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# STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM AS A TOOL FOR PLANNING AT A LOCAL LEVEL: THE EXAMPLE OF KARLINO COMMUNE (WEST POMERANIAN VOIVODESHIP)

**Abstract:** The study aims to analyse the correlation between planning tourism development at the local level and the development of the space that is being planned. Another goal is to determine the role of the local authorities (of the Karlino commune – *gmina*) in the implementation of strategic activities and the integration of various local beneficiaries around such activities. Further it will analyse how elaborating and implementing tourism development strategies may contribute to the local tourism economy and indicates the role and place of strategic planning in the process of creating and developing the tourist potential of a commune with particular emphasis on Karlino. The paper also discusses the tourism policy of Karlino's local government as well as the strategic goals to be implemented and indicates its tourism development directions. The following research methods have been applied: expert method, observation method (using the inventory technique, physical inventory of the elements of the analysed space and actions taken), monographic method, document research, diagnostic survey analysis (using the survey technique of institutions from the examined area: Karlino commune, the communes of the Białogard *powiat*, the municipalities of the Association of Towns and Communes in the Parsęta Valley), and a critical literature review. The case of Karlino commune and its strategic activities in the field of tourism indicates that planning constitutes one of the most effective tools for local development. Such activity particularly shows that the commune can and wants to direct its socio-economic development based on optional (rather than obligatory) activities focused around the strategic use of endogenous resources. The paper indicates strategic action directions based on an inventory of such available endogenous resources. It shows how the local tourism economy may benefit from a tourism development strategy.

**Keywords:** tourism development strategy, planning, commune (*gmina*).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of tourism has for many years constituted one of the most important issues of tourism policy represented by authorities at various levels, from the national through regional to the local – the municipal level in particular. The reason for this is that tourism is more and more frequently treated as a significant factor in local socio-economic development (tourism being an important or main workplace for the local community). This also increasingly applies to those areas where tourism has not played a significant role

yet, especially an economic one (other forms of management and economic activity, including earning, predominated in these communes). Both the increasing significance of tourism and the intensive development of many local tourist destinations have made it one of the main development tools at the local and, primarily, municipal level. This particularly concerns those areas that previously had an agricultural character and are currently struggling with problems of structural unemployment, and looking for ways to stimulate

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economic activity, create new jobs, etc. Industrialisation is, in these cases, often difficult due to the location or lack of raw materials and, therefore, other forms of economic activity are unprofitable (Głabiński, Duda, Szostak, 2017).

The development and planning of tourism at the local – particularly the municipal level – requires local authorities to think and act non-operationally, i.e. from season to season, yet strategically, as exemplified by a well-developed *gmina* (commune) development plan or a strategy dedicated to tourism (Kosiedowski, Potoczek, 2001; Szostak, 2017). Planning in the field of tourism development at the local level allows specific benefits for individual communes to be indicated, namely:

- identification of the basic problems and tourist development potential of a given *gmina*; accurate inventory of its endogenous tourist potential;
- identification of key tourist development opportunities and threats;
- coordinating all participants in a commune's development processes (authorities, community and local business) around these conditions;
- indicating the tools that are necessary for implementing tourism projects recognised as the most important for local development;
- coordination of these projects in time and space;
- integrating a significant part of a local community around the vision and detailed concepts for local development and joint actions for it (Rochmińska, Stasiak, 2004; Sztando, 2015; Wysocka, Koziński, 2000).

The implementation of the municipal tourism development strategy should contribute to identifying areas of tourist activity that provide the greatest local socio-economic benefits, understanding why various initiatives in different areas of tourist activity have brought market success or failure, indicating which qualifications and endogenous resources are lacking on the local tourist market, indicating the target groups of tourists who will be the beneficiaries of local tourist product development, and creating local tourist products based on its endogenous potential (Stasiak, 2005; Szostak, Zalewski, 2017).

