

Sustainable Development of Health Resorts in Poland

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to prove the legitimacy of implementing sustainable development in health resorts. The main focus is on health resorts in Poland, but the European context was also taken into account. Particular attention is devoted to public space and landscape that have been changing in recent years primarily as a result of measures described as revitalization or regeneration. Furthermore, examples of pro-environmental initiatives conducted in Polish health resorts over the last five years are presented. With the responsible use of the considerable natural, cultural and landscape assets health resorts are usually “equipped” with, health resorts can be a model for sustainable development. The article is based on an analysis of literature, source documents (legislation, reports, revitalization programmes, development plans) and websites as well as field observations (direct inventory). It is important, however, to implement remedial measures and build and maintain the image of health resorts as tranquil places with unique landscapes of therapeutic value and attractive public spaces.

Keywords: health resort, sustainable development, landscape, public space, revitalization, tourism

JEL: I19, O22, O39, Q01

Introduction

Health tourism¹ is attracting more and more interest in view of the unique demographic and cultural processes taking place in European societies, such as ageing, diseases of affluence, stress and chronic fatigue on the one hand and, on the other, the popularity of a healthy lifestyle and the fast-paced progress of medicine and technology. One of the forms of health tourism is health-resort tourism, based on the use of the therapeutic properties of special areas with health resort or spa status. Along with the development of this form of tourism, there is a growing interest in introducing innovations² in the existing spa towns in order to enhance their tourism attractiveness. Innovations are an important factor in the functioning and development of Polish health resorts (Mirek 2014) and require considerable capital expenditure, including the support from European

1. Defined by Gaworecki and Mroczyński (2008) as an intentional and voluntary trip away from one's place of permanent residence during one's leave from work in order to regenerate one's body, health tourism has become a contemporary social trend.

2. Innovations—i.e., the implementation of a new idea for solving a specific problem, stem from a premeditated approach to development. An antithesis of formulaic thinking, they are a kind of experiment involving some risk and aimed at bringing about positive change. The temporal variation of human motivation is the main reason behind the need for innovative measures regarded as an important factor in competition and sustainable development (Dryglas 2006). In the light of the European Union's cohesion policy, it is important that the weaker regions look for their own development path and create endogenous innovation through smart specializations (Grosse 2013). The EU's Europe 2020 strategy (see: EUROPE 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. COM/2010/2020 final) shows that smart specializations can focus on sustainable development. The field of smart specialization in the region can be tourism, including spa tourism. The innovation of tourism enterprises is an important factor in the development of the tourist region (Januszewska and Nawrocka 2015). In particular, small and medium investment activity affect the development of spa communities (Ingłot-Brzęk and Lewandowska 2018).

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Union funds (Peter-Bombik and Marszałek 2012). In addition, it is often stressed that health resorts should transform into multifunctional centers (e.g., Gonda-Soroczyńska 2014). It should be noted that a departure from the traditional therapeutic function towards modern forms of health tourism began in Europe as early as the 1970s (Januszewska 2005). That is why Polish health resorts expand their services and become holiday centers, attractive places where one can pursue active, congress, festival, entertainment, gambling, food, nature and many other kinds of tourism. At the same time, it is clearly stressed that sustainable development³ is a determinant of the functioning of health resorts in Poland (Mirek 2012). It requires the protection of therapeutic resources, securing the therapeutic properties of the climate, maintaining proper hygiene and sanitary standards, preserving the harmony of landscape and spatial development as well as consideration for the interests of permanent residents. Health resorts are described as reception areas for sustainable tourism (Dec and Krupa 2014). Securing the recreational functions of health resorts depends on sustainable development (Zareęba 2012). Polish health resorts should become models of implementing the principles of sustainable development in economic and societal life, particularly by means of adapting to environmental determinants and maintaining spatial order.

The objective of this article is to prove the legitimacy of implementing sustainable development in health resorts. The main focus is on health resorts in Poland, but the European context was also taken into account. Particular attention is devoted to public space⁴ and landscape⁵ that have been changing in recent years primarily as a result of measures described as revitalization or regeneration⁶. Furthermore, examples of pro-environmental initiatives conducted in Polish health resorts over the last five years are presented.

