQUISITE FOR RECREATION

Activity that is freely undertaken by a person in their free time is commonly termed 'recreation'. Changes in the perception and use of leisure time (not only from an individual, but also from social and economic points of view) have triggered discussions on the relations (and definitions) between leisure time and recreation, often in association with tourism and sport, see e.g. R. KRAUS (1971), J.A. PETERSON and W.D. MARTIN (1985), A.J. VEAL (1992), L. MEERAS (2010), A.R. HURD & D.M. ANDERSON (2011), D.R. AUSTIN & Y. LEE (2013), A. GULAM (2016). Similar debates on the scope of terms such as leisure, recreation, and tourism are also present in Polish literature. Still, the most commonly cited definition is the one by Wolańska, stating that "recreation comprises various activities that are undertaken in one's free time, voluntarily, for pleasure, for the development of one's personality, or to restore and increase one's psychological and physical capacity" (Wolańska 1997 cit. from MEYER, ed. 2015, p. 15). A similar definition has been proposed by A. Kowalczyk, in which recreation includes "any activity undertaken voluntarily with a view to restoring one's physical and psychological capacity, specifically including participation in culture, games, and sports, which takes place in time that is free from school, work, or household activities" (KOWALCZYK 2000). The definition by S. Tanaś is concise, but contains the same main attributes, stating that recreation is "any form of regeneration of human capacities by spending one's free time in an active or passive manner" (TANAŚ 2008). A comprehensive definition of recreation, comprising its key aspects, has been formulated by A. Dąbrowski: "all socially acceptable forms of human activity taking place in one's free time; undertaken voluntarily, freely, and for pleasure; which serve to restore and enhance one's capacities, enable playful, active, and diverse self-realization; and are performed individually or in groups, or occur as a global process" (DĄBROWSKI, ed. 2006).

The forms of activity selected are affected by a number of factors, including age, one's social and economic standing, education, and residence. Ways of spending one's leisure time are strongly affected by the social, civilizational, and economic environment of the individual (BOMBOL 2005, p. 15, BELLEZZA, PAHARIA & KEINAN 2017). An individual's leisure behaviors may demonstrate their social status or membership in a group. Changes in leisure time may be used to analyze changes in recreation and tourism, as these sectors are involved in spending this time (NIEZGODA 2014, NIEZGODA 2017). D.G. REID *et al.* (1993) attempt to indicate links between the categories of leisure, recreation,

tourism, and other activities, but claim that their interdependencies cannot be clearly demonstrated.

Changes in leisure may also be analyzed in association with processes characteristic of civilizational shifts. These include conspicuous consumption (BELLEZZA, PAHARIA & KEINAN 2017), individualization (BUTLER 2006, REICH, PECHLANER & HOELZL 2006, NIEZGODA 2017), and time compression (CZAJA 2011, GOŁEMBSKI & NIEZGODA 2012, NIEZGODA 2017).

Conspicuous consumption is typical for affluent societies where the set of goods and services consumers purchase may reflect their financial (and social) standing. Forms of recreation, and in particular tourism, may become a synonym for luxury.

Individualization occurs in markets where consumers can find goods and services matching their individual, often unique, needs. One example of a market that caters to individual needs is tourism, where consumers are able to compose individual sets of services to buy.

Leisure time becomes a valuable resource for individuals, as it provides satisfaction, and is evaluated based on difference from working time. As stated by JUNG (2011, p. 169), for the relatively affluent consumers in OECD countries, an increase in consumption may be hindered by a shortage of time for engaging in some forms, rather than a shortage of purchasing power. This prompts consumers to choose more time-effective forms of activity. Those who earn more tend to have less available leisure time (NIEZGODA 2017). Therefore, this time becomes increasingly valuable, and there is a need for its optimal utilization. Time and space become 'compressed'.

This entails a progressive decrease in the importance of public space, and reduction of distance over time. The phenomenon may be understood as a change in the attributes of modern life, manifesting in increased intensity of production and consumption within a unit of time (CZAJA 2011, p. 227). Time loses its dimensions, as communication (in its broadest sense) requires less and less of it. Space loses its importance, as distances lose their significance. Today's elites, as well as tourists, become less attached to specific territories, and increasingly independent of limited socio-cultural and political spaces, in a sense, they become extraterritorial (GOŁEMBSKI & NIEZGODA 2012). On the consumer's side, time compression manifests itself in the increased intensity of production and consumption (i.e. of both processes simultaneously) in a unit of time (NIEZGODA 2017).

Another phenomenon associated with changes in leisure time is the departure from so-called 'synchronization', resulting from the 'third wave' (TOFFLER 2001). This allows consumers to combine professional activity with recreation and rest. Boundaries between leisure and work begin to blur (KACHNIEWSKA *et al.* 2012, p. 144). One example could be a tourist using the recreational services of a hotel while participating in a conference.