Therefore, the article aims at:

- indicating of the role and place of strategic planning as well as activities in the area of developing and implementing tourism development strategies, in creating tourism products and developing the tourist potential of the commune (Karlino *gmina*) in particular);
- discussing the tourism policy Karlino's local government has adopted for the implementation of strategic goals and indicating its tourism development directions.

## 2. PLANNING AS A MANAGEMENT FUNCTION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Planning constitutes the basic and primary management function, regardless of whether it concerns business entities (commercial, mainly companies) or others, mainly local government at various levels. In order to make planning effective, it should be correlated with inspection, which is another management function. Any good and effective plan should, therefore, have implementation and verification tools, or at least they should be taken into account before implementation begins. Numerous strategies being developed have modules for monitoring implementation and evaluation and, sometimes, commune committees are appointed for this which will increase its effectiveness. This is one of the most important factors determining the implementation of local tourism development strategies (Głabiński, Szostak, Zalewski, 2016).

Planning essentially increases the effectiveness of operations and rationalises further management functions (including organisation). The significance of planning is particularly visible when analysing various development aspects of local government, especially at commune level. The planning process is a result of various causes and functions. On the one hand, local authorities plan activities or a specific development, as required by law or other legal regulations and, on the other, those communes that want to develop specifically should plan how to exploit their resources on the basis of which they intend to, for instance, develop some form of management or economic activity (Szostak, 2016b).

It is the commune authorities who hold responsibility for actively managing the various processes of local development through, above all, regulatory, initiating, organising and stimulating developmental activities. Thus, the authorities should apply modern management tools (including strategic management) and actively influence both the scale and pace of development including effective planning. Effective management of a given commune requires putting decisions into practice and strategic management concepts (i.e. elaborating local development strategies and development strategies for specific areas of the local economy, e.g. tourism or product). By applying efficacious and effective planning in the field of tourism, a commune may make the most of its own assets and tourism resources in the long term. The basis for tourism development is the appropriate use of (endogenous) potential. Strategic activities in the field of tourism allow the development processes of a commune to be shaped as well as solving defined problems within the longer term. The strategic planning

of a commune's tourism economy enables the maximisation of the use of endogenous tourism factors of local development (mainly natural and human) and of local business entities and residents living in the commune. The key aspect in this type of activity is the commune authorities' awareness of the benefits of solving development problems based on tourism as well as their determination in its practical application (Ziółkowski, 2015).

Planning local authority activities refers, in practice, to two basic levels, i.e.:

- the level of the 'hard' resources, including cost control, planning and allocation of resources (e.g. endogenous), setting appropriate targets for implementation, capital needs, etc.; in most cases, tourism development strategies refer to managing resources owned by the commune and located on its territory;
- the level of the 'soft' resources, which primarily include the motivational function, i.e. a plan should both motivate (local authorities, the people and local organisations responsible for implementing plans, commune residents) to act and meet needs; efficient action at the local level usually requires an effective and appropriate action plan; when a commune wants to develop in some field, it should have a plan, which is usually the best motivator for action; the plan is not only used to achieve intended goals, but also becomes a tool to survive in a competitive and increasingly unpredictable market environment (Jarmuż, Tarasiewicz, 2017).

### 3. STRATEGY FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN A COMMUNE

The stimulating and development functions constitute two of the most important which can be currently fulfilled by a tourism economy, and applies primarily to those communes that perceive tourism as a factor stimulating local socio-economic development. Development based on tourism is determined by whether a particular local government possesses tourism resources that would guarantee the implementation of numerous commercial activities. Particular communes that do not happen to have been previously regarded by both residents and local authorities as tourism destinations (in practice, stimulating and development functions were emphasised on the basis of other key resources e.g. agriculture or raw materials). The growing importance of tourism has made many representatives of local authorities begin to perceive as having the potential to stimulate the local economy. Through appropriate planning and the setting of real and achievable socio-economic goals, these communes can gradually

become attractive destinations for tourism and, sometimes, may become an alternative destination for mass tourism (Głąbiński, Szostak, Zalewski, 2016).

