

MARZENA MAKOWSKA-ISKIERKA*

Suburban zones as recreation and tourism reception areas for inhabitants of Polish metropolises

Abstract. The aim of the article is to characterise suburban zones, particularly as area performing recreational and tourist functions for inhabitants of large cities (metropolises). The study presents goals and motivations, frequency and duration of recreational and tourist activity undertaken in suburban areas based on information collected from a representative group of Polish urban dwellers. The study is based on a review of the literature, the author's observations and survey results. Essential quantitative data were obtained from a survey conducted on a representative sample of the Polish population carried out on the end of 2014 using the standardized questionnaire survey method as part of the Omnibus Express service (CATI). Most respondents contacted in the survey undertook tourist and recreational activity in the suburban zone every day or almost every day, usually accompanied by other family members. Their main intention was to rest and enjoy some recreational activities, visit relatives or friends and stay on summer holiday plots. The choice of the suburban zone was to a greater extent motivated by its tourist assets and familiarity with the area than its proximity to the place of permanent residence. Many respondents used some form of accommodation during those stays, including their own (private) summer houses, or relatives' / friends' flats, or hotel accommodation. The monitoring of tourist and recreational activity in Poland should be continued and should also focus on spaces used for these purposes. More extensive research would make it possible to identify patterns and trends, also at regional level. Consequently, this kind of research would facilitate a more effective planning and organization of tourism and recreation, which would bring measurable social, economic and spatial effects.

Keywords: suburban zone, metropolises, recreation, tourism, tourism reception area, tourist recreation

JEL Codes: L83, Z31, Z32

* University of Lodz (Poland), Faculty of Geographical Sciences, Institute of Urban Geography and Tourism Studies, e-mail: marzena.makowska@geo.uni.lodz.pl, orcid.org/0000-0003-4163-7561.

1. Introduction

Because of their proximity, suburban areas, which form the outer zone of metropolitan areas, are conveniently linked to the centre. They are usually attractive areas, both as regards their natural conditions (access to forest complexes and water reservoirs) and anthropogenic assets. They offer vast open spaces, tranquillity and direct contact with nature, as well as an opportunity to explore local cultural heritage. In addition, their recreation and tourism infrastructure has been systematically improving, encouraging people to spend their leisure time in attractive and varied ways. Thanks to their proximity and accessibility, suburban areas and their local assets can easily be explored at weekdays and during holidays. For this reason they are potentially attractive tourism reception areas, especially for inhabitants of large agglomerations, tired with the hustle and bustle of a large city and the stressful pace of life. City dwellers miss peace and quiet and contact with nature, where they could satisfy their recreational needs. The aim of this article is to verify this assumption, based on a review of the literature, the author's own observation and a survey. Since the study focuses on the demand and not the supply side, no quantitative or spatial analysis was conducted. Instead, a qualitative description of the characteristic features of suburban areas¹ is provided, together with an explanation of their relevance for tourism and recreation activity of inhabitants of Polish metropolises.

2. The characteristics of suburban zones²

A suburban zone (the key term in this article) is the area surrounding the central city, strongly connected with it through a number of functions (e.g. being the breadbasket of the area, with housing and tourist-recreational functions). Since the mid-1900s, foreign and Polish literature has explored many interesting topics devoted to these problems [e.g. Dobrowolska 1964; Beaujeu-Garnier, Chabot 1971; Kielczewska-Zaleska 1972; Straszewicz 1980, 1985; Koter 1985; Maik 1985, 1992; Dziewoński 1987]. Different authors have analysed the suburban zone as the city's agricultural base [Straszewicz 1954; Kosiński 1954], the area and range of the city's influence [Suliborski 1985]; they have also discussed transformations and processes occurring in the suburbs [Dziewoński 1987;

¹ A comparison between metropolitan areas of Krakow and Łódź with respect to tourism can also be found in another article by the author [Makowska-Iskierka 2015a].

² A review of the literature concerning suburban zones and a list of sources cited after M. Makowska-Iskierka [2011].

Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz 1995a], as well as their functions [e.g. Kosiński 1954; Maik 1985; Liszewski 1987a]. Other authors have formulated theories regarding the creation and growth of suburban zones [e.g. Christaller 1963; Korcelli 1969]. However, one issue that is still the subject of discussion is how to delimit suburban zones and based on what criteria [Dobrowolska 1964; Jelonek 1985; Liszewski 1985; Straszewicz 1985; Suliborski 1985]. Despite numerous attempts to address the problem theoretically [e.g. Dobrowolska 1964; Beaujeu-Garnier. Chabot 1971; Kielczewska-Zaleska 1972; Straszewicz 1980, 1985; Koter 1985; Maik 1985], researchers specializing in different sciences are still in disagreement about how to perceive suburban zones. The publication entitled “Pojęcia i metody badań strefy podmiejskiej”³ [Straszewicz (ed.) 1985] presents a geographical approach to the understanding of the character of this particular type of space in Poland and other European countries. Other interesting works include those by Stanisław Liszewski and Jolanta Gryszkiewicz [Liszewski 1987b, Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz 1998].

