

**University of Massachusetts Amherst**  
**ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst**

---

Travel and Tourism Research Association:  
Advancing Tourism Research Globally

2013 ttra International Conference

---

# Fair or Unfair: A study on Polish Leader participants in the context of tourism decision-making

Marianna Strzelecka

*Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management University of North Texas*

Yung-Kuei Huang

*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra>

---

Strzelecka, Marianna and Huang, Yung-Kuei, "Fair or Unfair: A study on Polish Leader participants in the context of tourism decision-making" (2016). *Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally*. 6.  
[https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra/2013/AcademicPapers\\_Visual/6](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra/2013/AcademicPapers_Visual/6)

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@library.umass.edu](mailto:scholarworks@library.umass.edu).

**Fair or Unfair:  
A study on Polish *Leader* participants in the context of tourism decision-making**

Marianna Strzelecka  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management  
University of North Texas

and

Yung-Kuei Huang  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

**ABSTRACT**

*The Leader framework developed by the European Commission (2000) was employed in response to rural unemployment and migration to urban areas. Leader aimed at incorporating new forms of governance at the local level by creating a legal basis for cross-sectoral partnerships and fostering stakeholder interaction and public participation. The establishment of Local Action Groups in Poland, however, does not warrant the effectiveness of their stakeholders' participation. Perceived fairness has been recognized as a required precondition for individuals' support for decisions and meaningful involvement in decision-making processes. The primary goal of this paper is to explore the basis of entitlement beliefs that selected Leader participants in Poland use to judge fairness and their participatory behavior in response to issues of fairness of tourism decision-making processes and distribution of Leader benefits.*

**Keywords:** *Leader, Poland, entitlement beliefs, participation in decision-making*

**INTRODUCTION**

Stakeholders' participation in tourism decision-making integrates democratic principles with sustainable development (Bora & Hausendorf, 2006), providing them with opportunities to observe and evaluate the current governance system in a better way (Cole 2006; Hunt & Haider 2001; Lawrence, Daniels, & Stankey 1997; Tosun & Timothy 2003). A socio-economic and political transition from socialism to a market economy experienced by Post-communist Central and Eastern Europe changed entirely conditions for countryside development. In particular, the collapse of the Communist regime was a singular event that made possible private land ownership and the growth of local markets. At the national level, economic reforms focused on liberalization of the market system and political changes concentrated on strengthening a nascent democratic culture (Grabowska & Szawiel, 2001). At the local level, the economic development of transitioning rural communities emerged as a major concern to Central and Eastern European policymakers owing to a rapid increase in migration of rural populations to urban areas.

Poland's accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004 represented an extension of ongoing socio-economic changes that were taking place inside the country (Sandford, 1999; Smith & Hall, 2006). Since 1990, the EU has been an active agent of socio-political change in Poland through such mechanism as export-import treaties or aid and loan programs that impacted the course of local development (Steves, 2001; McDonald, 2003). Emergent regional and local

programs that delegated responsibility for rural tourism to local communities became central to rural development decisions (Marciszewska, 2006; Mularska, 2008).

Aligned with this democratic principle, the *Leader* framework developed by the European Commission (2000) was employed in response to rural unemployment and migration to urban areas (Nash et al., 2006). The program created locally sustainable operations by facilitating public participation in decision-making including development of the tourism infrastructure. In other words, *Leader* aimed at incorporating new forms of governance at the local level by creating a legal basis for cross-sectoral partnerships and fostering stakeholder interaction and public participation (European Commission, 2006, *The Leader approach: A basic guide*). In Poland, representatives of local interests established formal partnerships, known as Local Action Groups (LAGs), to carry out the *Leader* framework. LAGs not only provided opportunities for local stakeholders to evaluate, discuss, and negotiate development possibilities and strategies, but also exercised control over distributions of *Leader* funding.

