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## CONCRETE AND WATER. SEARCHING FOR NEW POSSIBILITIES OF THE TOURIST FUNCTION DEVELOPMENT IN TRICITY

*For many years sandy beaches and cultural heritage have almost guaranteed an unending stream of tourists visiting Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot and their close neighborhood. Nowadays those obvious attractions that are “given” to Tricity are not enough for lots of tourists who expect something more. Even an average participant in mass tourism has turned to experiences and more sophisticated forms of spending his or her free time – sunbathing and traditional sightseeing are not enough to attract more tourists to Tricity. The cities therefore need to develop a clear strategy regarding the way they want to develop tourism. In order to create a competitive tourist product Tricity’s authorities try to look for some opportunities of developing the tourist function. It is also a result of the anticipated increased competition between the cities of Tricity [12]. This paper presents two extraordinary examples of involving the private sector in the process of creation of the tourist product of two cities: Gdynia and Sopot.*

**Keywords:** tourist function, tourist product, Tricity.

**Клаудія Новицька, Магдалена Жмитковська. БЕТОН І ВОДА. У ПОШУКАХ НОВИХ МОЖЛИВОСТЕЙ РОЗВИТКУ ТУРИСТИЧНОЇ ФУНКЦІЇ В ТРУЙМЯСТІ.** Протягом багатьох років піщані пляжі і культурна спадщина майже гарантували нескінченний потік туристів, які відвідували Гданьськ, Гдиню, Сопот та їх найближчих сусідів. В даний час ці очевидні визначні пам'ятки, які «дані» Тріймясту, недостатні для великої кількості туристів, які розраховують на щось більше. Навіть середній учасник у масовому туризмі вимагає досконаліших і складніших форм проведення вільного часу – загорання і традиційних екскурсій недостатньо, щоб привернути більше туристів до Тріймяста. Тому міста повинні розробити чітку стратегію відносно шляхів того, як вони хочуть розвивати туризм. Для того щоб створити конкурентоспроможний туристичний продукт, влада Тріймяста намагається шукати інші можливості розвитку туристичної функції. Це також є результатом очікуваної зростаючої конкуренції між містами Тріймяста [12]. Ця стаття представляє два яскраво виражених приклади залучення приватного сектора до процесу створення туристичного продукту двох міст: Гдини і Сопота.

**Ключові слова:** туристична функція, туристичний продукт, Тріймясто.

**Клаудія Новицькая, Магдалена Жмитковская. БЕТОН И ВОДА. В ПОИСКАХ НОВЫХ ВОЗМОЖНОСТЕЙ РАЗВИТИЯ ТУРИСТИЧЕСКОЙ ФУНКЦИИ В ТРУЙМЯСТЕ.** На протяжении многих лет песчаные пляжи и культурное наследие почти гарантировали бесконечный поток туристов, посещающих Гданьск, Гдыню, Сопот и их ближайших соседей. В настоящее время эти очевидные достопримечательности, которые «даны» Тріймясту, недостаточны для большого количества туристов, рассчитывающих на нечто большее. Даже средний участник в массовом туризме требует более совершенных и более сложных форм проведения свободного времени – загорания и традиционных экскурсий недостаточно, чтобы привлечь больше туристов в Тріймясто. Поэтому города должны разработать четкую стратегию касательно путей того, как они хотят развивать туризм. Для того чтобы создать конкурентоспособный туристический продукт, власти Тріймяста пытаются искать другие возможности развития туристической функции. Это также является результатом ожидаемой возрастающей конкуренции между городами Тріймяста [12]. Эта статья представляет два ярко выраженных примера привлечения частного сектора в процесс создания туристического продукта двух городов: Гдыни и Сопота.

**Ключевые слова:** туристическая функция, туристический продукт, Тріймясто.

**Searching for uniqueness.** To create something brand new and extraordinary, what will meet the increasingly demanding tourists' expectations, modern cities need not only great ideas, but also money, therefore the authorities has started to acquire the necessary funds from private investors. The merge of business and tourism seems to be the key to create an integrated and successful tourism product that will attract more people. This kind of cooperation can be beneficial to both parties, but still there are some crucial issues connected with it that have to be solved in order to establish a solid and long-lasting cooperation. One of the most frequently asked question is which social group will derive benefits of it – tourists, citizens or maybe somebody else?

