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**Mirosław Mika: Assumptions and determinants of local tourism development sustainability, Instytut Geografii i Gospodarki Przestrzennej Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2014, pp. 231**

Jolanta Wojciechowska  
*University of Łódź, Department of Tourism and Urban Geography*

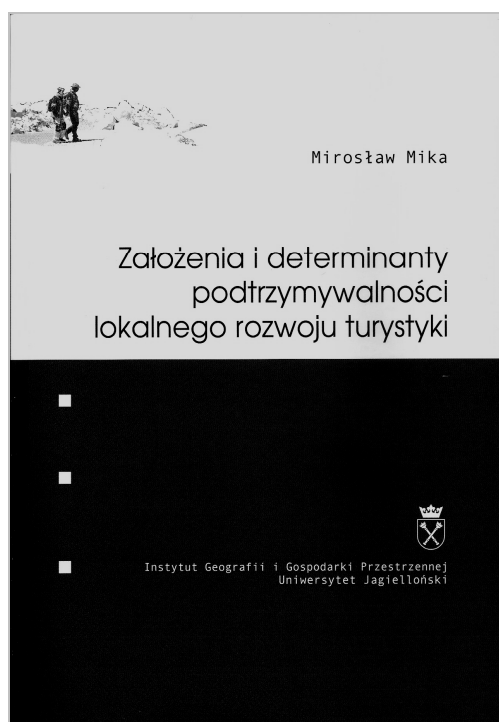
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**MIROSŁAW MIKA**

***ZAŁOŻENIA I DETERMINANTY  
PODTRZYMYWALNOŚCI LOKALNEGO  
ROZWOJU TURYSTYKI***

***[ASSUMPTIONS AND DETERMINANTS OF LOCAL  
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT SUSTAINABILITY]***

Instytut Geografii i Gospodarki Przestrzennej  
Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego  
Kraków 2014  
pp. 231

The reviewed work is an academic dissertation on local tourism development sustainability in mature reception areas. It consists of four chapters, each containing a large number of subchapters (e.g. 4.4.9.4), as well as an extensive bibliography (18 pages), a list of tables and figures, a summary in English and an appendix presenting the questionnaires used in the tourist surveys for summer and winter, as well as for investors in accommodation.

In the Introduction the author writes that the main objective is “to define the theoretical and methodological bases for the development over a long period of the tourism function in a destination at the peak of tourism”. He sets forth the following hypothesis: “in a destination with a highly developed tourism function, the factors influencing its long-term development are rooted in local infrastructural, natural and cultural resources as the basis of tourism development, as well as in the human and social resources invested in tourism”. We should also remember the author’s assumption that “every local system is an individual and unique, exceptional combination of conditions and circumstances in which tourism needs are satisfied”, referred to several times in different parts of the book. The author also explains the cognitive and practical aims, as well as the conception and methodology of the empirical studies at three tourism centres in Beskid Śląski (Szczyrk, Ustroń and Wisła) as examples of functionally mature reception areas.

In Chapter One, “Tourism development as a subject for geographical studies”, individual subchapters (relatively short, usually 1 to 2 pages) present some terms (tourism, development, tourism development, local tourism development) and research ideas which the author believes to be “the current and potential tourism development analysis at a local level in geographical studies” (as regards social mobility, functionalism and networking in tourism). The chapter ends with general remarks and seven conclusions drawn from a review of research ideas. Compared to the presentation of issues, which does not include too much detail, the conclusions seem too wide, and some seem to be completely detached from the preceding text. Moreover, it seems that the title of the chapter does not fully reflect its contents. The author does not discuss the development of tourism in terms of the range of theoretical conceptions in geographical studies, but only selects some as developed by both foreign and Polish researchers. The author does not make an evaluation of the Polish geographers’ contribution to tourism studies, he only presents a relational assessment, putting names alongside those of Polish tourism researchers from other disciplines (which is not pointed out), as well as foreign authors. With such a compilation, the reader can feel an artificial narrowing, or even a lack of examples of authors dealing with some important issues. The author, however, stresses the geographical point of

view in tourism studies and insists that the contribution of geography in multidisciplinary studies on tourism should be noted. He believes that in the future researchers will have to pay even more attention to "the explication of researched facts by examining relational structures in geographical space which decide the course of the (often invisible) mechanisms powering development processes."