The establishment of LAGs in a post-communist environment, such as Poland, does not warrant the effectiveness of their stakeholders' participation. Perceived fairness has been recognized as a required precondition for individuals' support for decisions and meaningful involvement in decision-making processes (Hunt & Haider 2001; Smith & McDonough 2001; Tyler, DeGoey, & Smith 1996). It is essential for LAGs to operate and work fairly with their stakeholders. The primary goal of this study is to explore the basis of entitlement beliefs that selected *Leader* participants in Poland use to judge fairness and their participatory behavior in response to issues of fairness of tourism decision-making processes and distribution of *Leader* benefits.

### **WHAT IS AN ENTITLEMENT BELIEF**

The concept of entitlement has been discussed across different disciplines (Naumann, Minsky, & Sturman, 2002). For example, from a legal perspective, individuals' entitlements are viewed as legal rights (Black, 1990). Along the same line, with the rise of democracy in 1980s and 1990s, political scientists termed democratic entitlement to describe citizens' rights to freedom of opinions and expression and participation in public affairs (Franck, 1992). Personality psychologists subscribed to the idea that entitlement could be a stable, core trait of narcissistic personality, reflecting one's expectations of special treatment in a favorable sense (e.g., Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004; Boyd & Helms, 2005). In recognizing the prominent force of social norms, or formally and informally prescribed rules and laws, social psychologists defined entitlement as an evaluative frame of reference deriving from a socially-constructed normative expectation, which prescribes who should or ought to receive something (Feather, 1999, 2003; Lerner, 1987; Major, 1994; Singer, 1981). After all, this definition, as opposed to entitlement as a stable personality trait, can afford discussions of what makes someone, or a certain group of people, entitled to certain outcomes. This relationship between someone and obtained outcomes specified in the sense of entitlement proffers an understanding of how people evaluate and respond affectively and behaviorally to human events associated with justice (Major, 1994).

The focus on the link between an actor and his/her outcome led some social psychologists to use the terms entitlement and deservingness interchangeably (e.g., Major, 1994; Moore, 1991), leaving the muddled state of conceptual overlap. It is worth noting that these two constructs denote distinct psychological meanings. According to Feather (1999, 2003), deservingness refers

to a judgment based on the evaluative structure of one's actions or merit and ensuing outcomes. A consistent contingency between one's actions and outcomes evokes the sense of deservingness, whereas the perceived inconsistency leads to the sense of undeservingness. For example, a good tip given to a restaurant server would be perceived to be deserved if his/her service behavior exceeds expectations. Therefore, a primary conceptual distinction between deservingness and entitlement resides in their locus of causality and controllability (Tomlinson, 2012). People make an inference of (un)deservingness when an actor is believed to cause or have control over future outcomes through his/her actions. In contrast, when causes of an outcome are beyond an actor's control, people rest upon the status or role-based expectations to form the sense of entitlement. In addition, as far as the value of outcomes is concerned, entitlement is a term typically in reference to positive, rather than negative, outcomes. The term deservingness can be typically in reference to both positive and negative outcomes. Empirical work has provided evidence that entitlement and deservingness bear different meanings to people (Feather 2003, 2008; Feather & Johnstone, 2001).

As social psychologists highlighted the force of an external frame of reference in conceptualizing entitlement, we recognize the context-dependent, subjective, and malleable aspects of entitlement. We subscribe to Tomlinson's (2012) general definition of entitlement beliefs, which are "an actor's beliefs regarding his/her rightful claim of privileges" (p. 5). Tomlinson (2012) asserted that entitlement beliefs may be a function of stable personality trait and malleable psychological state influences. The latter influence is contingent upon sociocultural factors, such as prescriptive rights, rules, or normative expectations. Therefore, people may not have consistent views on who is entitled to what because of different personalities and, more importantly, different status or role-based expectations. An actor's entitlement beliefs do not necessarily spring from a legitimate basis. It is also reasonable to assume that a shift in entitlement beliefs may occur through social learning processes.