Furthermore, using computers, or even phones, for work increases the difficulty of distinguishing specific activities classified as work or leisure (e.g. checking one's work-related and personal messages at the same time, browsing the internet during breaks in working etc.).

In the context of changes affecting leisure, it is interesting to look at the shaping and differentiation of recreational space, and its relationship with tourism space. Recreational space has not yet been clearly defined, nor systematized in detail (as opposed to tourism space, which has been defined, classified, and categorized by many authors, including S. LISZEWSKI (1995, 2013), A. KOWALCZYK (2014), M. WIĘCKOWSKI (2014), B. WŁODARCZYK (2014)). The most commonly cited definition is the one by M. Drzewiecki, defining recreational space as "a fragment of geographical space with characteristics enabling and conducive to various forms of leisure, where recreational processes of a socially and spatially significant extent occur" (DRZEWIECKI 1992, p. 17). According to S. Toczek-Werner, in a (recreational) space used for recreational activities, one can distinguish recreational activity centers (fulfilling the expectations and needs of individuals who prefer specific forms of activity e.g. fitness centers, swimming pools, dance studios) and areas, that enable recreation without restricting its form (e.g. parks, squares, sports fields, playgrounds) (TOCZEK-WERNER 2007).

For the purpose of the present paper, recreational space is assumed to be any space where recreational activities are undertaken. The nature of a given location allows for distinguishing open (outdoor) and closed (indoor) spaces, and for identifying spaces associated with a specific type of recreational activity (e.g. swimming, dancing, walking). Additionally, each space type may be considered formal (where activities are organized and/or provided for a charge) or informal (where activities are undertaken individually and free of charge)<sup>1</sup>.

Recreational space is most commonly viewed in the context of activities undertaken by the residents of a given area in their free time. However, in the case of areas that are attractive for tourists, there may (and does) exist some overlap between recreational space (used for leisure by residents) and tourism space (used for tourism and recreational activities by tourists). It seems that due to the changes occurring in the perception and consumption of leisure time, despite the fact that residents and tourists select their leisure activities independently, the selected activities are analogous in nature and undertaken within the same space. On the one hand, this results from changes in the attitudes and behaviors of residents who use the most attractive parts of their place of residence for leisure, and also often combine their working and leisure time within the same space. On the other hand, the behaviors of

tourists also change, as besides spending their time actively, in an attractive environment, tourists wish to experience the daily life of local residents (tourism 'off the beaten track').

#### 4. RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY OF RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS IN SZCZECIN

The above considerations are illustrated by an analysis of the recreational activity of Szczecin residents and tourists, and an attempt at identifying the relationships between recreational space and tourism space.

Szczecin has a large surface area (approx. 301 km<sup>2</sup>), where green areas account for 17.54% of the total, which, combined with bodies of water (23.68%) and agricultural land, gives 60.81% of the total area of the city (2016 report). This large share of green areas and bodies of water has a strong impact on the character of the city and creates favorable conditions for recreation. Enjoyment of the natural environment is facilitated by the constantly developing infrastructure (marinas, beaches, forest clearings, educational trails, hiking trails, cycle paths). Furthermore, the city has extensive facilities for undertaking a variety of recreational activities. These include buildings and infrastructure for recreational sports, such as stadiums (12), sports grounds (231), indoor swimming pools (8), marinas (12), tennis courts (7), or outdoor gyms (14). Various businesses and institutions use the city's facilities to pursue various interests e.g. sports clubs (273), gyms and fitness centers, dance schools, community centers etc. Infrastructure for culture and entertainment includes a concert hall (which hosted 436 events in 2016), cinemas (5), museums (7), and theaters (5). This concise presentation of potential recreational spaces in Szczecin does not constitute a detailed inventory, but simply indicates some of the recreational spaces and activities available.

Results of a study undertaken among Szczecin residents indicate that most leisure time on weekdays (1–2 hours) is available to young people (more than half of respondents aged 18–30), while most people aged 41–50 declare they only have free time at weekends. The most common activities undertaken include outdoor recreation (75% of women and 55% of men), games of skill (chess, cards, board games), and water sports (approx. 30% of respondents); moreover, men often pursue strength-based sports (35%), and women often choose fitness activities (39%). The least common activities include extreme sports and horse riding. The vast majority (77%) arrange their leisure activities themselves, while the remaining participate in organized activities.