Urban tourism is a very complicated system consisting of many varied determinants and all aspects of tourist activities in urban space. The city which is a destination of a tour is considered as cultural heritage and an indivisible element of tourism space [10]. There are several basic groups of urban tourist destinations: architecture and urban layout of a city, including historical and modern districts; cultural icons and sacred objects; ethnic districts; festivals; atmosphere of a city; academic

and scientific potential; conference centres; entrepreneurship development; malls and shopping centres; leisure, sports and gastronomical objects and communication junctions [4].

There are lots of forms of tourism but most of them are connected with a cognitive motivation. Urban tourism is visible in many conventional (heritage tourism, cultural tourism, trade tourism, business tourism, etc.) and some unconventional forms like for example clubbing. Cities give so many different opportunities to everyone, no matter their financial status or interests [9]. During the last decades urban tourism has become of increasing importance for city authorities and it is now considered as a crucial factor of socio-economic development. The tourist function of a city can be considered in many aspects, such as: social, cultural, economic, spatial and psychological. Its complexity is the reason why it is so difficult to develop tourism in a sustainable way. The literature on the subject shows that there are many diverse advantages of developing tourism in cities:

- improving the citizens' quality of life;
- revaluation of historic heritage;
- local economy activation;
- revaluation of urban space;
- improving a city's image [7].

Despite all of the above-mentioned benefits, mass tourism and the tourist function often collide with the other functions of cities or their districts, e.g. industrial or residential functions. The sustainable urban tourism could be a possible solution to this imbalance. Nowadays, urban tourism policy of Gdańsk and Sopot focuses mainly on promoting their tourist products and the issue on preparing the cities to be a tourist destination is often neglected. The sustainable tourism is generally associated with ecotourism and rural tourism as it is connected mainly with the natural environment and its preservation, but if we consider a city as a kind of “natural environment” for its citizens we could introduce the idea of the sustainable tourism into cities. Taking the above-mentioned into consideration, the sustainable city tourism shall be friendly to citizens, urban space and cultural heritage. The sustainable urban tourism shall look into the future and create tourist products bearing in mind the welfare of the next generations. There are three basic components of the sustainable urban tourism: protection of natural and cultural resources, welfare of local society and tourists’ extraordinary experiences. As M. Kurek [10] says, the sustainable urban tourism comprises of a wide range of activities, tourism management and development that preserve natural, economic and social integrity and guarantee preserving cultural and natural resources for the next generations. The first step to implementing the idea of the sustainable city tourism is establishing communication between the authorities, citizens and investors. Those three parties are the most important actors on the stage of the “urban tourism theatre” and they need to take part in an open dialog in order to create a balanced tourist product that will be beneficial for all of them.

The way of creating tourist products, the product life cycle [1] and practical experiences of many cities have proved that the essential impulse needed to proceed from the stage when a given tourist product is introduced into the market to the stage of the product’s growth and maturity [6] is the development of service-oriented infrastructure. Even a city located in the most unique and extraordinary natural environment cannot develop the tourist function. That is why R. Davidson [2] defines tourist investments as expenditures aimed at attracting tourists and expanding the supply of domestic and international tourist product. The investment may relate to products and services that include accommodation, transport, natural landscapes, exhibitions, information centres and many others. Some of them may be of a dual or multi-purpose nature, serving both tourism and non-tourism markets [3]. Three categories which have investment potential have been identified by the Urbis and Tourism and Transport Forum [15]. They are:

- short-term accommodation (e.g. hotels, guest houses and motels);
- tourism facilities (entertainment, recreation, cultural activities);
- other ancillary services (food and beverage, retail, commercial and other integrated services used by visitors and residents alike).

As it was mentioned above, investment in tourism can be undertaken by both public and private entities and

they can include infrastructure that serves both residents and tourists.

Although tourist products are not created only in a tourist destination, but also during the journey itself and even in the place of tourists’ residence, the destination is the most important. Its attractions and infrastructure are driving causes of the phenomenon called “tourism”. They create the recreation zones which are perceived as one of the most essential factors dynamizing tourism space development [8]. As B. Włodarczyk [16] says “tourism space is that part of geographical space where tourism occurs. The necessary and sufficient condition for classifying a part of geographical space as tourism space is tourism, regardless of its volume and character. An additional condition for delimiting tourism space is the occurrence of tourist infrastructure whose volume and character allow us to define the type of tourism space.” There are several types of tourism space listed by S. Liszewski [11]: tourist exploration space, space of penetration, space of assimilation, space of colonization, space of urbanization. Each of the above mentioned type of space has its own unique nature and there is an explicit type of investment projects that can be implemented there in order to keep the landscape balance.