3. Sustainable development denotes development in the ecological, cultural and economic sense (Kozłowski 2005) that satisfies the basic needs of all people and preserves and restores the equilibrium in the natural and socio-economic environment as well as people's spiritual balance, without jeopardizing the possibility of satisfying the needs of the future generations. It is a development where the forms and dynamics of economic activity, institutions, lifestyles (mainly the volume of consumption) and population size should ensure an appropriate quality of life to every person in the present and future generations, and all aspects of this development will be secured by the availability of natural resources, ecosystems and life-supporting systems (van den Berg and van den Nijkamp 1991). Human beings are at the center of sustainable development. "They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature"—see: The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992). [a:] http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/RIO_E.PDF. The idea of sustainable development envisions a lasting improvement of the quality of life of the present and future generations, which is integrally linked with the improvement of the condition of the environment (Skowroński 2006). Sustainable development should also involve taking care of the cultural landscape (Myga-Piątek 2010) as well as the acoustic and olfactory qualities of the air as factors influencing the quality of life (Bernat 2010).

4. According to the Charter of Public Space (2009), public space is defined as the common good of all users, deliberately shaped by people according to the social principles and values, serving to satisfy the needs of local and supralocal communities. It constitutes an important building-block and a clear expression of urban identity, and contributes to the creation of the city's image to external audiences while giving residents a sense of strong identification with the landscape of their city. Public spaces are key to the societal life of the city as a gathering place, a place of recreation and entertainment; they enable an escape from the burdens of city life: noise and pollution. Due to its multidimensional character, public space is subject to very strong pressure and is frequently appropriated by private users and investors. In addition, the low quality of public spaces results from the low level of public awareness of their significance as a component of urban and rural landscape (see: Karta Przestrzeni Publicznej. [a:] <http://www.tup.org.pl/download/KartaPrzestrzeniPublicznej.pdf>

5. According to the European Landscape Convention (see the text at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/0900001680080621>; or in Polish: Europejska Konwencja Krajobrazowa, sporządzona we Florencji dnia 20 października 2000 r. DzU z 2006 r. nr 14 poz. 98), landscape is "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors." It is experienced universally by means of stimuli of a multisensory character. Hence it impacts the quality of people's life wherever they might live: in urban and rural areas, in environmentally valuable and degraded areas, in special and ordinary, "everyday" places.

6. The term "revitalization" (also "regeneration" or "renewal") appears more and more often in various strategy papers and development programmes, which is linked with the availability of subsidies under the European Union's structural funds. Revitalization is most frequently defined as a process of spatial, social and economic changes in degraded urban areas, aimed at improving the inhabitants' quality of life, restoring spatial order, achieving economic recovery and rebuilding social ties. According to the Act on Revitalization (see: Ustawa z dnia 9 października 2015 r. o rewitalizacji. DzU z 2015 r. poz. 1777 z późn. zm.), it is a "process of bringing degraded areas out of a critical condition through measures that integrate intervention for the benefit of the local community, space and local economy, implemented by the stakeholders of this process based on the district revitalization programme" (Art. 2 par. 1).

Research proceedings were aimed at answering the following questions:

- Are health resorts in Poland characterized by sustainable development?
- Are the environmental and revitalization investments implemented in them innovative?
- In what direction should health resorts develop in the future?

The research was based mainly on the monographic method, which provides the in-depth knowledge of the specifics of health resorts in Poland. As an alternative, the individual case method was used. At the beginning, the current situation of health resorts in Poland was diagnosed on the basis of scientific literature, legal acts and websites. Next, using the case study, an analysis of strategic documents (mainly plans for the development of health resorts) was carried out and the obtained data was compared to the situation observed in the field (direct inventory).

1 Health resorts in Poland and other European countries

According to the Act on Health Resort Treatment,⁷ a health resort is an area where health resort treatment is carried out, that has been separated in order to use and protect natural therapeutic resources located within its borders, and that has been awarded health resort status. A town or village aspiring to receive such status has to meet all of several requirements. It should have deposits of natural therapeutic resources and a climate with proven therapeutic properties. Within its area, there have to be health resort treatment centers and health resort facilities, prepared to provide health-resort treatment. Additionally, it should meet the requirements specified in the environmental protection law and have the technical infrastructure with respect to water supply and sewage, power supply, public transport as well as waste management.