Creating and implementing a tourism development strategy in a commune most often results from the needs of effective management of a given space which means that, when shaping their own strategy, local authorities must define a vision for the development of a tourism economy and a mission, as well as the goals they want to achieve within a clearly defined period of time. This strategy additionally becomes a source of information on the functioning of a local tourism market for local authorities themselves, local entrepreneurs operating there, as well as entities from outside a commune willing to do business in a given area and, above all, tourists and the local community (residents). The development and implementation of tourism development strategies includes primarily:

- determining the direction of a given commune in terms of shaping its local tourism product,
- defining quantitative and qualitative economic (including social) goals to be worked on and achieved (articulating the main action priorities for the coming years),
- selecting and appropriate management of necessary tourism resources to achieve these goals, including the commune's mission.

The ineffectiveness of a tourism development strategy being implemented (e.g. failure to implement it, only partial implementation, etc.) and of, which follows, the adopted objectives and choice of tools may be determined by the following reasons:

- poorly conducted socio-economic diagnosis and inventory of tourism resources (incomplete scope of data, omission of certain phenomena, lack of detailed knowledge about the actions of entrepreneurs and directions of tourism resource development, incompatibility of internal and external plans with the local tourism development strategy, etc.);
- no development forecasts;
- incorrectly conducted social consultation and under or over-estimation of their results;
- a lack or an incorrect process of implementing a tourism development strategy (Sztando, 2009).

The process of creating a tourism development strategy involves working out the rules for its creation based on the following principles:

- departing from one-sided or short-sighted thinking – thinking about the development of tourism means planning your future;
- recognising the importance of every competitive advantage as even the smallest may become a factor for further development;
- concentrating on the strengths of action as the basis for quantitative and qualitative development;

- emphasising activities within your market domain, i.e. what you are the best at;
- diversifying production as far as is needed in development activities;
- admitting that strategic development management and, which follows, the tourism development strategy should focus not on overcoming competitors, but on positive development of what a tourist expects a particular tourism product to be;
- developing and investing in marketing tools; conducting market research;
- observing near and more distant surroundings (Meyer, Milewski, 2009).

The higher the level of tourist attractiveness of a given space, the greater the dependence of local government (including communes) on tourism and the development of a tourism economy. Tourist attractiveness consists primarily in the occurrence of what is of value in a given area as well as the quality and capacity of tourism and para-tourism infrastructure. In many communes, tourism is increasingly becoming an important part of the local economy and, thus, becomes an accelerator of local development (Szostak, 2016a).

#### 4. CHARACTERISTICS OF ENDOGENOUS TOURISM POTENTIAL IN KARLINO COMMUNE

According to the Central Statistical Office, the West Pomeranian Voivodeship is the region in Poland that is most frequently visited by tourists. It has been observed, however, for many years that there is an excessive concentration of tourism in the coastal zone. The area of the central part of the province, which includes Karlino commune, is by contrast the least visited part of the region. In connection with the above, while implementing the principles of sustainable development, spatial de-concentration of tourism and its dispersion, or at least part of it into the neighbouring areas, should be striven for. Karlino commune, located about 30 km south of the Baltic Sea, may be an example of such an area and, at the same time, become a beneficiary of dispersion activities. Its area is a natural service base (as an alternative and supplement) to the coastal zone and, therefore, should be a destination for short sight-seeing trips for tourists who go to the seaside, or provide accommodation for people who want to combine a stay at the seaside with activity in rural areas (Główny Urząd Statystyczny w Szczecinie, 2016).

The urban-rural Karlino *gmina* is one of the three communes of the *powiat* (district) of Białogard (Białogard, Karlino and Tychowo) and is located in the north-eastern part of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship. From the south, it borders the rural commune of Białogard

and the commune of Sławoborze (*Świdwin powiat*), while to the north the communes of Dygowo and Gościno (*Kołobrzeg powiat*), as well as Będzino and Biesiekierz (*Koszalin powiat*). In terms of area (141.02 km<sup>2</sup>), it is one of the smallest, second only to Białogard. Of all 114 in the entire province, Karlino ranks 75<sup>th</sup> in terms of area. The commune is located slightly higher in relation to population. In the beginning of 2017, there were 9255 inhabitants which accounts for almost 19.5% of the entire *powiat* population. This puts it in 41<sup>st</sup> place in the voivodship (Urząd Statystyczny w Szczecinie, 2018).