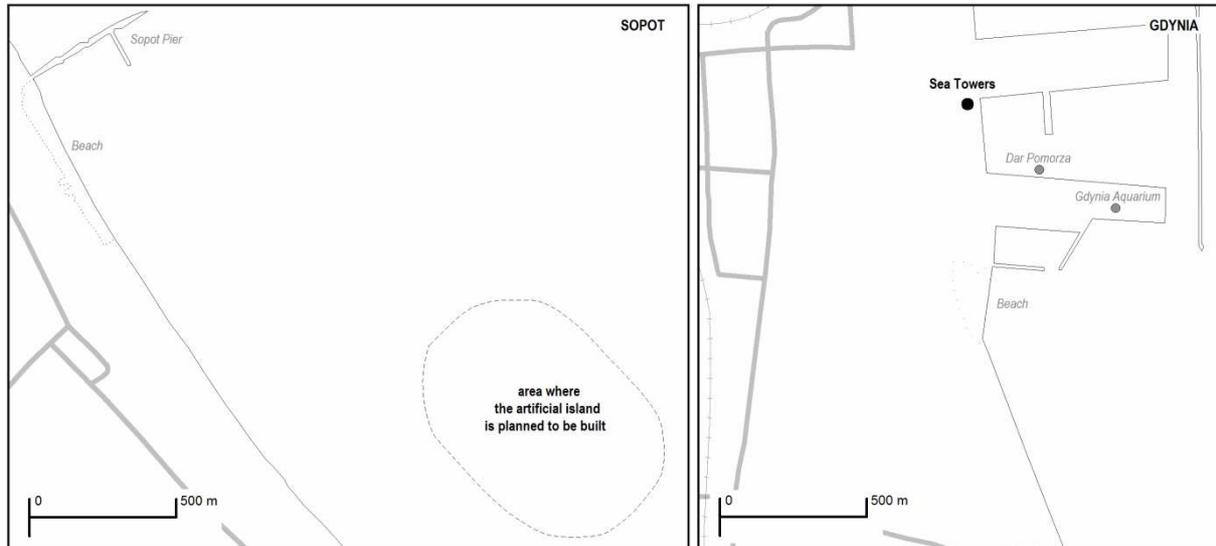
The space of urbanization is the most complex and diverse of all mentioned above what makes the implementation of the investment projects very difficult, not only in a physical dimension. Citizens should approve new tourist infrastructure and attractions as they are created in the place of their residence – in their “home”. That is why all investment decisions shall be made on the basis on deep environmental, economic and social analysis. In Tricity social participation is the idea that is becoming more and more popular. The citizens start to pay close attention to each and every initiative taken up in their space. They want to take advantage of new infrastructure and attractions. Gdynia and Sopot are two different examples of projects co-funded by private entities. One of them was completed in 2009, the second is still in the initial phase. They are both aimed at increasing the cities’ attractiveness. The first one is “Sea Towers” – the second tallest residential building in Poland located in the Prestige Zone of Gdynia. The second is an artificial island which is to be created in Sopot. Both projects are located in the tourism business districts (TBD) [5], in the areas where natural and anthropological attractions co-exist and complement each other giving an opportunity to create a complex tourist product (fig. 1).

**Sea Towers – lost tourist space.** Sea Towers is a mixed-use skyscraper complex built by Invest Comfort SA (fig. 2). It was designed in 2002 by Andrzej Kapuścik Architecture Studio from Vienna. Its construction commenced on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2006 and was completed on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2009. It is a complex of two towers joint by a special passage. The higher tower together with its flagpole is 141 meters high and it has 38 storeys, the lower one has 28 storeys. There are 265 apartments and business premises for many different types of business activity in the buildings [13]. According to the Local Urban Development Plan it was assumed that the developer shall fulfil the following condition: building an ob-

servation platform or/and a business premises (e.g. café) which will be accessible to the citizens and tourists who do not live in the building so they could also admire the wide panorama of the city and the bay.

The idea of constructing such a building in a relatively small city, in the immediate vicinity of the excel-

lent modernist architecture of the city centre was very controversial from the very beginning. What is more, the towers were to be used for residential purposes as their primary function. That is why the developer had to agree to create some kind of tourism space there.



**Fig. 1. Localization of the area where the artificial island is planned to be built in Sopot and Sea Towers in Gdynia**  
Source: own work on the basis of the Spatial Development Plan of Sopot, 2010



**Fig. 2. Sea Towers in Gdynia – a photo placed on an official website of Sea Towers**  
Source: <http://www.seatowers.pl>

Finally, when the construction was completed in 2009 it turned out that the observation platform and cafes are reserved only for the residents of the building and there is no such thing like a social space that is generally open and accessible to people. In fact, what they created is an empty, grey and concrete square (fig. 3). It is not used neither by the residents of the towers nor by any other citizens of Gdynia or tourists. What is more, the

continuity of the previously existing waterfront has been interrupted. The experience with Invest Comfort has shown that all designers' and investors' obligations shall be in writing.