In general, suburban zones are defined as areas surrounding or adjacent to a city and linked to it through a system of functions. However, they should not be viewed merely as neighbouring areas [Dziwoński 1987; Maik 1992], as they offer a specific mix of urban and rural living conditions [Chabot 1948]. In areas where such a mixture occurs there is a variety of direct and multilateral relationships but the influence of the city is the predominant force [Kielczewska-Zaleska 1972; Koter 1985]. According to Ludwik Straszewicz, suburban zones are linked with the city – together, they form one system and are an integral part of the urban organism; they develop thanks to the influence of the city (they depend on its economic growth, history, size, socio-economic importance); on the other hand, they perform certain functions which ensure the development and existence of the central city; suburban zones include towns and satellite housing estates, inhabited by people working and studying in the city [Straszewicz 1985].

A suburban zone is an area situated between the mother city and traditional rural areas, complementary to the city and transformed under its influence. It is characterised by the mode and intensity of land exploitation, the character and styling of its buildings, or the number and density of population [Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz 1998]. According to Roman Szkup, this part of geographical space changes over time (under the influence of the city) and in space (as a result of transport accessibility) and is shaped by the coexistence and interpenetration of urban and rural influences [Szkup 2003].

The urban zone is influenced by the mother city, whose specific features influence the way the suburban zone develops. The longer the city has existed, the more developed and the more distinctive its suburban zone becomes [Kielczewska-

³ Terminology and research methods in the study of suburban zones.

Zaleska 1972]. However, functions of the latter also influence the former, making the city, to some extent, dependent on its suburban zone [Straszewicz 1985]. Suburban zones can perform various functions [Harasimowicz 2018] connected with transportation, food supply, housing, industry, health care and recreation, public utilities and sanitation services, sports, research, spa treatments. It is these functions that determine the individual character of the zone rather than its spatial form [Liszewski 1987b].

As mentioned earlier, suburban zones are areas undergoing dynamic urbanization processes and functional, morphological, demographic and social transformations [e.g. Dąbrowska 1996; Jażdżewska 2005; Zimnicka, Czernik 2007]. Their development results in the creation of an urban-rural continuum [e.g. Benet 1963], where the differences between the suburban countryside and the city gradually disappear. The suburban zone has also been perceived as the manifestation of countryside urbanization [Beaujeu-Garnier, Chabot 1971] or as a tug of war between the city and the surrounding countryside. Along with the growth of the city, the suburban zone becomes another urbanized district and expands at the cost of the former middle part of the supply zone, which moves further and further away [Kielczewska-Zaleska 1972]. Transformations of this type are often caused by the development of tourism; in the literature, these processes are referred to as tourism urbanization [Dziegieć 1987, 1988, 1995; Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz 1995b, 1998; Makowska-Iskierka 2004, 2005, 2011].

To sum up, the suburban zone is the space of interpenetration between the city and the countryside, modernity and cultural tradition, industry and agriculture, workplace and home, different lifestyles, architectural styles and forms. It is an area where one can observe the flow of people and services, the interweaving of roles, relationships and functions.

In this article, the suburban zone is analysed in the context of metropolitan areas, defined in terms of its functional integration and on the basis of continuous urban development⁴. Rather than focusing on the problem of delimiting the suburban zone, the emphasis is on its character and functions. In accordance with the concept of a tourist metropolitan region or metropolitan tourist-recreational region, which is a multifunctional area comprising the central city and its functional zone, the suburbs are defined as areas situated in the outer zone of the city (the metropolis), performing tourist and recreational functions. They serve as a tourism reception area, mainly for city residents, who usually visit them at weekends, but also on weekdays and during holidays, mostly for recreational purposes. The metropolitan city, as the centre of the region, is the final or stop-over

⁴ This is the result of the expansion of residential areas around the city and the pushing out of tourist (summer holiday) settlements further away from the city (a stage in the urbanization of suburban areas [Makowska-Iskierka 2011]).

destination of trips made for business, educational or cultural purposes [Liszewski 2005].

Given the topic of this article, one should start by considering tourism and recreational functions of suburban zones. The recreational function is connected with the practice of building summer holiday facilities near large cities in the 19th century, which contributed to the gradual development of suburban zones [e.g. Liszewski 1987a; Faracik 2007; Mantey 2017]. Since the 1960s, Polish researchers have been investigating problems associated with the spatial organization of weekend recreation in suburban zones of large cities, paying special attention to natural conditions and forms of tourism development [e.g. Król 1981; Matczak 1981]. Since the 1970s, they have been particularly interested in the phenomenon of “second homes” [cf. Wępa 1974; Kowalczyk 1994]. Tourism and recreation near large cities were the topic of a conference organised by the IGU⁵ Tourism and Recreation Geography Commission in 1986. At that time, researchers conducted interesting studies regarding tourism in suburban zones of major European cities, which were presented in the Commission’s report [*Tourism et loisirs ...* 1983], and in *Folia Geographica* No. 5 from 1985, and in *Turyzm* vol. 2, from 1992. One should also mention studies conducted at universities in Warsaw, Cracow, Poznań, Wrocław, and Łódź. A detailed review of the literature devoted to suburban zones and results of research on the development of tourism and its effects in areas surrounding major Polish cities can be found in a few publications based on doctoral dissertations [Matczak 1982; Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz 1998; Faracik 2006; Makowska-Iskierka 2011].