The determinants of health resort treatment are similar across Europe. They differ only with regard to the details of the forms of protection, strictness of the public law regime within the protected area and, in some cases, stricter technical standards concerning air quality and noise levels (Dryglas and Golba 2017).

At present, there are approximately 1500 various health resorts, most of them located in Germany (350), Italy (300), Spain (128) and France (107). In Poland, there 45 statutory health resorts (additionally, Wieliczka was awarded the status of an underground health resort). Most of the health resorts are located in southern Poland characterized by peculiar geological conditions and the occurrence of mineral waters, peloids or therapeutic gases, which makes this part of Poland more privileged. According to the classification introduced by the Polish Norm PN-Z-11000:2001 “Health resorts, classification and general requirements,” the prevailing kind of health resorts are mineral spas, where the primary therapy involves the use of water. Peat resorts are in second place, followed by climate and seaside resorts. In terms of elevation above sea level, mountain (8), submontane (14), lowland (17) and seaside (6) health resorts are distinguished. Most spas are located within the administrative boundaries of usually not very big cities, for which health resort activities become the catalyst of development (Cieślak 2014). Small cities are characterized by a “human scale” and usually an individual character that is easy to recognize and interpret in terms of perception. Such cities feature more places where a direct interaction occurs between the urbanized environment and open countryside, thanks to which mental and physical renewal can be achieved more easily. Only three health resorts, namely Konstancin-Jeziorna, Sopot, and Swoszowice, are located within a metropolitan area (Warsaw, Tri-City⁸, and Kraków, respectively). Eleven health resorts are located in rural areas (e.g., Gonda-Soroczynska 2011), which is influenced, among other factors, by the presence of an open, natural landscape of high quality (also with regard to soundscape, the so-called acoustic comfort).

Through comprehensive measures related to the alteration of space, socio-economic and economic revival, it often contributes to protecting significant values of cultural landscape and to improvement in the quality of public spaces (Lorens 2007). Revitalization is linked with the idea of sustainable development owing to a comprehensive approach, taking into account the ecological, social and economic perspective, as well as a focus on improving quality of life (e.g., Kożuch 2010; Strzelecka 2011).

7. See: Ustawa z dnia 28 lipca 2005 r. o lecznictwie uzdrowiskowym, uzdrowiskach i obszarach ochrony uzdrowiskowej oraz o gminach uzdrowiskowych. DzU z 2005 r. nr 167 poz. 1399.

8. [Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot—Ed.]

2 The public space of health resorts

According to Węclawowicz-Bilska (2008), health resorts are urban developments whose spatial layout stems from their functions and is a result of a several century-long tradition of creating such layouts in order to satisfy various needs related to people's health. Thus, the spatial layouts of health resorts evolve and the knowledge of the stages of this evolution makes it possible to intentionally shape space to ensure its sustainable development without compromising the health resort function (Szromek and Gąsior 2014).

Polish health resorts are not spatially autonomous; they are linked with permanent settlement units of varying size. Węclawowicz-Bilska (2008) distinguishes six kinds of spatial layouts: isolated (e.g., Żegiestów Zdrój), conjugated (dominance of the health resort — e.g., Wysowa Zdrój, dominance of the town — e.g., Muszyna), parallel conjugated (e.g., Piwniczna Zdrój), integrated (e.g., Szczawnica), absorbed (e.g., Swoszowice), mixed (e.g., Rabka Zdrój). A deteriorated layout can also occur (e.g., Łomnica Zdrój). From the perspective of the proper functioning of the therapeutic process and attractiveness of a health resort to convalescents, two models are advantageous, namely the isolated model (on condition that the health resort is very well equipped with a rich and varied programme of services or easy and direct access to a neighboring permanent settlement center with a broad range of services) and the conjugated model, particularly parallel conjugated where the health resort complex is clearly separated from the neighboring town by linear boundaries, such as a river, gully, high escarpment, road or railroad. The mixed model is inconvenient to health resort users who have to move across areas with an urban function. The absorbed model is equally inconvenient, particularly when a health resort is small and there are no cultivated green areas of sufficient size in its close proximity. In such cases, the threat of noise pollution and air pollution is considerable.