As theoretical discussions on the antecedents and consequences of entitlements in social or organizational justice have been blooming, empirical efforts in exploring the roles of entitlement beliefs in the context of public participation in community development or governance have been scarce. The subjective and malleable features and subject-matter relevance of entitlement beliefs warrant a qualitative approach to provide more context-rich insights. The current study argues that entitlement beliefs may provide an alternative social psychological lens through which to elaborate on under what circumstances perceived (un)fairness may arise during public participation in rural tourism development as well as to scrutinize intragroup dynamics and participants' involvement in decision making.

## METHODS

The data for the present study was extracted from the first author's more general qualitative inquiry into stakeholders' experiences with LAGs and *Leader*. We discovered dynamics of (un)fairness within LAGs that we felt needed to be explored in the unique post-communist context of Poland. Semi-structured interviews intended of asking the key respondents for the facts as of matter as well as for respondents' opinions about *Leader* events and Local Action Groups. The two Local Action Groups in Pomerania were selected from the list provided by the Pomeranian Marshal Office ([http://www.pomorskie.eu/pl/dprow/dzialnia\\_umwp/lider/lsr](http://www.pomorskie.eu/pl/dprow/dzialnia_umwp/lider/lsr)). After a general overview of established Local Action Groups, two Local Action Groups were targeted for the in-depth study that appeared different due to size and character of *Leader* implementation process. The next step were interviews with selected office managers who

responded to emails. The semi-structured interviews with rural stakeholders in *Leader* were conducted between July and October of 2010, on the basis of available membership information. Interviews were usually conducted in people's homes and lasted between 2 and 6 hours. The sampling of interviewees continued until the researcher felt that the main study themes were sufficiently explored and diverse instances represented.

A total of 18 stakeholders from Local Action Group I and II were interviewed. In addition the leaders of LAG I and LAG II, the interviewees included eleven participants from LAG I and five participants from LAG II. Interviewed LAG I stakeholders included: seven owners of an agro-tourism or rural tourism business, a local artist, a tour guide, an owner of a restaurant and a representative of a local association. Four interviewees from LAG II represented interest of the private sector; two of them were also active members of local associations (Local Tourism Organization, Agro-tourism association). One stakeholder actively participated in LAG II Board of Directors and the other represented a local cycling club. A set of beforehand-prepared questions guided each interview. During the interview the study participants were encouraged to tell their individual stories and talk about individual experiences regarding tourism development in the area.

## **FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

The *Leader* framework builds on traditions of deliberative local democracy focused on improving mechanisms for greater direct public involvement in policymaking through enhancing debate and dialogue. The democratic principles associated with the countryside transition in support of *Leader* operations in Poland included the opportunity to stay informed, to voice and exchange opinions, to exert influence over decisions regarding distributions of financial resources, and to evaluate or monitor execution of decisions. The authors found several issues related to entitlement beliefs and perceived fairness in stakeholders' participation in LAGs.

Officials' personal invitations to participate in *Leader* were viewed by the stakeholders either as a confirmation of an established positive 'relationship' with authorities, or the recognition of their local status. Their perceived entitlements to decision-making about distributions of funds stem from a set of beliefs that they had the best knowledge about the area and were best representatives of local needs and interests. In many instances, the event of establishing a positive relationship between certain stakeholders from the private sector and officials was associated with differentiation between the sub-group of the core 'privileged' LAG members and the 'others'. LAG members division into the 'core' members and 'the new enthusiasts' contributed to rather negative views among 'the new enthusiasts' as they felt neglected and excluded from *Leader* funding and training as opposed to stakeholders who strongly ally with LAG practices.

The core members of one LAG, primarily local officials and those directly linked to them, assumed that 'new enthusiasts' had insufficient knowledge about the *Leader* framework. Another common view among the 'core' members indicated seniority of LAG membership as a basis for designating power in LAG decision-making. This entitlement belief contradicted some 'new enthusiasts' views that the more stakeholders have control over funding decisions, the more benefits the local community can gain from the *Leader* program. While the core members of that particular LAG were motivated to hold onto and prevent the benefits that came with decision-making from being granted to others, seniority of membership might serve as a plausible, informal rule to justify their entitlements.

