

# Sustainable Tourism Development Towards Spatial Justice: Evidence from Masłomęcz, Poland

Assist. Prof. Dr. Katarzyna LEŚNIEWSKA-NAPIERAŁA<sup>a,b</sup>, Assist. Prof. Dr. Tomasz NAPIERAŁA<sup>a,b,11</sup>, Dr. Paulina TOBIASZ-LIS<sup>a</sup>, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Marcin WÓJCIK<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *University of Lodz, Poland*

<sup>b</sup> *Centre of Tourism Research, Development, and Innovation, CiTUR, Portugal*

---

## Abstract

Since 1980s tourism related academia, institutions and organizations (including United Nations), and business practice have focused on the relationship between tourism and sustainable development. Environmental, social, and cultural contexts of sustainable tourism development has been widely discussed by researchers, politicians, and practitioners. Concepts related to sustainable tourism development like community-based tourism, responsible-sustainable tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, and many others, have been introduced and investigated. Nowadays, the significance of geographical contexts of tourism research, policy, and business practice increases. Thus, the goal of this research is to discuss the phenomena of sustainable tourism development in the geographical context. The locality becomes the main consideration of this enquiry, and the spatial justice is introduced as the main goal of sustainable tourism development. The main research method applied in this enquiry is a case study. To address investigated relation between sustainable tourism development and spatial justice, the results from the case study research on thematic Goth Village in Masłomęcz (East-South Poland) were exploited. This case study is one of 33 actions investigated under the EU Horizon 2020 research project 'Resituating the local in cohesion and territorial development' (RELOCAL).

**Keywords:** Sustainability tourism development; Spatial justice; Locality; Thematic village.

---

## 1. Theory and Concepts

The aim of this research is to discuss the phenomena of sustainable tourism development related to geographical concept of spatial justice. The locality becomes the main consideration of this enquiry, and the spatial justice is introduced as the main goal of sustainable tourism development. Di Bella, Petino, & Scrofani (2019) emphasized the problem of focus of European policy and research on metropolitan rather than peripheral areas. Such kind of public and academic debate influences also tourism development, discussed in urban rather than rural context. The goal of this research is to fulfil mentioned niche.

Higgins-Desbiolles (2008) discussed the notion and idea of justice tourism. She underlined that justice tourism should be recognized not only as a contrary to the contemporary mass tourism, but also as a contribution to a more just global order. Jamal & Camargo (2014: 12) define just destination as "a destination whose tourism planning, policy making and practices enable the fair treatment of its environmental and social-cultural resources (tangible and intangible), and facilitate the well-being of place, people and pasts". Just destination actively involves destination's resident stakeholders, including disadvantaged groups, in the process of tourism planning and marketing (procedural justice), and fairly distributes economic, social and cultural benefits of tourism development among host-area residents and their places (distributive justice) (Jamal & Camargo, 2014).

Barton & Leonard (2010) emphasized that economic focus of tourism industry usually pay less attention to potential negative impacts like environmental deterioration and increase of social and spatial inequalities. Host-area do not benefit fully as tourists purchase services from providers (e.g. travel agencies, large transportation companies, hotel chains) located in tourists' home-areas. If the net transfer of value from host- to home-areas occurs, the inequalities between the regions will increase. Moreover, tourism might also enable inequalities within the host-area (Barton & Leonard, 2010). Finally, development of tourism profit-oriented industry might result in the colonization and the commodification of host-area, including culture, identity and experience of a place and its residents (Devine, 2017). Injustices result from tourism when cultures and places of host-areas and their people are being freely marketed and packaged for worldwide tourism consumption (Jamal & Camargo, 2014). Moreover, tourism itself might be considered as spatially unjust phenomena, if it makes particular places affordable only for just a few, rich people (Müller & Hoogendoorn, 2013), dominating and violating residents of host-areas (Salazar, 2017). Thus, when considering and planning sustainable tourism development, tourism sustainable contribution in local community well-being need to be recognized as priority (Barton & Leonard, 2010).