The attractiveness of health resorts is linked with a set of compositional and spatial values,⁹ clear correlation with the terrain (landforms), easy and direct contact with nature, human-friendly scale of the layout featuring legible landmarks and vantage points, attractive public space (Węclawowicz-Bilska 2008). The functional and compositional significance of the center of a health resort is highlighted by the stately and elegant arrangement of parks and other green areas, extensive avenues and promenades, garden squares, gardens, etc. Clusters of green (parks) in the centre constitute clear compositional layouts that definitely stand out in the landscape of a health resort town. Large green areas are accompanied by water features — e.g., fountains, with both an ornamental and therapeutic function (they humidify the air). The presented assets of health resorts necessitate attention to the type of development of public spaces (e.g., Golba 2009; Płachta 2014; Węclawowicz-Bilska 2009; Wójcikowski 2015).

Resort parks are an important element of the public space of health resorts. They often constitute the center of a health resort while functioning as a health treatment facility utilizing the natural therapeutic resources and therapeutic properties of the climate (as stipulated by the legislation mentioned above). Starting from the 19th century, parks became the location of a peculiar complex of buildings (Kurhaus buildings, pump rooms for “taking the waters”), garden architectural features and various forms of vegetation (Majdecka-Strzeżek 2008). Used by convalescents and local residents for walks, in many health resorts parks are connected with the adjacent woodland and forest paths. Then they become a place that is particularly appropriate for terrain therapy which, in its broad meaning, denotes various forms of dynamic physical exercise in terrain with varying scenery and landforms (Ponikowska and Marciniak 1988).

There is a total of 84 parks within health resort towns; most of the parks are small (less than 0,1 km²) (Bernat 2017). Every second health resort (i.e., 23) has only one park, 11 resorts have at least three parks (e.g., Ustka, Kołobrzeg, Ciechocinek), while three resorts (Żegiestów, Supraśl, Czerniawa-Zdrój) do not have a cultivated park. Less than half (i.e., 33) are historic parks (older

9. Węclawowicz-Bilska (2008) distinguishes the following spatial layouts of health resort complexes: promenade type (pedestrian and motor traffic either separated or integrated), park type, and promenade-park type (parallel, perpendicular, oriented).

than 100 years) and only ten parks are new (younger than 10 years). The characteristic facilities and features of park infrastructure include band shells, pump rooms, graduation towers, sanatoriums, cafés, arbors, fountains, benches, walking paths and cycling lanes, playgrounds, sports fields and outdoor fitness parks.

In recent years, most parks have undergone revitalization/renovation, which has enhanced their attractiveness. Probably that is why as many as 27 health resorts do not have investment project plans (Bernat 2017). It should be noted, however, that some health resorts contribute to the expansion of municipal green areas by establishing new park facilities corresponding to the modern needs (e.g., Muszyna, Inowrocław, Busko-Zdrój). The cultivated parks can be complemented by forest parks in the close neighborhood of health resorts (e.g., Piwniczna). Although the attractiveness of health resorts has been enhanced through revitalization measures, the problem of noise pollution has not been entirely solved. Thus, there is a need for acoustic revitalization and the related enhancement of the quality of green areas, expansion of health resort infrastructure (e.g., fitness trails, and introduction or restoration of order in public space). Health resorts, especially resort parks, should be tranquil areas that are conducive to treatment and therapy. One should also remember about preserving the outstanding resort park layouts and their unique natural and cultural character. As Leniartek (2015) believes, owing to a peculiar approach to “revitalization,” parks have now become an element that primarily shapes the image of a town for the needs of the real estate and tourism market. Because of that, parks lose their cozy character and become public spaces frequented by crowds and serving as a backdrop to new architecture.