The bibliography related to the use of suburban zones for recreational and tourism purposes, particularly by inhabitants of large cities, is rather limited. In Poland, these issues have been addressed by Elżbieta Dziegieć and Stanisław Liszewski [Dziegieć, Liszewski 1984, 1985], and, indirectly, at the regional level, by a number of other authors [e.g. Kostrzewa 1991; Wiluś 1991; Latosińska 1997; Włodarczyk 1999; Faracik 2011; Liszewski 2015; Makowska-Iskierka 2015b, as well as Sołtysik 2013; Sołtysik et al. 2016; Mantey 2016, 2017; Zamelska, Kaczor 2017]. The special character of weekend recreational tourism has been described based on information about the suburban zone of Wrocław [Sołtysik 2013], and partly in articles concerning Warsaw, Krakow, Poznań and Łódź. Review publications on tourism practiced by Poles [e.g. Luberda 2014; Makowska-Iskierka 2014; Berbeka 2016; Jarosz 2016; Niemczyk 2016] mention only weekend trips, categorised as domestic, short-term tourist trips, which are the most popular form of travelling, frequently to suburban areas. Unfortunately, there is a lack of studies on short-term recreation, including one-day trips. Analyses regarding recreational activities of various socio-demographic groups are usually based on

⁵ International Geographical Union.

information from small samples, refer to local conditions and can hardly serve as the basis for generalizations. This evident research gap has prompted the author to conduct a representative survey in order to study how dwellers of Polish metropolitan areas use suburban areas.

3. The specific nature of suburban recreation and tourism reception areas

In the literature, a tourism reception area or tourism concentration area is defined as a place, destination or its part, a group of localities, a region or a country, which attracts tourist traffic by virtue of its tourism assets [e.g. Hendel 2018]. Michał Żemła emphasizes that the term can refer to any area which is a place of intensive tourism and its socio-economic and natural outcomes, which has assets and tourism infrastructure that can be perceived by tourists as a separate and homogeneous whole. From the perspective of a tourist looking for a tourism product, such an area is an alternative to other areas (brands) [Żemła 2010: 29].

A tourism reception area can be identified and assessed in terms of factors that are relevant for tourism consumption, i.e. transport accessibility, tourism assets (which can be turned into tourist attractions after being adjusted to tourists' needs), services provided by operating equipment and using the general infrastructure [Dziedzic 1998].

Suburban zones of large cities often hold large tourism potential, i.e. a set of tourism (natural and anthropogenic) assets (attractions), which may be of interest to tourists. When the existing tourism potential is enriched by the accommodation and gastronomic infrastructure, transport, tourist information, etc., it can become an attractive tourist product. The same area can offer several products intended for different groups of users. A tourism reception product is usually a conglomerate of many products with various links and relationships, generated by different entities, which pursue different, sometimes contradictory aims [Żemła 2011a: 1073].

In order to take advantage of the resources provided by the city's surroundings, various forms of activity are undertaken. The most popular and most frequently observed in suburban areas include active recreation (e.g. jogging, going for walks, Nordic walking, cycling, mushroom picking, fishing, horse riding), staying on a recreational plot, or in a "second home" or at a holiday facility, often combined with passive recreation (e.g. reading, sunbathing), sightseeing and recreational visits (usually short), visiting family or friends, as well as participating in a one-time or regular event, taking part in some classes (e.g. on an educational farm or in a thematic village) or coordinating events (e.g. family

celebrations, such as wedding parties, jubilees, tem-building parties). How the suburban space is used depends on individual preferences and on the current offering available for a given group of users. These are usually private individuals, mainly families with children or couples, elderly people, disabled people, or social groups (including organized groups of club or union members, company workers). They may share an aim and interests, e.g. nature lovers, people interested in active recreation.

Recreational or tourist stays in suburban areas are usually short (weekends are popular) and take place during short and medium periods of leisure time, not far from the place of permanent residence; they do not require special planning or specialist programming; they are mostly organized individually (organized group trips are rare), do not require much organization or financing, involve a variety of activities, which provide a quick regeneration of physical and mental powers.

Suburban zones can be used for recreational and tourist purposes. This division depends primarily on the amount of time spent on a single occasion and on the character of stay. Following Bogdan Włodarczyk's way of thinking, the leisure time space includes tourism space and recreation space. The latter is also an element of the home (family) space. Recreation space is a part of geographical space, which has qualities favourable for different forms of recreation, involving significant social and spatial recreational processes [Włodarczyk 2009, 2014]. On the other hand, tourism space is the part of geographical space where tourist traffic occurs; it is functionally distinct, comprises natural elements (natural environment), permanent outcomes of human activity in this environment (cultural and economic), as well as human environment in the social sense [Liszewski 1995]. Different authors also use the concept of recreational-tourist space [Baczwarow, Liszewski 1998].

Broadly speaking, recreation is any activity which helps the body to regenerate and regain strength, usually by resting and engaging in fun activities, possibly involving physical activity, creativity and effort; it is voluntary and is undertaken in free time; it is determined by personal preferences and interests and does not have to involve travelling. According to Małgorzata Durydiwka, recreation is synonymous with rest [Durydiwka 2012]. On the other hand, tourism is a form of recreation, which, apart from a change of activity, also involves a change of surroundings. It can be defined as a spatial phenomenon involving trips outside the place of permanent residence and the use and transformation of the geographical environment for the purposes of tourist traffic [Rogalewski 1974]. It is a temporary, voluntary change of the place of stay (the environment and the rhythm of life), as well as staying away from the place of residence for educational, recreational and health-related purposes. Tourism can be viewed as a form of active recreation (tourist recreation) through the consumption of travel and tourism services.