The dominant part of the region is formed by a slightly undulating ground-moraine plateau whose height reaches 30-40 m a.s.l. and clearly increases to the south, reaching around 120 m a.s.l. in the vicinity of Białogard. After the ice sheet had subsided (about 14-12,000 years ago in these areas), the plateau was cut by the wide and winding Parsęta River with its tributaries (the Radew most prominently). They form an extremely picturesque river network, quite deeply cut into clay-sand glacial sediments. The height of the valley reaches 25-27 metres on the section between Karlino and Lubiechów and again in Poczernin. To the north of Karlino, from its confluence with the Radew, the valley widens to 400-500 metres and its floor abounds in oxbow lakes, a testament to the extraordinary meandering of the river. It is currently one of the most interesting landscapes in Karlino commune and, visually, one of the most beautiful fragments of the Parsęta valley in this part of its course (*Strategia rozwoju powiatu białogardzkiego*, 2015). The Radew valley which here is under protection within a Natura 2000 habitat refuge, is yet another picturesque spot in the region. Additionally, the Radew confluence with the Parsęta forms a large island surrounded by wetland peat bogs and marshes. It was here, in a strategic position, that the castle of the Kamień bishops was erected in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, one of the most significant buildings of its type in Pomerania.

The natural course and floor of the Parsęta valley contributed to the fact that since the Middle Ages its salt route from Kołobrzeg to Wielkopolska was one of the most important trade routes of Pomerania and indeed this part of Europe. The salt that was mined in the immediate vicinity of Kołobrzeg, and sold for large sums to European rulers and merchants, was transported along the valley. Not without reason, a bishop's castle and then a settlement (today's Karlino) was erected at the crossroads of former trade routes, at the confluence of the Parsęta and Radew rivers.

The commune of Karlino is mainly agricultural and only 14.2% of its area is covered by forest and other natural vegetation. This is mostly concentrated along the valleys of the Parsęta and Radew rivers, which are the commune's most valuable natural resource. They are additionally covered by special protection within the habitat refuge. Within the commune there are also



small fragments of two other Natura 2000 areas: “Radew, Chociel and Chotla valleys” and “Warno Bog”.

There are only 16 natural monuments in the commune (including several ‘group monuments’ with a dozen or even several dozen trees), the lowest not only in Białogard *powiat* but also in this part of West Pomerania. All of the monuments are animate.

The proximity of Koszalin and the location of Karlino on the route of national road no. 6 (Szczecin-Gdańsk) and provincial road no. 163 (Kołobrzeg-Wałcz) give both the town and the commune a transit character, and passers-through do not pause here even for a short stop for sightseeing or recreation. This translates into the commune’s infrastructure and tourism base (accommodation and catering) which is extremely poor. The Petrico Leisure Complex in Krzywopłoty is the only larger hotel and catering facility. Several nearby villages offer agrotourism farms (Daszewo, Kowańcz) or guest rooms (Lubiechowo, Karlino, Karścino). In Karlino itself there is also a small campsite with caravan plots located by the kayak marina on the Radew river.

The commune’s big advantage is the several marked tourist routes (mainly for walking and cycling) of supra-regional significance that are also used by people from outside the region. These include the well-marked trail of the Pomeranian *Camino de Santiago* and the Salt Trail (*Szlak Solny*). The modern bicycle route along the embankment of the former narrow-gauge railway is also very popular, marked and equipped with the necessary infrastructure such as signposts, stopping places, asphalt paths, etc. In Kołobrzeg the trail connects with the international bicycle route R-10.