The revitalization of the Brine Park in Inowrocław (Ph.1.) led to the considerable development of the health resort function (Łątka, Gotowski, and Rabant 2013). The revitalization of the park in Połczyn Zdrój (Ph.2.) is regarded as an important factor that enhanced the attractiveness of the resort (Wiktorowski 2010). The renovation of parks in health resorts in the Sudety Mountains—i.e., Kudowa Zdrój, Łądek Zdrój, Długopole Zdrój, and Polanica Zdrój—is regarded as a pro-environment solution determining the development of recreation functions (Szostak-Młynarska 2012). Investment projects in the resort parks of the Małopolska region are shown as an example of positive changes in public space achieved thanks to Poland’s membership in the European Union (Wójcikowski 2015). For example, a comprehensive restoration of the resort park in Rabka Zdrój was carried out along with the construction of typical health resort infrastructure, which made the resort more attractive. The park is kept tidy and clean by a local cooperative (Rabczańska Spółdzielnia Socjalna “Dziewięciś”) employing 15 people. One of the projects currently under way in Rabka Zdrój is the expansion of the resort park through the redevelopment of the boulevard on the Poniczanka stream. In the currently neglected area along the stream, an attractive public space is planned along with several health resort facilities (graduation tower, brine waterfall, salt therapy cave, facilities for Kneipp hydrotherapy treatment) and recreation facilities (walking path and cycling lane, outdoor fitness park, beach volleyball field, ropes course, climbing walls of varying height) as well as small architectural features that improve the quality of public space in the resort (benches, revitalized green areas, renovated pedestrian and cycling bridges). The project is aimed at creating a unique public space that restores the town’s close and clear relationship with nature. The boulevard is to perform health resort, recreation, traffic, social and official functions. Furthermore, the development plan for the Rabka Zdrój health resort envisages the construction of a water playground in the resort park along with the development of the functionally linked area adjacent to the existing playground. At present, people walk to the existing playground with its different play zones by taking shortcuts across the area of the planned water park, which causes damage to the grass in a large part of the area.

Measures taken in many Polish health resorts correspond with European and global trends. They are aimed at the restoration of historic complexes/layouts,¹⁰ highlighting landscape values

10. Historic resorts around Napoli have been revitalized as part of the revival and redevelopment of recreational areas in the vicinity of Vesuvius, in order to create an alternative to the crowded seaside areas (Węclawowicz-Bilska 2008).

(including the multisensory aspects),¹¹ expanding the size of cultivated green areas,¹² establishing water gardens (hydrotherapy)¹³ and improving the aesthetic look of public space. It should be remembered, however, that measures aimed at improving the quality of landscape (including public space) of health resorts require a more comprehensive view, not limited to the modernization of sanatoriums and their surroundings. The regeneration of the entire town with which a particular health resort is linked is also necessary (Węclawowicz-Bilska 2013). European health resorts perform a variety of social and educational functions such as providing places for recreation, entertainment and mental relaxation. Also important is the integration of healthy people with people with physical or mental disorders as well as young people with older people. Sharing public space as well as establishing and maintaining social interactions helps prevent social exclusion. Places such as resort parks encourage adults to practice sport and provide a space for children to play. It has also been recognized that the aesthetic function is an important function of resort parks (Trojanowska 2017; Węclawowicz-Bilska 2013) and that therapeutic environmental factors include the forest cover, landscape, cultural environment, spatial layout and architectural forms that should be different from the surroundings in the convalescents' permanent place of dwelling (Glaus 1975).

3 Pro-environment initiatives

Investing in the environmental protection infrastructure is an indispensable measure to maintain appropriate environmental conditions for health resort treatment. Besides the renovation of resort parks, it is necessary to protect the purity of water, support the use of renewable sources of energy, segregate municipal waste, and implement environmental education (Szostak-Młynarska 2012).

The Eko Hestia Spa competition, held since 2016, is an example of appreciating pro-environment initiatives in Polish health resorts. The goal of the competition is to promote innovative efficient pro-environment measures carried out by local governments as well as investment projects related to the broadly understood issue of environmental protection, implemented by districts with health resort status. The district recognized by the jury as the best receives a financial reward that must be used to fund further pro-environment actions within the award-winning district—e.g., planting in cultivated green and park areas, conducting environmental education activities, investing in renewable sources of energy, etc. The jury evaluates the submissions taking into account pro-environment measures carried out in the previous five years.