According to Marin Bachvarov and Elżbieta Dziegieć, in the English language literature, tourism is a narrower concept, understood as a form of recreation involving both physical and educational activities [Bachvarov, Dziegieć 2005: 88]. It involves trips away from the place of residence for recreational purposes and to celebrate holidays, including at least one overnight stay. Recreation also takes place away from home, but it lasts shorter – less than 24 hours. This is the meaning scope of both concepts that is adopted in this article. People who participate in recreational activities during their leisure time are called “recreants” [after Dewailly, Flament 1993], and when these activities are performed away from their place of residence and are part of tourism, they are referred to as “trip makers” or “visitors” (the World Tourism Organization definition).

Recreation and tourism activities may be considerably different but they are linked by some spatial relationships. Consequently, it is possible to talk about tourist recreation, which combines the features of both phenomena, including the perspectives of participants, economic agents and the physical space [Bachvarov, Dziegieć 2005: 91]. This combined concept seems to be adequate to describe activities undertaken by inhabitants of metropolises in suburban areas.

4. Research methodology

The principal features of tourism and recreation practiced in Poland, in the zones surrounding cities (i.e. outside the centre, in the outer area) are described in the article by Marzena Makowska-Iskierka, which indicates that the special character of the metropolitan area is mostly determined by city inhabitants, who are its main users [Makowska-Iskierka 2015b]. The main goal of the present study is to provide a detailed analysis of activities undertaken by inhabitants of Polish metropolises in suburban areas. The aims, motivations, frequency and duration of stays in suburban areas during recreational and tourist activities are analysed using information collected in a survey of a representative group of Poles.

Essential quantitative data were obtained from a survey conducted on a representative sample of the Polish population. At the author’s request, the Homo Homini Public Opinion Research Institute carried out the task towards the end of 2014 using the standardized questionnaire survey method, as part of the Omnibus Express service (a study on a representative population sample). The technique used was CATI, i.e. the computer-aided telephone interview. Random and quota sampling method was adopted (N_{min.}=1067; margin of error – 3%, confidence level – 0.95), based on demographic data about the Polish population provided by the Central Statistical Office (GUS) and guaranteeing representativeness of the study. The sampling frame consisted of the widely available, updated

and complete list of addresses and telephone numbers, supplemented with a random dialling list, created from randomly chosen cell phone numbers, generated on the basis of prefixes allocated to individual operators within the Telephone Numbers System in the public land mobile network (PLMN T2). The numbers were generated proportionally to the market share of individual cell phone operators. The survey was conducted among inhabitants of Poland, of both sexes, who were 15 or older on the survey day. The sample reflected the distribution of socio-geographical features across the population, and sampling variation was counterbalanced by using stratification based on population density and distribution in different size classes of localities. The demographic variables included sex, age, education, income and seven categories of the place of residence (villages, towns up to 49,000, 50,000-99,000, 100,000-199,000, 200,000-400,000 and cities above 500,000, as well as Warsaw; the size classes were established for individual provinces.

For the purposes of this article, metropolises are defined as cities inhabited by over 500,000 people, namely the cities of Warsaw, Cracow, Łódź, Wrocław and Poznań. It should be emphasized that of the information collected during the CATI survey, only data concerning this group of respondents were analysed.

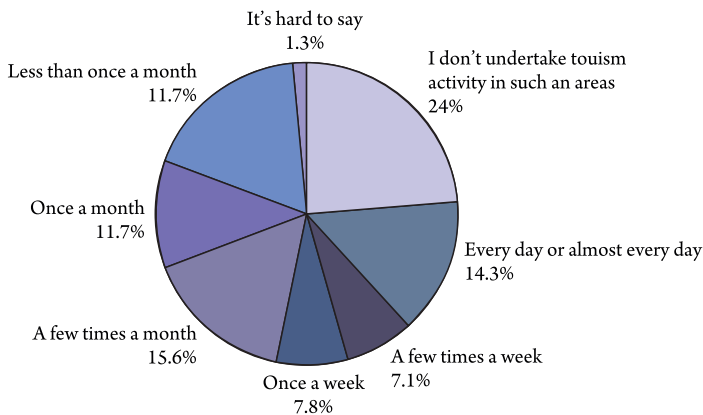
5. Inhabitants of Polish metropolises as users of suburban zones – survey results

The aim of the poll was to study the character of recreation and tourism activity undertaken in suburban areas, particularly by people living in metropolises. To obtain the necessary information, respondents were asked questions about how often and when they visit suburban zones of large cities (Figs. 1 and 2), what type of accommodation they usually use (Fig. 3), purposes of their stays (Fig. 4), reasons for choosing suburban zones (Fig. 5) and who they usually go with (Fig. 6).

Figure 1 shows information about the frequency of recreation and tourism activity undertaken by metropolis dwellers in suburban zones of large cities. Three fourths of respondents in this group said they used the suburban space for this purpose, though with different regularity: nearly 30% visited such areas every day or at least once a week, 26.3% - a few times a week, and 18.2% - less frequently. 14.3% of metropolis inhabitants took advantage of areas surrounding the city in their leisure time every day or almost every day, which constituted the largest share among all five categories of the place of residence. It should probably be linked to the vogue for healthy lifestyle or to the particular lifestyle of metropolis inhabitants, who appreciate and engage in activity (especially physical) in their free time. Respondents in this group are usually young, well-educated employees,

who understand that regular physical activity is the key to good health and a form of prevention against chronic or civilizational diseases [cf. Biernat 2011; Piotrowska 2017]. This interpretation is supported by the findings of the GUS report on the participation in sports and physical recreation [GUS 2017], which indicates that many young people regularly engage in such activities and that their frequency tends to change with age and is correlated with the career cycle.