## 5. THE TOURISM POLICY OF KARLINO COMMUNE IN RELATION TO BIAŁOGARD *POWIAT* AND THE ‘ASSOCIATION OF TOWNS AND COMMUNES IN THE PARSETA VALLEY’

As indicated by the diagnostic survey, which was conducted in the second half of 2017 for the purposes of the publication being prepared by the research team of the University of Szczecin (Szostak, Głabiński, Duda), the analysed area is interesting, not only for inventory reasons, but as a good research subject for the relationship between planning the development of tourism at the local level and the development of the space that is being planned. In addition, it indicates a role and place for strategic planning in creating and developing the tourism potential of a commune. The survey covered 15 communes: Karlino and neighbouring communes, i.e. those belonging to Białogard *powiat* and selected from the Association of Towns and Communes in the

Parseța Valley. The same questionnaire was filled out by each participant who were all specialised in tourism and employed by a given administrative unit. The commune of Karlino was the main research area and the survey’s goal was to indicate whether it is reasonable to develop a local tourism development strategy for such an area and what conclusions, economic, political and development benefits in particular, could be derived. The survey used was of an inventory and diagnostic character and its purpose was both to collect necessary information on the functioning of the local tourism economy and to obtain information on the knowledge that officials have of what the commune possesses, what pro-tourism activities are carried out and what planning tools are used.

What results from the collected material, analysis of the commune documents (Biuletyn Informacji Publicznej. Urząd Miejski w Karlinie, 2020) and interviews conducted with the employees, is the fact that the commune of Karlino does not have a developed and implemented tourism development strategy (so far tourism development has been based primarily on other strategic documents such as a local development strategy, in which tourism is only mentioned). Analysis of the available documentation indicates that the tourism economy is regarded as one of the directions of socio-economic development and is included in the current development strategy of Karlino (i.e. the strategy indicates the development of the tourism function, through implementing for instance the following tourism goals: development of the tourism base, increasing the tourist attractiveness of the commune, tourist education, promotion of tourism values, building a favourable attitude towards tourism among residents).

In comparison to other communes in Białogard *powiat*, the commune of Karlino is much more active in the field of tourism development and, above all, it undertakes many activities aimed at activation, e.g. through promoting tourism and communal tourism products, organising courses enabling the unemployed to change profession, including courses in entrepreneurship and business establishment, cooperating with tourism organisations of local and regional range, marking roads, routes, tourism facilities, preparing places for sport and recreation as well as keeping the commune clean and attractive.

The diagnostic research indicates that there are a number of pro-tourism and pro-investment activities undertaken (including the creation of a system of incentives and preferences for those investing in the tourism sector, as well as activities aimed at extending the tourist season).

Responsibility for tourism within the organisational structure of the commune have been entrusted to the Department of Promotion and Economic Development. Those who are in addition responsible for the

development of tourism include all the employees of the commune council (within the scope of their work positions), commune authorities (depending on needs), as well as communal units and such organisations as the Sports Facilities, Tourist and Recreation Company, Karlino Culture Centre and the Museum of the Karlino Region.

The commune of Karlino, acting as an administrative unit responsible for the development of local tourism, applies specific forms of promotion to its pro-tourism activities: advertising via press, radio and television; publishing catalogues, folders, leaflets, maps on tourism or individual infrastructure elements, as well as the forms of tourism available in the *powiat* and communes; promoting the region on the internet through its own website [www.karlino.pl](http://www.karlino.pl). In practice, in addition to this website, there are also independent websites whose content directly relates to both positive and negative events that take place in the commune in the field of tourism.

The commune of Karlino implements or has implemented tourism investments of an infrastructural nature, e.g. by preparing ideas for walking and cycling routes, waterborne trails and leisure tourism, and the analysis covered, in particular, the years 2014-2017. The commune has obtained and continues to raise funds from the European Union or other sources for tourist and tourism-related undertakings, including the Homanit Arena, a Regional Centre of Tourism and Sport in Karlino (2014), construction of a hose point for fire-fighters in Konopnicka Street (2014), construction of a storm water drainage system and a section of road along Moniuszki Street and the Biedronka housing estate in Karlino (2016), development of the recreation area and a kayak marina on Nadbrzeźna Street (2017), the installation of photovoltaic systems on the roofs of public buildings (2014), the Museum of the Karlino Region and many other investments.