The outdoor recreational activities named included walking (almost 50% claim several times per week), cycling (13%), gardening (6%), and Nordic walking (3%). Respondents jog (17%) several times a month and engage in team sports (13%); use beaches (43%), ice rinks (34%), and recreational grounds (32%), and attend public events (31%) several times a year. The preferred locations for outdoor activities include the *Kasprowicza* (48%) and *Jasne Błonia* (39%) parks, the *Wały Chrobrego* embankment (35%), and *Puszcza Bukowa* (24%) and *Las Arkoński* (18%) forests.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents, mostly aged 25–30 (over 80%), declare they use sports and recreation facilities (approx. 5% more men than women). More than 10% stated they use the following several times per month: fitness centers (20%), swimming pools (18%), saunas (14%), and gyms (14%). The least commonly used facilities (several times per year, fewer than 10% of respondents) are tennis and squash courts. As to passive recreation, the preferred forms include attending cinemas (77% declare they go to the cinema several times per year), and spending time with friends (40% state they do this several times per month). As for daily forms of recreation, the most common one is watching television (45.4%). Over 12% of respondents play video games or go shopping on a daily basis.

In 2015, Szczecin was visited by nearly 390,000 tourists, of whom 34% came from abroad, mainly from Germany (43%) and the Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, Norway). Study results indicate that main activities of tourists during their stay in Szczecin included participating in special events (82%) and cultural events (52%)<sup>2</sup>. More than half of the respondents engaged in sightseeing, approx. 48% enjoyed the green areas, and approx. 45% went shopping. Foreign tourists were less likely than domestic tourists to participate in cultural events or to enjoy water and green areas, and more likely to sightsee and participate in special events. The sport and recreational infrastructure of the city was used by two-thirds of respondents. Tourists mostly choose city walks (38%), cycling trails (33%), and spa & wellness offerings (32%). Recreational activities involving culture and entertainment included visiting pubs and clubs (55%), cinemas (50%), museums (33%), and theaters or the concert hall (27%). The main locations of tourism activity in Szczecin included the *Wały Chrobrego* embankment (72%); the *Kasprowicza*, *Jasne Błonia* and *Ogród Różany* (65%) parks; the Pomeranian Dukes' Castle (63%); and the riverside promenade (62%).

A comparison of activities undertaken by tourists visiting Szczecin and the leisure behavior of the city's residents shows considerable similarity both in terms of activity type and the locations where they are undertaken. It seems impossible not only to separate tourism space from recreation space, but even to clearly delineate tourism or recreation spaces within the city. Even places

offering accommodation, a service typically used by tourists, commonly offer services used on a daily basis, rather than incidentally, by residents (food, hosting special events, conferences, spa & wellness services etc.). The residents' places of work, on the other hand, have infrastructure enabling recreation.

This is a fitting illustration of the way these functions overlap in space, especially in highly developed and densely populated areas such as cities. The fact that the same fragment of space may serve a variety of functions is neither new nor extraordinary, but the progressive overlapping of an increasing number of functions makes it difficult to clearly identify the dominant function of a given space. Simple quantitative assessments of the intensity or prominence of specific phenomena in space are becoming increasingly rare. This suggests difficulties in identification of its identity (current and target), which is significant e.g. for spatial planning or management.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The availability and use of leisure time contributes to the psychological wellbeing of individuals and to the quality of life in societies. In economic analyses, it is important to include an assessment of the role played by leisure in domestic budgets, social use of time, socio-economic development, human capital creation, economic welfare, and quality of life (CZAJA 2011, p. 234). Leisure time resources and uses are becoming a diagnostic category for socio-economic development (BOMBOL 2008). Quality of life can be evidenced by the quantities and types of services used during leisure time. Participation in leisure activities can be considered a component and indicator of psychological wellbeing and subjective quality of life. Demanding work creates a need for leisure activities that differ substantially from this work (BOMBOL 2005, p. 27).

This has certain consequences for decisions related to tourism and recreation behaviors. The increased number of trips combined with their decreased duration has contributed to an increased number of visits to urban areas which have much to offer to residents and tourists alike. Simultaneously, with the constant compression of leisure time, tourism activities in the visited locations become more similar to the leisure activities of residents, which means both types of activities occur in the same environment. Additionally, tourists wish to experience the daily life of the city (tourism 'off the beaten track'), while residents 'play at being tourists' in their home cities to discover it anew. Urban recreational and tourism spaces overlap in a way that makes it impossible to separate them, but still allows the distinction of certain sub-spaces where either tourism or recreational behaviors prevail.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The present paper does not purport to define the term "recreational space" or provide a systematization of such spaces. A broad discussion on the scope, attributes, functions, and classification of recreational space and its relationships with tourism and leisure spaces took place during the academic conference titled "Przestrzeń rekreacji – granice i konteksty" [Recreational spaces – boundaries and contexts] at the University of Łódź Faculty of Geographical Sciences (Institute of Urban Geography and Tourism), November 21–22, 2017. Conclusions from the discussion, which touched upon multiple aspects, should contribute to the development of a final definition of recreational space and a better understanding of relationships between recreational, tourist, and leisure spaces. The working definition of recreational space (and its divisions) used in the present paper is simply a framework used primarily to accurately present the study results.

<sup>2</sup> These results might have been affected by the timing of the study.

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