Fig. 1. Frequency of tourist and recreational activities undertaken by inhabitants of Polish metropolises in the suburban zone of a large city*



* Original wording of the question: “Jak często / z jaką regularnością podejmuje Pan/i aktywność turystyczną i rekreacyjną w strefie podmiejskiej dużego miasta (in. w okolicy dużego miasta)?”

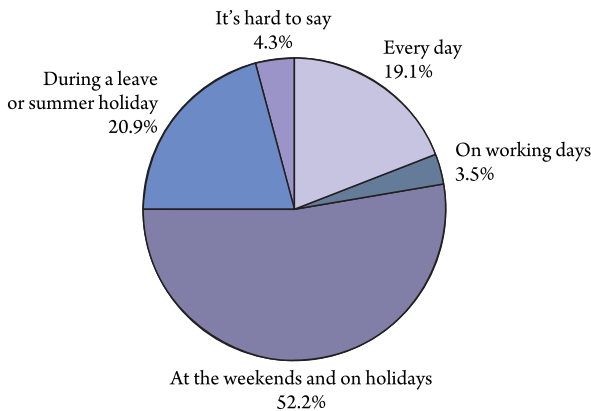
Source: based on data collected the survey commissioned by the author.

Interestingly, nearly a quarter of the respondents in this group reported that they did not undertake recreational or tourist activity in suburban zones at all. Interestingly, it was the largest percentage among the five groups of respondents classified by the category of the place of residence. This could be due to their preference to rest near their homes, within the limits of the city, i.e. in the centre of the metropolitan region rather than in its outer zone. In another study by Piotrowska [2017] it was found that inhabitants of Polish largest cities were the most physically active and the most likely to exercise together with their relatives. Lack of physical activity was reported by only 14% of respondents living in metropolitan areas, while the practice of exercising with family members – by nearly half of all respondents. This situation probably has to do with the most frequently chosen forms of recreation and easily accessible, good quality and varied recreation infrastructure available in the city. These observations are consistent with the results of the social diagnosis published by the Polish Ministry of Sports and Tourism [MSiT 2016], which revealed a growing demand for freely avail-

able infrastructure enabling city dwellers to be engage in physical activity and participate in popular, informal, pleasure and relaxation-oriented sports, without the need to be competitive.

The second question asked during the interview concerned typical periods when respondents undertake tourist and recreational activity in suburban zones of large cities (Fig. 2). The purpose of the question was to indirectly determine the duration of such visits. The collected data indicate that most respondents chose weekends and non-working days, which made up over half of responses, followed by leaves and holidays (over a fifth of all responses). Such choices enable longer stays in suburban areas, mainly for recreational purposes, thanks to the suitable tourist infrastructure, especially accommodation facilities, which will be discussed later on.

Fig. 2. Periods when inhabitants of Polish metropolises undertake tourist and recreational activity in the suburban zone of a large city*



* Original wording of the question: "Kiedy podejmuje Pan/i aktywność turystyczną i rekreacyjną w strefie podmiejskiej dużego miasta?"

Source: based on data collected in the survey commissioned by the author.

According to a study conducted by the Institute of Tourism in Warsaw, weekend tourism is becoming increasingly popular among Poles and has a regional character, i.e. people usually visit areas located relatively close to their place of residence for short-term trips. A 2-3-day stay every week is a good opportunity to rest and regenerate the body, usually in the company of other family members, enjoying the landscape and spending time in an active way [prnews.pl, 2008]. It was observed that short, weekend stays, not far from home, are popular with families with children and elderly inhabitants, i.e. among less affluent people, who choose these areas also for sentimental reasons.

Participating in short domestic trips largely depends on the financial situation, the level of education, age and socio-occupational status. Studies by Berbeka [2016], Niemczyk [2016] indicate that the level of participation in this form of tourism is positively correlated with the education level and the economic situation. More affluent residents of large cities clearly are more likely to choose not only short trips more regularly but also more expensive and longer trips (including trips abroad) [Berbeka 2016; Niemczyk 2016], as alternatives to taking a longer holiday. This is also confirmed by a 2018 survey conducted by *IBRIS Market and Social Research Institute*, which showed the frequency of weekend travel for tourist/recreational purposes [Słomski 2018]. According to the survey, as many as 24.1% of respondents claimed that they did not travel at all; only 8.5% of respondents earning over PLN 7000 responded positively. Over a fifth of respondents admitted going on a trip once in three months on average, and 17.4% - once in six months, 5.4% did so regularly, nearly every weekend, and 17.6% - once a month on average.