In the field of tourism, the commune of Karlino mostly cooperates with the neighbouring communes of Białogard *powiat* and the Association of Towns and Communes in the Parsęta Valley. This concerns exchanging folders, leaflets, tourist and cultural information, organising communal events, as well as mutual promotion and participation in planning and implementing tourism investments. Karlino is not a member of the West Pomeranian Regional Tourist Organization, but has indicated the need to intensify the cooperation that was initiated several years ago. The commune is, however, a member of LOT Kołobrzeg Region and LOT Parsęta River with which it carries out joint promotional activities, including participation in domestic and foreign fairs.

Analysing the tourist activity of Karlino commune's authorities, in comparison to the selected communes associated in the Association of Towns and Communes in

the Parsęta Valley, it can be concluded that it is positively oriented towards tourism (i.e. the commune authorities are active in the development of local tourism, implementation and development of tourism products based on the commune's endogenous tourism resources and have a vision and mission for the tourism economy). The only communes that remain more touristically active than Karlino are strictly tourist communes or those with attractive tourism qualities, namely Kołobrzeg and Borne Sulinowo. As the diagnostic study shows, unlike Karlino and other communes, those of Kołobrzeg and Borne Sulinowo have tourism development strategies and, therefore, based on their local tourism economy, they undertake very intensive activities at various levels in terms of activation and development. Tourism is a basic sector of the local economy for these communes. A current analysis of their development indicates that there is a clear relationship between the possession and implementation of tourism development strategies and the positive (particularly the economic) effects that are achieved. Moreover, the possession of development strategies results from the fact that tourism is an important and sometimes basic part of their economies. They also abound in tourist attractions of a high quality and are, additionally, a source of pro-entrepreneurial activities. Karlino has a chance to join them in the near future as, among others, it will have its own tourism development strategy. Kołobrzeg and Borne Sulinowo may, therefore, become role models including activities which have pro-development aspirations based on their endogenous tourism resources in combination with their location in comparison to other touristically attractive areas.

Like most communes of the Association of Towns and Communes in the Parsęta Valley, that of Karlino undertakes activities aimed at tourism activation through e.g. the promotion of tourism and tourist products, implementing infrastructural tourist investments, cooperating with tourist organisations, marking roads, routes and tourist facilities, preparing places for sport and recreation and caring for cleanliness and attractiveness. In addition, Karlino organises foreign language and entrepreneurship courses which others do not, except for Kołobrzeg and Borne Sulinowo. Karlino, like most, is aware that appropriate incentives and preferences should be used for those investing in the tourism sector. A similar situation applies to activities aimed at extending the tourist season.

Despite the awareness that tourism plays an important role in economic and social development it is not clearly displayed in the organisational structure of the individual communal councils. Tourism is most often combined or is a component of offices or positions along with promotion, development, sport or culture. In the case of Karlino, it is the Department of Economic Promotion and Development, which indicates that tourism

and the related economy at this stage of development is not a priority sector.

All the communes consciously select the good promotion tools, yet Kołobrzeg, Szczecinek and Ustronie Morskie are the only ones that additionally include active participation in domestic and foreign fairs. All have and actively use their own websites for current operations, successfully implement local tourism investments and actively obtain EU funds for the development of tourism space. They are aware that the development of tourism cannot take place without cooperation with neighbouring communes, partner towns, local action groups, local tourist organisations or as part of the Association of Towns and Communes in the Parsęta Valley. Most are either members of West Pomeranian Regional Agency of Tourism (ZROT) (Kołobrzeg, Borne Sulinowo, Ustronie Morskie), or intend to cooperate (Karlino), or intend to join this organisation (Gościno, Sławoborze). Three, i.e. Karlino, Kołobrzeg and Borne Sulinowo, are members of LOT; two – i.e. Sławoborze and Gościno – want to establish such an organisation in their area, while four – Dygowo, Grzmiąca, Szczecinek and Ustronie Morskie – are not interested in this form of cooperation. The majority plan to implement investment projects in the coming years while only two, Kołobrzeg and Borne Sulinowo, conduct research on the local tourist market.