The 'privileged' members' entitlement belief about control over decision making shaped group's dynamics, the decision-making procedure and its outcomes. The 'new enthusiasts' were expected to assume peripheral role in the LAG's operations. Even few older stakeholders felt excluded or treated unfairly and the growing sense of disappointment and injustice reduced their commitment to *Leader*. Quite reversely, two 'enthusiastic' LAG members felt their direct involvement in decision-making is unnecessary as LAG decisions are legitimate and current 'core members' represent their interests well.

The private sector stakeholders were concerned that too often officials viewed themselves as the only ones who knew how to deal with local issues accepting input exclusively from members who agreed to their views and with whom they previously worked. In particular, the heavy criticism was expressed regarding (1) the illegitimate distribution of *Leader* funding to public sector without agreement of the private sector and (2) the common practice of decision-making beyond the formal meeting. The core members' entitlement belief guided allocation of benefits to support their agenda, the new enthusiasts cast doubt on the procedures that form decisions of funding distribution. Perceived unfairness was boosted by unclear criteria for projects evaluation, which allowed the new enthusiasts to derive meanings from outcomes favorable to public-sector agencies.

Several strategies that stakeholders used in response to perceived deprivation of involvement in decision-making emerged from the data: (1) withdrawing from participation due to unfair procedures and treatment, (2) assuming a monitoring role to stay informed, and (3) negotiating their role in *Leader* by building positive relationships with the core members. The interviews revealed that private-sector stakeholders restrained participation in *Leader* processes as a result of a belief that the public sector retains control over decisions or when the roles of business and social sectors were unclearly defined in LAGs processes.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the current study contribute to the body of research on perceived fairness in tourism development in two primary ways. The current study recognizes entitlement beliefs as an anchor to evaluate fairness of actual decision-making experiences (Feather, 2003; Tornblom & Vermunt 2007), highlighting the threat of different entitlement beliefs to stakeholders' participation. The findings regarding stakeholders' responses to unfairness suggest that, as far as their participation is concerned, their action could go beyond a matter of engagement levels of participation. While few members disengaged from participation in *Leader* due to perceived injustice, some stakeholders took an adaptive approach to change their peripheral role in LAG processes.

The qualitative data from the study indicated that perceived fairness is likely to be associated with entitlement to actively participate in *Leader* decisions-making process or to benefit from *Leader*. We propose that the entitlement beliefs are ingrained in local socio-historical conditions of a place and as such the data interpretation needs to be put in that context. We also noted that both strength of entitlement beliefs and opportunities to engage in decision-making appear to simultaneously influence perceived legitimacy of LAG decisions in Poland. As the main limitation of this study is the relatively small sample of respondents, generalization of the findings is confined within the local conditions of the examined Local Action Groups. To be able to make more generalized though still contextualized claims regarding entitlement beliefs,

perceived fairness and legitimacy of decisions, future research needs to focus on gathering information from a large sample of respondents in a given context.