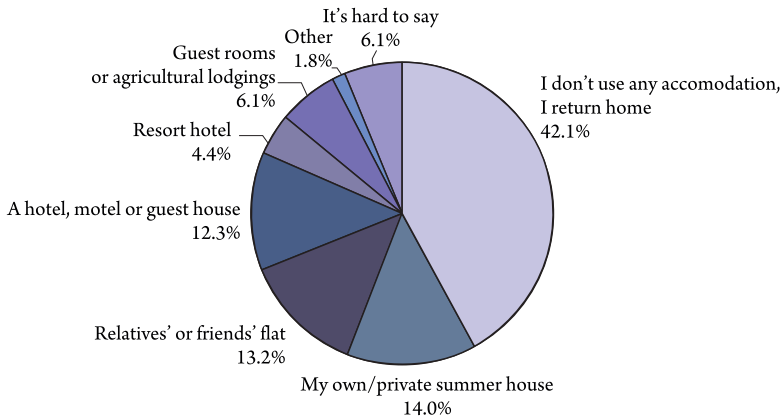
As regards the survey described in this article, of all groups of respondents defined by the class size of their place of residence, the largest percentage of those making daily visits to suburban areas was found in the group of city dwellers (19.1%). This finding suggests short, recreational stays, during which people tend to choose different forms of outdoor physical activity, since green open spaces in cities are limited and the quality of air is also very poor.

This result is consistent with the relatively large percentage of respondents (42%) who did not use accommodation facilities during their stays in suburban zones. It can be assumed that many agglomeration inhabitants return to their own homes, situated in relative proximity. Such a solution is reasonable as it eliminates additional costs and simplifies trip organization, while providing comfort, safety and greater intimacy. It is also indicative of the recreational nature of shorter stays in relative proximity to the city. Nevertheless, over half of all respondents did report using various forms of accommodation available in the suburban zone (Fig. 3). 27% stayed in their own private houses or flats or those belonging to their friends or relatives, 23% used collective, commercial accommodation facilities. The first option may reflect the thriftiness of metropolis dwellers, the second – their increasing affluence and growing demands as regards the comfort of an overnight stay.

The author's observations and other studies conducted in suburban zones surrounding large Polish cities indicate the existence of a large number of private recreation plots, with summer houses and so called "second homes", – mostly owned by city dwellers. 14% of metropolis respondents in the commissioned survey reported staying in such homes. Owning a house with a garden at an attractive location is a dream come true for many and is regarded as a good investment. Staying in one's own summer house provides tranquil and comfortable

leisure time, and a private plot of land allows the owner to arrange the space immediately surrounding them. Summer homes are also a welcome change from the permanent place of living⁶, usually on a periodical basis, but in some case, especially after retiring, even permanently. People who do not own plots of land or recreation houses in suburban zones take advantage of a wide range of hotel facilities, usually star-rated (12.28%), as well as agritourist farms (6.14%) (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Types of accommodation typically used by inhabitants of Polish metropolises while staying in suburban areas*



* Original wording of the question: "Z jakiego zakwaterowania korzysta Pan/i (najczęściej) podczas pobytu turystycznego lub rekreacyjnego na terenach podmiejskich?"

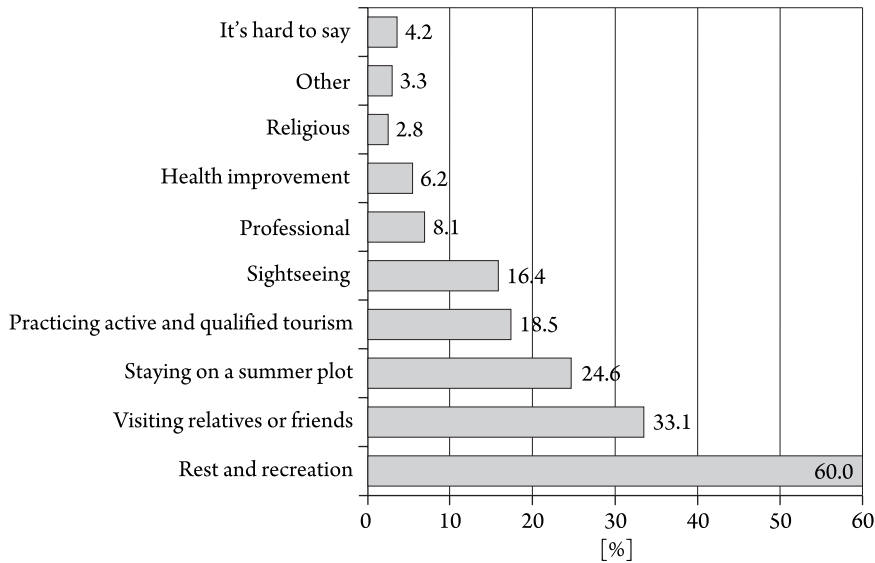
Source: based on data collected in the survey commissioned by the author.

Inhabitants of Polish metropolises were also asked about the purpose of going to suburban areas. They usually gave more than one reason (Fig. 4). Obviously, the most important one was rest and recreation (60% of all responses). A stay on a recreational plot proved to be very popular (nearly a quarter of all responses among metropolis dwellers; the second most popular answer in the whole sample). Other reasons are related to this primary goal (undertaking various activities, including adventure tourism – 18.5%, sightseeing and visiting places – 16.4%, or health considerations – 6.2%). The second most popular reason was to visit friends and relatives, which is consistent with answers regarding accommodation used while staying in the suburban zone (see Fig. 3). Participation in social meetings or family occasions is a good reason to leave the city and spend

⁶ According to official statistics, housing conditions in Poland are systematically improving, with apartments and houses in rural areas being, on average, 28.9 m² larger than those in cities [GUS 2019].

at least one night away from it. It also provides an opportunity to take advantage of assets and attractions available in suburban areas. Other reasons for visiting suburban locations, include job-related and business matters, which additionally highlights the significance of these areas.