## 6. THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR KARLINO COMMUNE

The fact that the commune of Karlino, in its pro-development activities, has engaged external experts and began work on a document entitled “Strategy for tourism development for the commune of Karlino until 2025” resulted from an increase in awareness about the economic and future importance of its tourism assets (previously inventoried), modelled on the activities of communes that are successful in tourism (increase in tourism, increase in tourism income, development of the local entrepreneurship sector, development of tourism service infrastructure). As indicated by analysis of available documentation, this approach was consistent with the path used in numerous studies of this kind. It has a logically formulated plan, covering the following key stages of action: identifying the information base, making a diagnosis and inventory of natural and human resources, analysing the current state of tourism in the commune by assessing tourism potential in particular, applying SWOT analysis, defining a tourism vision and mission in the commune, determining priority areas, strategic and operational objectives of tourism development, developing a plan for tourism development for the coming years and,

above all, indicating the strategic, selected forms and tourism products, determining the directions of development and promotional activities, indicating target groups, recommending the best channels for promotion and marketing, developing an institutional system for implementing and monitoring strategies and reviewing available funding sources.

As a result of this, a vision for the commune was created: “The commune of Karlino is an attractive place for tourism, having a well-established position on the regional market of tourism services, and the commune tourism economy is an important source of income for residents who live in a safe, friendly and clean environment” (Głąbiński, Duda, Szostak, 2017, p. 51). Karlino’s mission, in turn, took the following form: “Comprehensive tourism development of the commune of Karlino through the use of what is of local natural and cultural value, the tourism infrastructure and the potential of the community and the commune’s residents concentrated around tourism” (Głąbiński, Duda, Szostak, 2017, p. 51). The tourism development strategy for Karlino commune is based on eight key strategic goals:

- the tourism economy as a workplace for residents;
- tourism as a stimulator of the economic development;
- extending the tourist season;
- development of the necessary tourism infrastructure;
- creating branded tourism products;
- cooperation with the neighbouring communes and partners from the association of towns and communes in the parsęta valley in the field of tourism in order to build joint regional tourist offers;
- promotion of the tourist offer;
- raising the tourism awareness and tourism education of the inhabitants.

## 7. DIRECTIONS OF STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT FOR TOURISM IN KARLINO COMMUNE

An important strategic activity within the commune of Karlino, is the shaping of a tourist offer and creating the image of Karlino as a commune with a rich tourist offer. Moreover, local tourism branded products should be promoted or, if possible, created as exemplified by *Energia*, a Centre for Science and Technology. Although the centre is only in the phase of planning, the commune already prides itself on the slogan of ‘A Commune with Energy’ (*Gmina z energią*). In the future, this is to be one of the most significant magnets attracting tourists around which the tourism service infrastructure will develop.

By applying the ‘expert method’ in the research and relying on the tourism inventory, as well as analysing possible tourist activities based on local endogenous



resources, the strategic directions of using the economic potential (including tourism) and building its tourist products are:

- the Baltic Sea coast along with the holiday resorts operating there (infrastructure connections, cooperation in the field of joint pro-tourist investments, joint promotion, leisure and accommodation facilities for seaside recreation, an alternative to the sea); this course of action results from the tourist offer of the Karlino commune may complement the offer that tourists relaxing at the seaside may take advantage of;
- transit – road S6. To the north of the commune border there will be an important national road connecting Germany and Szczecin with Tri-City; many tourism-oriented municipalities identify transit routes as both one of the primary sources of tourist inflow and a way to increase accessibility;
- tourism taking advantage of the local endogenous landscape, the Radew and Parsęta valleys in particular;
- a tourist reception and weekend tourism area for residents of the central, eastern and southern parts of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, including the inhabitants of Koszalin and Kołobrzeg;
- recreational tourism in rural areas (including agrotourism);
- based on the ‘multicultural’ development of the commune, looking for new opportunities to create tourism products based on natural and cultural resources;
- creating new, unique tourist products that could attract tourists, e.g. *Energia*, the Centre for Science and Technology;
- intensifying cooperation with the other communes in Białogard *powiat* and those in the Association of Towns and Communes in the Parsęta Valley.