## REFERENCES

- Black, H. C. (1990). *Black's law dictionary*. St. Paul: West Publishing.
- Bora, A., & Hausendorf, H. (2010). Democratic transgressions of law: Governing technology through public participation. In B. Alfons, & H. Hausendorf (Eds.), *International Studies in Sociology and Social Anthropology* (pp. 10-18). Leiden & Boston: Brill.
- Boyd, H. C. III, & Helms, J. E. (2005). Consumer entitlement theory and measurement. *Psychology & Marketing*, 22(3): 271-286.
- Campbell, W. K., Bonacci, A. M., Shelton, J., Exline, J. J., & Bushman, B. J. (2004). Psychological entitlement: Interpersonal consequences and validation of a new self-report measure. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 83: 29-45.
- Cole, S. (2006). Information and empowerment: The keys to achieving sustainable tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 14(6): 629-644.
- Franck, T. M. (1992). The emerging right to democratic government. *American Journal of International Law*, 86: 46-91.
- European Commission. (2000). *Commission Notice to the Member States of 14 April 2000 laying down guidelines for the Community initiative for rural development (Leader+) (2000/C 139/05)*.
- Feather, N. T. (1999). *Values, achievement, and justice: studies in the psychology of deservingness*. Hingham: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Feather, N. T. (2003). Distinguishing between deservingness and entitlement: Earned outcomes versus lawful outcomes. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 33: 367-385.
- Feather, N. T. (2008). Perceived legitimacy of a promotion decision in relation to deservingness, entitlement, and resentment in the context of affirmative action and performance. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 38: 1230-1254.
- Feather, N. T., & Johnstone, C. (2001). Social norms, entitlement, and deservingness: differential reactions to aggressive behavior of schizophrenic and personality disorder patients. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27: 755-767.
- Hunt, L., & Haider, W. (2001). Fair and effective decision making in forest management planning. *Society and Natural Resources*, 14: 873-887.
- Lawrence, R. L., Daniels, S. E. & Stankey, G. H. (1997). Procedural justice and public involvement in natural resources decision making. *Society and Natural Resources*, 10: 577-589.
- Lerner, M. J. (1987). Integrating societal and psychological rules of entitlement: The basic task of each social actor and fundamental problem for the social sciences. *Social Justice Research*, 1(1): 107-125.
- Leventhal, G. G. (1980). What should be done with equity theory? New approaches to the study of fairness in social relationships. In J. G. Kenneth, M. S. Greenberg, & R. H. Willis (Eds.), *Social exchange: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 27-55). New York: Plenum Press.
- Major, B. (1994). From social inequality to personal entitlement: the role of social comparisons, legitimacy appraisals, and group membership. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 26, pp. 293-355). San Diego: Academic Press.

- Marciszewska, B. (2006). Cultural tourism and socioeconomic development in Poland. In Smith, M., & Robinson, M. (Eds). *Cultural tourism in a changing world: politics, participation and (Re)presentation*. Channel View Publications, Clevedon
- McDonald, M. (2003). *European community tourism law and policy*. Dublin: Blackhall Publishing.
- Michalska, S. (2008). Aktywnosc społeczna i postawy obywatelskie mieszkancow wsi a rodzaje ich zyciowych orientacji. In Podedworna H., & Ruszkowski P. (Eds.), *Spoleczne aspekty zrownowazonego rozwoju wsi w Polsce* (pp.123-143) Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar Spolka z o.o.
- Moore, D. (1991). Entitlement and justice evaluation: Who should get more, and why. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 54(3): 208-223.
- Nash, R., Koyabe, D., & Stansbie, P. (2006). Impact of European Union funding on tourism in the Grampian Region. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 8: 247–261.
- Naumann, S. E., Minsky, B. D. & Sturman, M. C. (2002). The use of the concept “entitlement” in management literature: A historical review, synthesis, and discussion of compensation policy implications. *Human Resource Management Review*, 12: 145-166.
- Sandford, G. (1999). Parliamentary control and the constitutional definition of foreign policy making in democratic Poland. *Europe–Asia Studies* 51(5): 769–797.
- Singer, E. (1981). Reference groups and social evaluations. In M. Rosenberg & R. H. Turner (Eds.), *Social psychology: Sociological perspectives* (pp. 66-93). New York: Basic Books.
- Smith, P. D., & McDonough, M. H. (2001). Beyond public participation: Fairness in natural resource decision making. *Society and Natural Resources*, 14: 239-249.
- Steves, F. (2001). Poland and the international system: external influences on democratic consolidation. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 34(3): 339-352.
- Tomlinson, E. C. (2012). An integrative model of entitlement beliefs. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*. DOI 10.1007/s10672-012-9208-4
- Tornblom, K. Y., & Vermunt, R. (2007). Towards an integration of distributive justice, procedural justice, and social resource theories. *Social Justice Research*, 20: 312-335.
- Tosun, C., & Timothy, D. J. (2003). Arguments for community participation in tourism development. *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 14(2): 2-11.