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## RURAL TOURISM AS A FACTOR OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

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This paper propose to look at rural tourism as a possible engine for local development.

It is the primary purpose of developing tourism: to be a source of employment and income. But rural tourism goes far beyond that aim giving other beneficial effects, which can be seen as secondary but have great importance to transformation.

The paper focuses on the following aspects. First, strategies and concepts of rural development and the place of rural tourism in them. Second, different (direct and non direct) benefits from rural tourism, which stimulate change of rural world. Third, some examples of arguments from Poland achievements in rural tourism.

### WHY RURAL AREAS NEED TRANSFORMATION ?

Rural Poland is a remarkable survival; it still reflects past times, past life styles, values and cultures, past markets and a past world. In eastern part of the country it is a complex living museum with great national, ecological and heritage value. But it is under serious threat of destruction, as powerful global forces bring new trends in farming, food and marketing. Like rural regions and lifestyles in other countries, Poland's countryside may lose its rich regional identities and values. It is already losing many of its young people to city regions [5, 9].

Poland's rural world is at a turning point – it faces the need to refresh and renew and build on its past – or lose its significance. The paper concentrates on the development of rural tourism, not to replace farming but to complement it, and to help introduce new ideas and income streams as a catalyst for rural economic, social and cultural regeneration. Sustainable rural tourism has become a key ingredient in modern rural development in many parts of the developed world.

Most of European states experienced a 40-70% reduction in their agricultural workforce.

Countries in central and eastern Europe have been also treated as being in "transition" or "transformation". Transition is a term employed (not always consciously) to represent a prescriptive set of uni-linear conceptual attitudes which locate the shift away from central

economic planning almost exclusively in terms of market-oriented reform. Strictly defined, transition is concerned with moving between two known points, the final dimension of which in this case is the integration, or prospect of integration, of former communist states into the world economy [3, 22].

As an alternative framework concept, transformation although embracing fundamental structural change, is less concerned with an end state, being open-ended and allowing for the substantial (converging and diverging) differences which exist between former communist countries. Transformation implies flexible approaches which respect culture, sovereignty and peoples apprehensions, and which can be imbued with ideals and sustainability and equality cannot be accommodated within transition. Each country has a distinctive and unique path of extrication from state socialism.

#### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Concept of sustainable development may provide a useful tool for understanding such processes. "Rural development is a deliberate process of sustained and sustainable economic, social, cultural and environmental change, designed to improve the quality of life of the local population of a rural region" [1, 4]

Tourism has been one of the great growth industries of the last 50 years, providing employment and transferring wealth from cities and industrial regions to the resort regions of the world. In the last twenty years, tourism has changed. It is no longer tied to holiday resorts. Millions of travelers now travel to see and enjoy the world's cities and cultural centers. And millions more seek rural holidays, to see and enjoy nature, to enjoy traditional rural cultures. They also seek adventure and activity holidays, and, in contrast some seek calm and solitude in the countryside. Rural tourism is a growth industry within tourism. Experience in Europe introduced the world to the concept of sustainable rural tourism, a management concept that conserves rural regions, and uses tourism as a tool for their conservation and the well-being of their peoples and economies. Sustainable rural tourism, now recognized by the World Tourism Organization and many other bodies, uses a variety of tried and tested management techniques.

Sustainable rural tourism is not an end in itself, but a mechanism to conserve nature, to work with the farming community, and to help recognize and conserve small town and village communities and their traditional ways of life. The aim is to help rural Japan to recognize its strengths, and convert them into products that the market values. Thus rural hospitality and buildings can become interesting places to visit and stay in. And fields that grow crops and trees can become places for walking and cycling, as well as food production. Rural life styles can become sustainable through recognition of their worth and the income they generate from visitors; rural landscapes and countryside are sustainable because they are valued as visitor attractions [4, 12].