In Chapter Two, entitled "A crisis in the conception in harmonious tourism development", the author presents the theoretical assumption and the results that its implementation has brought about in urban planning and in economic activity all over the world. Based on the examples quoted, mainly from foreign literature, the author systematizes the key arguments against the idea of sustainable tourism from the perspectives of the tourist, the tourism sector and the tourist reception area. The author considers the global consequences of climate change for the development of tourism destinations and regions, in terms of its potential for application. He analyses the methodological weaknesses and points to current changes in international debate. Personally, the author believes that "in a situation when the global economy has entered a development phase conditioned by climatic and economic instability, the most important issue is not the question of harmonious sustainability, but the ability to preserve local economic structures and the benefits of development for the economy and society". He thinks that it is necessary to verify his assumptions. First of all, he stresses that it is necessary to shift the centre of gravity in current debate and research from the global to the local level, as well as to depart from "the interpretation of the functional sustainability of reception areas in their specific ("idealized") state for the benefit of an evolutionary process of transformation, based on rational economic premises and actual social behavior, and not moving towards a particular target set in advance." It can be assumed that such an approach includes both rationality and irrationality which should be considered together in order to fully understand the structural processes in tourism. It is worth adding that the chapter is interesting to read, though it lacks examples from the Polish literature and the discussion is conducted basically on a single plane without showing the advantages. Therefore, it seems that the word "crisis" used in the title of this chapter is an overstatement.

Chapter Three, entitled "Sustainability in local tourism development - theoretical and methodological assumptions", is the most important part of the book where the author presents a conceptual model and describes the relation between the sustainability of local tourism development and the competitiveness of tourism reception areas.

The conceptual model is presented identifying the potential factors of long-term tourism function development in aspects such as tourism attractiveness, competitiveness of tourism entities, optimization of local resources, and the stability and resilience of the local tourism system to external disorder. These problems are considered to be the basic elements of the model's structure, presented in graphic form on p. 76. Each element is discussed following the same pattern containing two categories of explication: (1) first the concept with its key features, and (2) its objective. The process of explication involves the presentation of international and Polish academic discussion of the issues but it does not end with conclusions on each one, which leaves the reader with a feeling of insufficiency. The conclusions are presented in a separate subchapter, some referring to parts of the discussion which the author did not include. Moreover, the summary may surprise the reader by a change in the order of the model constituents presented in Table 7. Here, the local resource optimizing factor comes before the competitiveness of local tourism entities. This change raises the question: to what extent can the order of analysis be changed, i.e. the structural system of the model. The author provides a partial answer on p. 124, writing about the complex and dynamic reality which may produce modifications. However, he believes that sustainability determinants go beyond the tourism development factors established so far, and the development of sustainability is above all about quality. Therefore, the author claims that when searching for the mechanisms for increasing the functional efficiency of local tourism entities it is worth reaching beyond the sphere of tourist activity. He quotes examples in the next chapter, containing the description of the results of empirical studies in Beskid Śląski.

Chapter Four is entitled "Determinants of the local tourism development sustainability in the light of research results". Using the examples of three selected destinations (Szczzyrk, Ustroń and Wisła), the author tries to identify the factors determining long-term development of the tourism function and point to the main limitations and internal barriers to local tourism development. The methodological research procedure was explained in detail in the Introduction, while in this chapter the author presents an evaluation of local conditions from the point of view of tourists and of ski tourism, together with an analysis of the factors and limitations to the development of accommodation. For the three destinations mentioned, the author applies a comparative analysis with interesting results. An interesting approach is the "tourism transfer index", showing the functional links between the towns and their surroundings. A drawback is that the author

does not present conclusions but only a description of ten functional categories (patterns) of accommodation facility. The conclusions can be found in the final remarks, divided into three: additional comments, detailed conclusions (based on Chapter Four; there are 20 of them) and general conclusions. It is worth saying that the number and meticulousness of the conclusions may slightly disorientate the reader.

Generally speaking, the publication is not an easy one. It is written in rather impenetrable language including long, complex sentences, forcing the reader to concentrate hard on their meaning. Occasionally, the text contains neologisms or inconsistencies, e.g. presenting an issue first on a national and then on an international scale, while its authors are quoted in brackets in an opposite order (e.g. pp. 44-46). It should be noticed that the publication presents a broad overview of phenomena and processes, as well as the opinions of foreign and Polish authors. However, it is highly general. At some places, there are not enough arguments to explain an issue or some authors have been ignored. For instance, the public-private partnership is mentioned in only one sentence on p. 104,

describing it as a tool which is still underused. In several other places the author briefly mentions the tourism offer (pp. 86, 92, 95) but does not make any reference to this, and in the subchapter on local co-operation (4.4.8.1) the author places an unclear classification of organizations as associations based on partner cooperation, specialized (p.173) or even official (p. 174). The first column head in the majority of tables in the appendix is either empty or not even present.

Finally, it should be stressed however that from a cognitive and methodological point of view, the book is interesting, presents an original approach to the issues of local tourism development in the context of sustainable development.

**Jolanta Wojciechowska**

University of Łódź

Department of Tourism and Urban Geography

*Translated by Ewa Mossakowska*

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