

Workshop Report: RSA research network on Tourism, Regional Development and Public Policy

3rd Workshop: Business and cultural tourism in metropolitan areas Warsaw, 13-15 September 2009,

Organised by Marek W. Kozak (m.kozak@uw.edu.pl), Centre for European Regional and Local Studies EUROREG, University of Warsaw

The main aim of the RSA research network on tourism, regional development and public policy is to examine tourism diversity from the perspective of regional development in order to identify current challenges and opportunities in a more systematic manner, and hence provide the basis for a more well-informed integration of tourism in regional development strategies and move beyond political short-termism and buzzword fascination. This aim is pursued through a series of workshops and publications, taking place in 2008-2009, starting in Izmir, Turkey, April 2008, then in Aalborg, Denmark, November 2008 and the third in line in Warsaw, Poland on 13-15 September 2009.

The research network has a very wide remit that covers many different dimensions of tourism that are central from a regional development perspective, such as

- place branding and territorial identity
- travel services, including the rise of the budget airline short-trip culture
- on-site services, including standardisation/specialisation in hotels, second homes and rural accommodation
- attraction development, including cultural (culinary, heritage, faith-based), event (sport, music), nature (sea-side resorts, mountain areas), and activity-based (health, sport) forms of tourism
- the role of tourism within regional development strategies and organisations
- tourism labour markets, competences and seasonality.

The third Workshop, organised in the fast developing over 3 million people strong metropolis of Warsaw, was dedicated first of all to the widely understood cultural tourism, business tourism and congress tourism as most typical for metropolitan areas.

The structure and proceedings of the Workshop were built around key note speeches.

After addresses to the participants by Grzegorz Gorzelak, Director of the Centre for European Regional and Local Studies, University of Warsaw, and Aureliane Beauclair, representative of the Regional Studies Associations, the introduction to the workshop themes was done by

Rhodri Thomas (Leeds Metropolitan University) with his speech on “Moving and Shaking: Urban Tourism and Events Policy Formation”. Looking at theoretical framework he suggested the regime theories offer best instruments to explain the successful organization of events. Using an example of Bollywood-Yorkshire co-operation in organization almost ad hoc planned event he made a thorough analysis giving special attention to to the process of mobilising stakeholders of international event.



Photo 1. The Royal Route at the University of Warsaw

The afternoon session was preceded by key note by Martin Selby (Liverpool John Moores University) devoted to “Culture, Consumption and Capital”. Discussing the role of cultural activities in metropolitan development and tourism development he used the case of Liverpool with its cultural strategy, its implementation and impacts on economic and social spheres.

Second day of the Workshop started with key note speech by Henrik Halkier (Aalborg University) on “Tourism Policy and Knowledge Processes in Tourism Development: Preliminary Results from a Comparative Study of European Destinations”. Highly theoretical introduction into the understanding of the notion of tourism policy was followed by proposal of new institutional approach focusing on three aspects: 1. the destination and its political, social, economic contexts; 2. the destination and its destination management organisation (DMO); 3. the DMO and its targets among firms, workforce, tourists, institutions. Research in selected European countries led Henrik Halkier to the conclusion that among crucial

determinants of policies developed and the scope for their future development is the ability to utilise knowledge.



Photo 2. The audience

The last session started with the thorough analysis of the state of the “Meetings industry in Poland” by Krzysztof Celuch (Convention Bureau of Poland, Polish Tourist Organization). Meetings industry, relatively new sector of tourism belongs to the most dynamic in Poland and is being supported by a net of recently established Bureaux which hope to support effectively efforts of the businesses and their organizations.

Sessions organized between those presentations gave the opportunity to lesson to and discuss around 15 contributions. Most of them were directly referring to various forms and problems of tourism in the metropolitan areas; from tourist infrastructure and product development to possibilities of utilisation of specific resources (like post-industrial heritage) or place branding. Certain presentations were also taking into account tourism development in not necessarily metropolitan areas but oriented specifically (with different results) on the metropolitan target group. As in the previous Workshops, the organizers had taken care of the opportunity to have enough time to discuss issues raised by contributors.

Altogether there were around 25 participants representing countries form Taiwan to the UK, with the strongest delegations from Poland an the UK. On top of that, during second day of the Workshop it was attended by a group of students who as the first in Poland study Business Tourism specialization as a separate subject.

During the Workshop Warsaw was flooded with sun. As it took place in the historical buildings of the central campus of the University of Warsaw, before and after hours the participants had the opportunity to take a walk on the surrounded by impressive palaces and

burgher houses and beautifully renovated Royal Route, visit the Royal Castle and the Old Town, museums and historical sites. Or make a trip to the fast growing financial and business districts or shopping and entertainment centres.

Taking into account the experience of all three Workshops (Izmir, Aalborg, Warsaw), this way of organizing exchange of research results and ideas on tourism, regional development and tourism policy seems to fit well into the needs of researchers interested in the field.

M.W. Kozak, 2009