Shortly speaking sustainable tourism means three "e" - aspects: economic, ecological, ethical and balance between economic and ecologic. It requires an integrated approach to rural development, involve all sectors (public, private and voluntary) and be based on partnership and collaboration

#### UNDERSTANDING RURAL TOURISM

Rural tourism is not a simply tourism which takes places in the countryside. It is more complicated and multidimensional question. The narrow definition is that it is farm tourism or agritourism. But Lane [6, 40] has proposed wider definition. "Rural tourism is a complex multi-faced activity: it is not just farm-based tourism. It includes farm-based holidays but also comprises special-interest nature holidays and ecotourism, walking, climbing and riding holidays, adventure, sport and health tourism, hunting and angling, educational travel, arts

and heritage tourism". It means that rural tourism ignore large-scale mass recreation complexes which are located in rural areas but are not functionally rural. They are known as tourism in rural areas. Specific of rural tourism is that is built upon the rural world's special features: open space and nature, traditional communities and heritage.

#### BENEFITS FROM RURAL TOURISM

Developing tourism can bring costs and benefits. Some most important benefits are listed below: [6, 24-35]

##### 1. Economic

- multiplier effect
- more diversified economy
- new jobs for local people
- alternative or supplementary income
- higher vulnerability of local economy
- development of businesses
- attracting other businesses (not directly related to tourism)

##### 2. Social

- encourage collaboration and collective community activities
- school of entrepreneurship which is first step to other businesses
- higher level of education
- better infrastructure
- higher level of life
- limiting migration to cities and even abroad
- leadership

##### 3. Cultural

- aesthetics of architecture and design
- conservation of heritage
- better communication and understanding
- space transformation

##### 4. Environmental

- cleaner nature
- better protection of natural and cultural resources
- better waste management
- new protected areas as guarantee of nature quality
- certification systems
- biodynamic agriculture

#### RESULTS OF RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT –CASE OF POLAND

Based on 15 years of experience we can show the main results of rural tourism:

##### 1. Economic

20 000 accommodation units (average 10 beds = 200 000 x 20 USD x 80 days = 320 millions USD direct turnover + 160 millions USD income)

Indirect incomes is estimated at the level of minimum 160 millions USD [2: 17].

##### 2. Social

130 regional and local organizations – over 60% very active not only in the field of rural tourism, but also in organizing local life and initializing new innovative initiatives.

##### 3. Educational

Special educational system – from basic courses to university level. There is a special system of education and advise in the field of rural tourism.

Thousands people graduated basic and advanced courses during last 15 years. About two thousand specialists got master of art degree at 5 agricultural universities which teach rural tourism.

#### 4. Environmental

New facilities for better respecting and protecting natural systems. Areas where rural tourism is developed have better waste management (incl. segregation), sewage and cleaning systems and **lower pollution**.

#### FUTURE

What should be the aims for future. A first aim should be to stop the accelerating decline of the rural Poland, give it time to take stock of the many possibilities it has, and to consider what sort of countryside we seek in the future. One possible overall future can be suggested as follows.

Rural Poland should begin to move forward from a countryside dominated by agricultural development to become a more diversified countryside, with a broader economy, capable of supporting many different types of jobs, including tourism. This would offer a higher quality of life, and a way of supporting modern services, and the cultural and natural heritage. Six overall aims are suggested; seeking:

1. A living countryside, with thriving rural communities and access to high quality public services.

2. A working countryside, with a diverse economy, including farming, forestry and tourism, giving high and stable levels of employment.

3. A protected countryside in which the cultural and natural environment is sustained and enhanced, and which all – visitors and local people – can enjoy and celebrate.

4. A valuable countryside, contributing to the well being of all the Japanese people, acting as custodian of their heritage, source of their food, place for their relaxation and fitness, offering an alternative to big city life.

5. A vibrant countryside which can understand, discuss and shape its own future and live well without subsidy.

6. A fashionable countryside, with a strong and positive image, built upon its great strengths and values of quality of life, natural and cultural heritage, tranquillity, freedom to enjoy a healthy outdoor life, and the many personal contacts that rural communities offer.

The aim is a countryside of renewal, resurgence and re-discovery, replacing decline and decay. City life too would benefit from the new countryside – as pressures of congestion are relieved, as outdoor recreation opportunities are created, and as new ideas begin to come back to the cities from a resurgent countryside. We suggest the way for developing sustainable rural tourism which can contribute to developing such living, working, protected, valuable and vibrant rural areas. To reach this new future will be a lengthy task.

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