Barton & Leonard (2010) argued that tourism enables spatial justice when marginal groups of host-area residents and localities populated by those groups are the focus of sustainable tourism development. It is crucial to engage host-area residents into the process of tourism planning through the education. Local heritage, culture, bio- and geodiversity are recognized as the main resources for rural tourism development. Since the beginning of their existence, people have been using land and its resources to satisfy their material, social, cultural and spiritual needs (Briassoulis, 2009). Moreover, all mentioned resources are crucial from the perspective of local identity and pride of host-area residents. Thus, the linkages between tourism and locality seem obvious, and non-traditional forms of tourism as ecotourism and cultural tourism, or ecocultural tourism need to be emphasized (Devine, 2017; Jamal & Camargo, 2014). However, Salazar (2017) pointed out that contemporary linkages between tourism development and

---

<sup>11</sup> Tomasz Napierała, PhD; Tel. + 48 42 6354567; Email address: tomasz.napierala@geo.uni.lodz.pl

spatial justice are weak. Schellhorn (2010) indicated that rural tourism sector is usually dominated by less qualified, and less paid female staff. However, this is not confirmed by the official statistics as most of the employees work informally, and usually help the employer as relatives. This kind of gender inequality need to be emphasized.

Bramwell & Lane (2008), Gezon (2014), Higgins-Desbiolles (2008, 2018), and Ramón-Hidalgo & Harris (2018) argued that sustainable tourism exists only with the balanced focus on 1) justice, 2) equity and democracy, including political empowerment of local people, organizations, and communities, 3) ecological and heritage preservation, and aesthetic landscape integrity, 4) and economic efficiency resulting in a decrease of negative visitors' impact, and in increase of local community benefits. Thus, spatial justice needs to be recognized as a goal of sustainable tourism development. Cheng, Yang, Gao, Tao, & Xu (2018) found that only cooperation between local governments and enterprises promotes the spatial justice through sustainable tourism development. Public-private partnership might be considered as an option for mentioned cooperation towards the integration of the local economy (including tourism industry), society and environmental resources. However, Gezon (2014), and Schellhorn (2010) warn that concentration and professionalization of every form of tourism, including ecotourism or cultural tourism, might marginalize local communities, and increase environmental degradation.

## **2.Methods and Research Area**

The goal of this research is to discuss the phenomena of sustainable tourism development in the geographical context basing on the thematic Goth Village in Masłomęcz (East-South Poland). The investigation presented here is a descriptive case study (Yin, 2015). We focused on the idea of thematic villages, which in this specific case has led to empowering local community, redefined local identity and caused multifunctional development.