Fig. 4. The main reasons for trips to suburban areas made by inhabitants of Polish metropolises*



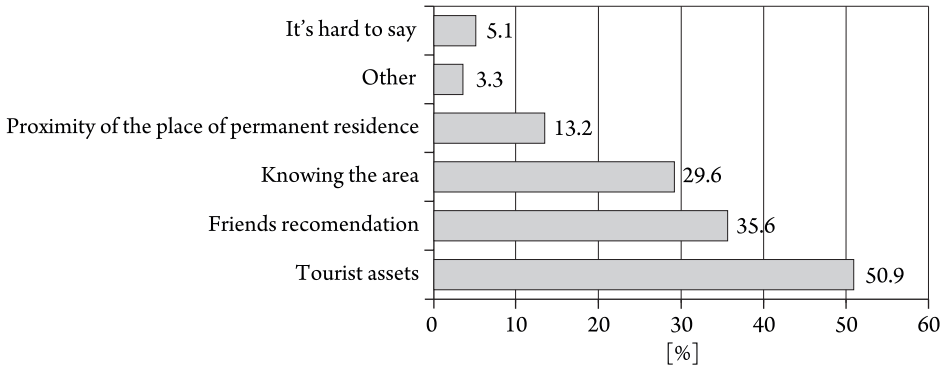
* Original wording of the question: "Jakie są główne cele Pana/i wyjazdu na tereny podmiejskie?"

Source: based on data collected in the survey commissioned by the author.

The poll conducted among inhabitants of five largest Polish cities did not include a question about details of activities undertaken in suburban zones. This information, however, can be inferred from responses concerning reasons for trips provided during the interview, from observations and from the literature and reports on similar topics [e.g. Lubowiecki-Vikuk, Paczyńska-Jędrycka 2010; Mantey 2016; GUS 2017]. Examples of activities that can be undertaken in suburban areas are presented in the first part of the article devoted to the literature review and the description of the special character of suburban areas of recreation and tourism reception.

Figure 5 shows factors determining the choice of suburban zones as destinations for tourism and recreation. Over half of all metropolis dwellers (the highest percentage of all groups defined by the class size of the place of residence) emphasized the importance of tourist assets, which includes the area itself and its natural resources that determine its attractiveness for tourists.

Fig. 5. Factors that motivate inhabitants of Polish metropolises to choose suburban zones as destinations for tourism and recreation*



* Original wording of the question: "Co decyduje o Pana/i wyborze strefy podmiejskiej na obszar przyjazdu w celach turystycznych i rekreacyjnych?"

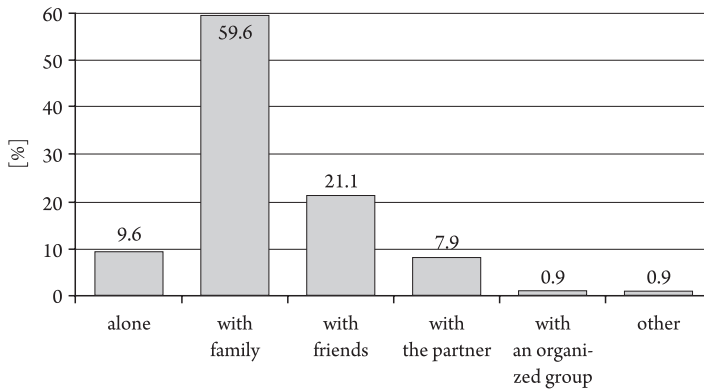
Source: based on data collected in the survey commissioned by the author.

Familiarity with the suburban zone and its proximity to their place of permanent residence was nearly equally significant for city inhabitants (42.8% of responses). For a relatively small percentage (13.2% – the smallest share among the five groups included in the study), the distance played an important role, which is understandable, as suburban areas are most easily accessible by transport, meaning less time and money spent on travelling.

Over a third of respondents in this group (most probably those who did not know well the offering, attractions and infrastructure of suburban areas) valued recommendations of their friends. They may not have had many opportunities to explore them, because, for instance, in their family there had not been a tradition of spending leisure time in the suburban zone. Judging from the author's personal observations, stays and ways of spending free time, especially on suburban recreational plots, are passed on from generation to generation and are mostly based on the sentimental attachment to the place.

Familiar home space or space close to home makes people feel secure. Any longer journey to new, unfamiliar territories means leaving this familiar space and discovering the unknown, which involves an element of risk [Stasiak 2017]. Currently, the importance of safety is growing, which has an effect on decisions concerning tourist trips. Some people do not feel the urge to experience the thrill of adventure and prefer to stay close to home. It is particularly convenient in suburban zones, where it is easy to quickly return to the city and use its services and amenities. The infrastructure around metropolises is constantly developing, providing comfort for its users. Such conditions improve

Fig. 6. Types of company usually chosen by inhabitants of Polish metropolises during tourist and recreational activity in the suburban zone of a large city*



* Original wording of the question: “Z kim (przeważnie) podejmuje Pan/i aktywność turystyczną w strefie podmiejskiej?”

Source: based on data collected in the survey commissioned by the author.

the standard of recreation in suburban zones, especially for families with children and elderly people.

