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Bicycle Transport as an Opportunity to Develop Urban Tourism – Warsaw Example

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Abstract

The article presents innovative solutions in respect of cycling tourism in Warsaw. To illustrate it, a bike rental system is presented. The article characterizes the level of bicycle transport in voivodeships. In order to do that, the report entitled, “Transport i łączność” [“Transport and Communication”] and the data of the Central Statistical Office (GUS) “Turystyka” [“Tourism”] are utilized. It can be noticed that the development of longer cycle lanes and building new ones as well as bike stands and parks will enable tourists and the inhabitants of Warsaw to increase the share of bicycle use for transport in urban tourism.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, transport is one of the most important factors determining the existence and development of cities (Kozłak, 2008). Almost all cities are under the pressure of traffic congestion. That congestion results in numerous social conflicts and is not in harmony with the natural environment, and is the main source of most transportation problems. In such a situation, there is an urgent need to adopt a transport development model that could guarantee the mobility adequate to social demand but with the lowest possible impact on the environment. The constitutional principle of sustainable development is the way to solve the problem.

In urban tourism, means of road transport (cars, buses and bikes) and rail transport (trams, trolleybuses and underground) are especially important. The infrastructure of bicycle transport includes: tourist trails, cycle lanes, and

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bicycle stands and parks. Bicycle traffic is mentioned in domestic and international documents as an important element of a sustainable transport model. The highlighted advantages are not only connected with transportation and ecology but also with health.

At present, it can be observed that cyclists, including people who use bicycle-sharing systems, are very active. Bicycle rentals are services offering the use of a bike on a short time basis, for a deposit or at a fixed rate. The bicycles can be of various types: traditional ones, tandems or carrier cycles. The bicycle is the most environmentally friendly means of transport as riding a bike does not poison the environment or emit fumes.

The article aims to present bicycle transport exemplified by the bicycle-sharing system in Warsaw. It also characterizes the level of bicycle transport infrastructure in voivodeships. In order to do that, the report entitled, “Transport i łączność” and the data of the Central Statistical Office “Turystyka” are utilized.

2. Bicycle transport and urban tourism

Urban transport is a business activity that consists in transportation services provided within the area of a city and in its suburbs (Podolski, 1985). The issue of urban transport is connected mainly with the transportation of passengers in Poland it is often substituted by a term ‘komunikacja miejska’ [‘urban communication’ (sic!)] (Wyszomirski, 2009). Depending on the mode of transportation, urban transport can be divided into road, rail and water (Sambor, 1999).

The term ‘urban’ highlights the basic area of transport operations but it does not specify it thoroughly. Urban transport operations, as a rule, go far beyond the administrative borders of a city/town and reach the suburban areas actually in another municipality. The basis for qualifying certain suburban areas to be serviced by urban transport is the character of traffic in the area determined by the function it fulfils for the city/town. Many suburbs play the same role as city districts. These include all the areas with the majority of dwellers working in the city and those where there are many institutions employing city dwellers, or where there are recreational facilities for city dwellers (Sambor, 1999).

Urban tourism is very important for the development of urban transport. Urban tourism, as a differentiated, complex and dynamic phenomenon, escapes thorough definitions and analyses and that is why some researchers prefer to use a term ‘big city tourism’ (Zajączkowski, 1978). There is no doubt that tourism in urban areas adopting different forms has become an important element of the economic landscape of most big cities but also a factor in revival and development (Pender, Sharpley, 2008).

Over the last years, there has been a significant change in the relationship between demand and supply in urban tourism. While in the past cities could differentiate their tourist offer and through marketing attract a certain type of visitors, nowadays the market of tourist towns is so saturated that many of them have lost their uniqueness (AASHTO Executive Committee, 1999).

Tourist trails, including cycling paths, are another important issue in tourism. They mark routes for tourists by specifying descriptions and characteristic features (Frade, Ribeiro, 2014).

3. Tourist cycling routes and bike paths

Polskie Towarzystwo Turystyczno-Krajoznawcze [Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society] defines a tourist trail as a “track segregated in the area that is used for excursions, marked with unique blazes (symbols) and equipped with information facilities, which ensure that a tourist without any specific skills or experience can safely and calmly go along in every season and any weather conditions”. There are differences between trails for walking, skiing, cycling, kayaking and horse riding (Instrukcja, 2007).

It is essential that the traffic on tourist trails is regulated. It is always necessary to comply with the signs. In winter or when being modernised, some trails can be closed. Non-compliance with the signs equals pure stupidity and means unnecessary risk for one’s own health and life. Moreover, the right of way is as follows: hikers first, horse-drawn vehicles after them, cyclists last.

On the other hand, a bike lane (a path for bicycles), according to the Central Statistical Office, is an “independent road or its part (e.g. a lane) designated for bicycle traffic and marked with adequate traffic signs” (Transport i Łączność, 2012). It is characterised by having symbols marking its course and helping to find the right way.

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