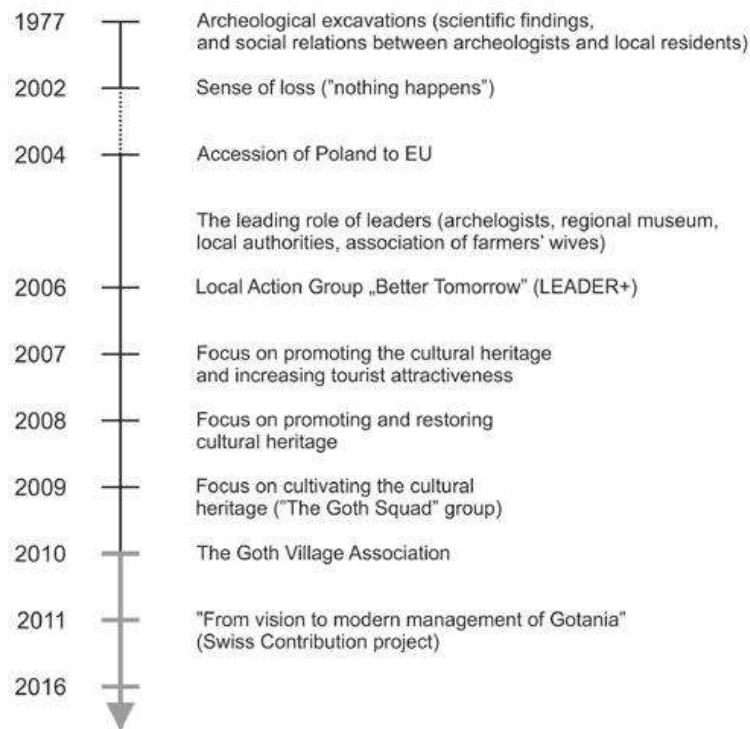
Any research project should start with a desk research study. It enables researchers to collect and analyse existing data and thus establish the current state of knowledge concerning a specific topic (Leśniewska-Napierała & Napierała, 2017; Makowska & Boguszewski, 2013). As part of this, the authors searched for qualitative and quantitative data in the strategic documents. The collection of data was conducted in 2018. First, a Focus Group activity was organised and conducted in Masłomęcz to gather community members, local stakeholders and experts and observe interactions between these group members. Secondly, 9 semi-structured interviews were carried out. All the interviews were semi-structured, the respondents were encouraged to talk freely on the prepared discussion points. Following the focus group activity and individual interviews, along with a research walk, the photographic documentation was collected. Finally, authors participated in Archaeological Fest – an annual one-day festival which takes place in the Goth Village. Detailed description of methodological framework might be found in “D 6.2 Case Study Report Goth Village” (Tobiasz-Lis et al., 2019) delivered under the EU Horizon 2020 research project ‘Resituating the local in cohesion and territorial development’ (RELOCAL).

The area of this research is Masłomęcz, a village situated in Eastern part of Poland in Hrubieszów municipality in lubelskie voivodeship, only 8 km from the Ukrainian border. Masłomęcz is a small but very dispersed village of 380 inhabitants (100 households). Masłomęcz is an example of thematic village developed on the basis of a real history of the place. During archaeological excavations between 1977 and 2002, a complex of Goth settlements and cemeteries from the 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century was discovered. Traveling from the north of our continent, Goths settled in Hrubieszów Valley. It is estimated that at that time the population of Masłomęcz was 2 thousand people, which is the reason why the village was considered the capital of the Goth community (Tobiasz-Lis & Dmochowska-Dudek, 2017; Tobiasz-Lis et al., 2019).

## **3.Results and Discussion**

In Poland, the same like in other countries in Eastern Central Europe, rural areas are in transition, facing challenges like: declining and ageing populations, youth retention, limited economic and social opportunities for residents, loss of local services and higher costs of living. Thus, rural communities reposition themselves through diversifying their economic base, enhancing the quality of life, and looking for new functions (Bukraba-Rylska, 1992; Tobiasz-Lis et al., 2019; Wójcik, Tobiasz-Lis, & Dmochowska-Dudek, 2016). This is in line with findings of Pazoki & Yourdkhani (2016) who confirmed that development of rural tourism - as it diversifies the rural economy - is the prohibitor of the general process of rural development. In Masłomęcz, as in other municipalities in the region, following social and economic issues were diagnosed: 1) high, structural unemployment caused by inactivity and inadequate education, and 2) a very large asymmetry in the age and gender structure that results from a significant outflow of women aged up to 30 years from the commune, as well as from over mortality of men over 60 years of age (Tobiasz-Lis et al., 2019).

In Masłomęcz in 2002 in response to the end of 25 years of ongoing excavations, the local community has begun to engage in reconstruction and popularization of cultural and historical heritage of the region. In 2006 the first wooden Goth's hut has been built and it gave the beginning of Goth open air museum in Masłomęcz. Extensive cooperation has been undertaken with scientific institutions to accurately reconstruct the image of the region's past. The local social initiative was noticed by the media, neighbouring local governments and became a kind of showcase of the Hrubieszów region. Between 2007 and 2009, a few projects were realised, focusing on the historical education of the inhabitants of the village and shaping their skills in arts and crafts typical for ancient Goths. The Goth Village Association was created in 2010 officially. The Goth Village is currently the fastest growing object on the tourist map of the Hrubieszów county, which was made with cooperation with Lublin University and Regional Museum in Hrubieszów (Tobiasz-Lis & Dmochowska-Dudek, 2017).