Sea Towers and their neighbourhood were supposed to be a visible sign of "prestige" – in fact it is a lost space.



*Fig. 3. Sea Towers and their vicinity four years after the buildings' completion*

*Source: own photos*

**Artificial island – gained tourist space?** The artificial island is an ambitious project aimed at creating a mirage of the second Dubai in Sopot. So far the project is still in the initial phase of implementation and almost everything that is known about it comes from digital visualizations and media coverage. The plan is, indeed, astonishing – a 20 ha island is planned to be located approximately 500 meters from the shore (fig. 1), along the line between the building of “Ergo-Hestia” and the Accors Hotel. There will be a marina for 320 yachts, several hotels, discos, pubs, restaurants, an exhibition hall, a cinema, a bowling centre, a playground and an aquarium. The island will be linked with the main land through a double-decker road and air-trains (fig. 4). The object will be capable of accommodate about 6000 visitors at a time. There will also be car parks for 720 cars

and 20 coaches and two helicopter landing sites. What is more, the island will have a 500 meters long pier, a promenade and an observation tower in the centre.

The project seems to be very enterprising and there are some opinions that it is only a promotional initiative. However, the spokesman of Sopot City Hall claims that the project is so widely promoted, e.g. during the International Real Estate and Investment Fair in Cannes, because it is planned to be financed entirely by a private investor. In order to confirm the project's reality the city ordered a model research of the sea in 2000 and the construction project of the island was updated after that. Professor B. Mazurkiewicz from Gdansk University of Technology claims that from a technical point of view it is technically possible to build such an island.



*Fig. 4. The visualization of the Tomasz Bosiacki's project of the artificial island in Sopot*

*Source: Sopot – Oficjalny Serwis Miejski, 2012*

When considering the future directions of the city's development it must be said that Sopot has not got many areas where any new projects could be implemented in the future. That is why this sea-oriented direction is quite understandable. What is more, the project gained a very high social acceptance (80%) during the public debate organized in 2008.

An estimated cost of the project's implementation is approximately 1,5 milliard PLN and the author of the project – an architect T. Bosiacki claims that the island has already attracted some investors. To make it even more attractive, the project have been included in the Spatial Development Plan of Sopot published in 2010.

The idea of creating the island is an answer to searching new directions for the city development, a way of promoting sailing and other water sports in Sopot. The island along with the Sports and Entertainment Hall located at the border of Sopot and Gdańsk shall be a compositional axis for a new recreation area located along the south border of the city. However, we cannot be sure if this area will be accessible for everybody, it seems that

only the rich will be able to exploit luxurious facilities of the island.

**Conclusions.** People – tourists, citizens, investors, leaders – they all have to coexist in the urban space. Mass tourist movements in cities generates a high level of income and that is why cities' leaders try to attract as many tourists as they can and sometimes they seem to forget that there are also citizens who try to lead a normal life there. Trying to create an extraordinary tourist product, as those two described in this paper, cities often establish a cooperation with private investors. However, this cooperation shall involve also the third party – the citizens. As it was said before, those three parties need to take part in an open dialog in order to create a balanced tourist product that will be beneficial for all of them. The example of Sea Towers shows that the lack of communication between the authorities, investors and citizens leads to creating empty and lifeless places which, in fact, do not serve anybody. Maybe the project of the artificial island which has gained such social acceptance will be a positive example of situation when everybody benefits.

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#### Summary

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For many years sandy beaches and cultural heritage have almost guaranteed an unending stream of tourists visiting Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot and their close neighborhood. Nowadays those obvious attractions that are “given” to Tricity are not enough for lots of tourists who expect something more. Even an average participant in mass tourism has turned to experiences and more sophisticated forms of spending his or her free time – sunbathing and traditional sightseeing are not enough to attract more tourists to Tricity. The cities therefore need to develop a clear strategy regarding the way they want to develop tourism. In order to create a competitive tourist product Tricity's authorities try to look for some opportunities of developing the tourist function. It is also a result of the anticipated increased competition between the cities of Tricity [12]. This paper presents two extraordinary examples of involving the private sector in the process of creation of the tourist product of two cities: Gdynia and Sopot.

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