Closer tourist cooperation between the communes of the Association of Towns and Communes in the Parsęta Valley should constitute the commune authorities’ main direction. The purpose of such cooperation should include:

- creating equal conditions for the development of tourism in the associated areas through taking into account their specificities in the socio-economic development plans;
- developing criteria for assessing the quality and standard of tourism services (e.g. accommodation, catering) which are common to the cooperating areas;
- integrating communes by creating uniform operating conditions in tourism, sport, recreation, leisure, protection of natural assets, etc.;
- creating and implementing tourism development programs that are in line with general higher-level development priorities;
- enriching and complementing the cultural offer which is an important element of the local tourism product;

- constructing a joint inter-communal tourist promotion system and a system of information and reservation for tourism services;
- undertaking activities for the development of a tourism and para-tourism infrastructure;
- organising a monitoring system for tourism (research on tourism, identification of motivation and arrival directions) and records of tourism infrastructure facilities;
- undertaking joint action for establishing cooperation with other administrative units from the European Union in the field of tourism;
- joint development of tourist attractions and creation of joint tourism products (e.g. joint further development of the Parsęta River);
- taking steps to create mutual complementarity within the tourist offer;
- cooperation in the field of tourism not only at the planning stage, but also at the stage of implementation of joint proto-tourism projects.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

The case of Karlino commune and its strategic activities in the field of developing the local tourism economy indicates that planning is one of the most effective tools for local development. Such activity, particularly, comes down to the fact that it can and wants to direct its socio-economic development not on the basis of obligatory activities but on optional ones. It turns out in practical terms that it is not only rural communes and their endogenous tourist resources that can be the subject of strategic actions but it also applies in many cities (e.g. Wrocław, Lublin, Stargard, Racibórz, Oświęcim) and *powiats* (e.g. Gryfino *powiat* in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship).

Initiating pro-tourism activities and then creating specific tourism products based on endogenous resources (e.g. based on specialised tourism) would be, in the case of both Karlino commune and other similar ones, the right action which would meet the needs of tourists. Karlino authorities should encourage local entrepreneurs as well as communities to actively engage in pro-development activities based on endogenous tourism resources. Lack of clear intentions or misunderstanding of the problem on the part of local entrepreneurship may contribute to failure in the area of tourism development undertaken. At the same time, any activities related to the development of the local tourism economy should constitute an element of long-term local development and be a model for other communes that intend to follow a similar development path.

To sum up, it should be stated that for many local authorities (including Karlino) planning plays the role



of a marketing tool addressed to social recipients, above all, commune residents. It is usually the case that residents evaluate the activities of local authorities not only through the visible effects of work, but also through what the commune does for its residents and whether it does it in a rational and effective way. Its tangible manifestation is the development and then implementing of a specific plan. Planning at the stage of developing the appropriate document most frequently brings specific practical effects, i.e. through an inventory of resources, the authorities acquire knowledge about what specific development resources they have, where they are located, in what state they are, what can be done with them, and what is the cost of their development. The planning process sets out visible and achievable operating limits; the goals that can be achieved and those which cannot. For communes (*gminy*) and other types of local government, the scope of planning and activities related to it is most often limited by the spatial specificity of a given commune, location, endogenous resources, the activity and entrepreneurship of residents, and the activity of authorities managing a given space. The plan is to maintain order in a chaotic and unpredictable environment. The plan allows local authorities to integrate a local community consisting of residents, local entrepreneurs, organisations, and activists for the development of a commune around a common goal and to motivate them toward targeted action. Without an appropriate plan, local communities tend to fall into idleness, apathy and fatalism. Nobody does anything and, if something is done, it is done in a thoughtless and chaotic way.

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