**Fig. 1: The timeline of actions undertaken to create a thematic Goth Village in Masłomęcz.**

Source: own elaboration based on Tobiasz-Lis et al. (2019).

The Goth Village is the basic element generating organized tourist mobilities to Masłomęcz and an important factor in creating the multifunctional development of the village (Tobiasz-Lis & Dmochowska-Dudek, 2017). In 2004 in Masłomęcz the first Archaeological Feast (pl. *Biesiada Archeologiczna*) took place. Since then, such meetings have become an annual tradition and holiday for archaeology fans (Juciński, 2007). Every year Masłomęcz is visited by approximately 5-6 thousand people. However, the Archaeological Fest organised on the last Sunday of July, draws the attention of about 2-3 thousand tourists itself. The open-air museum around which become a new centre of the scattered settlement keeps developing new facilities and events (Tobiasz-Lis et al., 2019). The Goth Village is accompanied by two agritourism farms offering accommodation and a variety of services, and local products, also available for purchase in local shop.

The common thread of the Goth Village in Masłomęcz is to use the endogenous potential of the area, through sustainable tourism for socio-economic development. Regarding the concept of spatial justice, various local and regional actors were involved in the process: e.g. residential community groups, local and regional activists and NGOs, the university and other local and regional institutions. This is in line with research by Schellhorn (2010) who found that successful and sustainable tourism development needs to originate within the informal tourism economy, local networks, and family relations. The Goth Village in Masłomęcz is recognized as a great example of a bottom-up approach towards spatial justice and sustainable tourism development. The Goth Village Association promotes spatial justice in the locality through activating localised resources for sustainable tourism development and involving the whole community into sustainable tourism planning.

#### 4. Conclusions

The tourism related initiative the Goth Village developed in Masłomęcz is focused on local identity based on historical and cultural roots, and empowerment of residents of host-area to change the nearest neighborhood, living conditions and the quality of life. Thus, it might be confirmed as an excellent example of sustainable tourism development towards spatial justice goals. Importantly, the initiative received significant conceptual and financial support of both local and external actors and institutions.

Thematization of rural spaces observed in Masłomęcz village resulted in maintenance of memory and cultural identity of the village. On the other hand, exogenous and complementary function of tourism was introduced to contribute to social and economic multi-functional development, and to the improvement in quality of life of the host-area's residents.

#### 5. References

- Barton, A. W., & Leonard, S. J. (2010). Incorporating social justice in tourism planning: Racial reconciliation and sustainable community development in the Deep South. *Community Development*, 41(3), 298–322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330903444051>
- Bramwell, B., & Lane, B. (2008). Priorities in Sustainable Tourism Research. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 16(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.2167/09669580803489612>
- Briassoulis, H. (2009). Factors influencing land-use and land cover change. *Land Cover, Land Use and the Global*