Suburban zones are typically visited by two or three-generational families, as can be seen in Figure 6, which is the option selected by as many as 60% of metropolis dwellers, the highest percentage among all groups of respondents identified by the class size of their place of residence. The least popular option (nearly 8% – half the mean value for the whole sample) was “with my partner”. Over 21% of large city dwellers opted for the company of friends. Travelling and staying outside the city together, during leisure time, helps people to keep up good social relationships and to maintain and strengthen family ties. Such trips can also be a good outdoor lesson, especially for the youngest. Interestingly, only 1% of respondents reported the option of visiting suburban area with an organized group. Offers of this kind are not popular yet, or they are insufficiently advertised, which is why potential users are not aware of them.

6. Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to describe suburban zones as areas which perform significant recreational functions and are attractive places of tourism reception, particularly for inhabitants of metropolises. The author also discussed the unique character of activities undertaken in these zones, which confirms the sig-

nificance of suburban areas in this respect and provides support for the author's main hypothesis.

The study has demonstrated that suburban zones of large cities or metropolitan areas surrounding the central city⁷ offer a number of possibilities of spending free time in an interesting way, enabling people to enjoy rest and recreation in close touch with nature, practice various forms of active and educational tourism, thus supplementing options available in the city. Thanks to their tourist assets, attractive location, good transport accessibility and appropriate infrastructure, suburban zones are attractive tourism and recreation areas. Therefore, they are popular and highly valued, especially by metropolis inhabitants. Lidia Poniży adds that recreational areas in suburban zones are particularly suitable for daily and weekend recreation of city dwellers and inhabitants of metropolitan areas [Poniży 2010].

The results of the survey commissioned by the author indicate that inhabitants of Polish metropolises (i.e. cities inhabited by over 500,000 people) tend to make regular and frequent (daily or almost daily) recreational and tourist visits to suburban zones. The main reasons for such trips, usually in the company of family members or friends, include rest and recreation (mostly physical), visiting relatives and friends, and a stay on a recreational plot. Most respondents chose suburban areas mainly for their natural assets; the proximity of accommodation, including their own summer houses and hotels, played a much less significant role.

Similar studies should be conducted on a regular basis, in order to track potential changes or trends. It would be useful to increase the number of questions to gain information about the duration of one-time stays in suburban zones, typical seasons, the most frequently undertaken forms of activity, or the evaluation of the infrastructure. With a larger sample size, it would be possible to analyse personal variables and their correlation with responses. Patterns of tourist and recreational behaviours of city inhabitants could also be observed. A comparative study could be interesting from the scientific and practical point of view as it might reveal some regularities in different parts of the country. This, in turn, could help tailor the offering and tourist and recreational infrastructure to the needs and expectations of visitors and in this way bring measurable social and economic benefits. A harmonious development of recreational and tourist functions in suburban zones, supported by rational planning, creates great opportunities for the development of these spaces as attractive and competitive reception areas [cf. Żemła 2011b], not only for agglomeration inhabitants.

⁷ The metropolitan area is often referred as the suburban zone [e.g. Faracik 2006, 2011].

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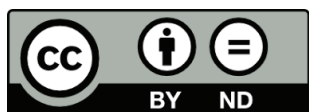
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Strefy podmiejskie jako obszary rekreacji i recepcji turystycznej dla mieszkańców polskich metropolii

Streszczenie. Artykuł ma na celu przedstawienie specyfiki strefy podmiejskiej, w szczególności jako obszaru pełniącego funkcje rekreacyjno-turystyczne, głównie dla mieszkańców dużych miast (metropolii). Na podstawie badań własnych, przeprowadzonych na reprezentatywnej grupie Polaków – mieszkańców metropolii, ukazane zostały m.in. cele i motywy, częstotliwość i czas podejmowania przez nich aktywności rekreacyjnych i turystycznych na terenach podmiejskich. Na potrzeby opracowania zastosowano następujące metody badawcze: kwerendę literatury, obserwację własną, badanie sondażowe opinii publicznej Polaków. Niezbędne dane ilościowe uzyskano z badania przeprowadzonego na reprezentatywnej próbie populacji Polski pod koniec 2014 r., przy użyciu standaryzowanych wywiadów kwestionariuszowych, w ramach usługi Omnibus Express (CATI). Ankietowani mieszkańcy metropolii polskich podejmowali aktywność turystyczną i rekreacyjną w strefie podmiejskiej najczęściej codziennie lub prawie codziennie, przeważnie w gronie rodziny. Ich głównym celem był wypoczynek i rekreacja, odwiedziły krewnych lub znajomych, a także pobyt na działce letniskowej. Walory turystyczne i znajomość obszaru były istotniejszym czynnikiem decydującym o wyborze strefy podmiejskiej niż jej niewielka odległość od miejsca zamieszkania. Mieszkańcy dużych miast często korzystali z zakwaterowania podczas tych pobytów, w tym z własnego (prywatnego) domu letniskowego albo z mieszkania u krewnych lub znajomych, a także z noclegów świadczonych przez różne obiekty hotelarskie. Wskazane jest bieżące monitorowanie aktywności turystycznej i rekreacyjnej Polaków, również w odniesieniu do wykorzystywanych przez nich w tych celach przestrzeni. Poszerzone badania pozwoliłyby wskazać prawidłowości i tendencje, także w skali regionalnej, a tym samym lepiej planować oraz organizować ofertę rekreacyjną i turystyczną, przynosząc w konsekwencji wymierne skutki społeczne, ekonomiczne i przestrzenne.

Słowa kluczowe: strefa podmiejska, metropolie, rekreacja, turystyka, obszar recepcji turystycznej, rekreacja turystyczna



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