- Change, Encyclopaedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS), 1*, 126–146.
- Bukraba-Rylska, I. (1992). Badanie kultury a odbudowa tożsamości wsi współczesnej. In M. Wieruszewska (Ed.), *Odnowa wsi. Między mitem i nadzieją* (pp. 133–157). Warszawa: IRWiR PAN.
- Cheng, Z., Yang, Z., Gao, H., Tao, H., & Xu, M. (2018). Does PPP matter to sustainable tourism development? An analysis of the spatial effect of the tourism PPP policy in China. *Sustainability, 10*(4058), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10114058>
- Devine, J. A. (2017). Colonizing space and commodifying place: tourism's violent geographies. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 25*(5), 634–650. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2016.1226849>
- Di Bella, A., Petino, G., & Scrofani, L. (2019). The Etna macro-region between peripheralization and innovation: Towards a smart territorial system based on tourism. *Regional Science Policy and Practice, 11*, 493–507. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rsp3.12176>
- Gezon, L. L. (2014). Who wins and who loses? Unpacking the 'local people' concept in ecotourism: A longitudinal study of community equity in Ankarana, Madagascar. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 22*(5), 821–838. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2013.847942>
- Higgins-Desbiolles, F. (2008). Justice Tourism and Alternative Globalisation. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 16*(3), 345–364. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669580802154132>
- Higgins-Desbiolles, F. (2018). Sustainable tourism: Sustaining tourism or something more? *Tourism Management Perspectives, 25*, 157–160. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.11.017>
- Jamal, T., & Camargo, B. A. (2014). Sustainable tourism, justice and an ethic of care: toward the Just Destination. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 22*(1), 11–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2013.786084>
- Juciński, M. (2007). III Biesiada Archeologiczna w Masłomęczu. *Archeologia Polski Środkowej, 9*, 397–398.
- Leśniewska-Napierała, K., & Napierała, T. (2017). The function of hotels in revitalizing rural areas: case studies in Pomerania Province. *Turyzm/Tourism, 27*(2), 63–72. <https://doi.org/10.1515/tour-2017-0014>
- Makowska, M., & Boguszewski, R. (2013). Analiza danych zastanych - zagadnienia wstępne. In M. Makowska (Ed.), *Analiza danych zastanych: Przewodnik dla studentów* (pp. 9–31). Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR.
- Müller, D. K., & Hoogendoorn, G. (2013). Second Homes: Curse or Blessing? A Review 36 Years Later. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 13*(4), 353–369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2013.860306>
- Pazoki, M., & Yourdkhani, M. (2016). Study of the feasibility of rural tourism development and its effects in rural areas (Case study: Toyedarevar rural district). *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality Research, 5*(1), 43–54.
- Ramón-Hidalgo, A. E., & Harris, L. M. (2018). Social Capital, political empowerment and social difference: a mixed-methods study of an ecotourism project in the rural Volta region of Ghana. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 26*(12), 2153–2172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2018.1546711>
- Salazar, N. B. (2017). The unbearable lightness of tourism ... as violence: an afterword. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 25*(5), 703–709. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2017.1293405>
- Schellhorn, M. (2010). Development for whom? Social justice and the business of ecotourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 18*(1), 115–135. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669580903367229>
- Tobiasz-Lis, P., & Dmochowska-Dudek, K. (2017). „Drużyna Gotów” - Masłomęcz. In M. Wójcik (Ed.), *Tożsamość i „miejsce”: Budzenie uśpionego potencjału wsi* (pp. 67–73). Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego. <https://doi.org/10.18778/8088-426-7.09>
- Tobiasz-Lis, P., Dmochowska-Dudek, K., Wójcik, M., Jeziorska-Biel, P., Napierała, T., & Janiszewska, A. (2019). *Goth Village: A Thematic Village in Masłomęcz as an Anchor for New Local Identity and Multifunctional Development of Rural Areas, Poland*. Joensuu. Retrieved from [https://relocal.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2019/05/23\\_PL3\\_GothVillage\\_FINAL\\_PUB.pdf](https://relocal.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2019/05/23_PL3_GothVillage_FINAL_PUB.pdf)
- Wójcik, M., Tobiasz-Lis, P., & Dmochowska-Dudek, K. (2016). Thematisation of space as a local development factor. Case study of Sierakowo Sławińskie and Masłomęcz. *Studia Obszarów Wiejskich, 43*, 113–123. <https://doi.org/10.7163/sow.43.8>
- Yin, R. K. (2015). *Studium przypadku w badaniach naukowych*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.