Eleven health resorts took part in the first edition of the competition: Busko Zdrój, Inowrocław, Konstancin Jeziorna, Krynica Zdrój, Nałęczów, Rabka Zdrój, Sękowa, Solec Zdrój, Sopot, Szczawnica, and Uniejów. Among those, Uniejów, Busko Zdrój, Nałęczów, and Sopot were invited to the second round. The winner of the first edition was Uniejów district in recognition of geothermal investment projects and attractive forms of educating children and youth about environmental protection. The award was used for the expansion and modernization of educational paths in the spa park and the educational-promotional project “Environmentally-Friendly Health Resorts” which integrates all statutory health resorts.

Nine health resorts participated in the second edition of the Eko Hestia Spa competition, namely Busko Zdrój, Łądek Zdrój, Muszyna, Polanica Zdrój, Rabka Zdrój, Sękowa, Solec Zdrój, Szczawnica, and Ustroń. Out of those nine, Busko Zdrój, Rabka Zdrój, Sękowa, and Szczawnica were invited to the second round. The jury gave the highest score to the “programme of multi-year comprehensive measures in the field of ecology” presented by representatives of Busko Zdrój. Special awards were also given to the following health resorts: Rabka Zdrój, Wapienne (district Sękowa)

11. The Blue Lagoon geothermal spa in Grindavik in Iceland was established in the vicinity of a crater surrounded by hills and filled with water of an intensively blue color (Węclawowicz-Bilska 2009).

12. In Bardejovske Kupele in Slovakia, cultivated green areas cover more than 80% of the spa complex. One of the key elements here is the forest park, transitioning into a forest and featuring, among other facilities, pools, numerous and varied walking trails and places for recreation by the springs (Węclawowicz-Bilska 2009).

13. In the Czech Jeseník spa, drawing on the legacy of Vincenz Priessnitz, a hydrotherapy facility (Balneopark) was opened in 2010. Accessible to convalescents and tourists, it consists of hydrotherapy stations situated along a stream with cascades, waterfalls and pools. The new facility harmonizes well with the existing landscape and structure of the town, and is a perfect place for walks, exercise and recreation (Majdecka-Strzeżek 2012).

and Szczawnica. In awarding the main prize to Busko Zdrój, the jury showed their appreciation for the consistent implementation of the program of the thermal insulation of public buildings and replacement of street lighting with new LED lighting, introduction of the renewable energy powered lighting of the new spa park and facilities serving the maintenance of municipal green areas, improvement of the water supply and sewage management as well as educational activities. The year 2007 saw the completed expansion of the resort park with recreational and cultural functions, including areas of cultivated green along with the necessary auxiliary infrastructure (promenades, lanes, walking trails, fountains, ornamental and recreational ponds, resting areas, mixed use streets, lighting) (Ph.3.). At present, the projects planned for the coming years include the development of the so-called “new park, construction of a graduation tower and Kurhaus (multifunctional health resort center), modernization of lighting in the “old park,” highlighting its spatial layout and improving its aesthetic appearance, increasing the size of green areas in the degraded parts of the health resort along with the introduction of small architectural features, and protection of the biodiversity of environmentally valuable areas by creating an educational cycling path connecting the resort districts of Busko-Zdrój and Solec-Zdrój.¹⁴

The neighboring Solec Zdrój district participated both in the first and second edition of the competition. Expenditures on environmental protection and ecology account for about 25% of the district’s budget. The district modernizes water supply and sewage systems along with the construction of modern wastewater treatment plants, and continues the thermal insulation of public buildings and encourages the installation of renewable sources of energy. The projects planned for the coming years include renovation of the Park for educational and recreational purposes; redevelopment of the area around the water reservoir; improvement of the aesthetic appearance and functionality of public spaces in the revitalized area. It should be added that at present, the district does not have an elegant resort park and attractive recreational areas. There is only a neglected private park (Ph.4.) and water reservoir as well as a few alleys lined with shrubs in the vicinity of the resort facilities. The first of the projects mentioned above includes the establishment of an ecological park within a currently unattractive area adjoining a state-owned forest complex. The primary objective of redeveloping this area will be to preserve and restore valuable natural environment and landscape assets. The accomplishment of the planned projects will help prevent a further degradation of this area, preserve the natural heritage and re-energize the economy and societal life, thus improving the quality of life for the inhabitants.

Conclusions and final remarks

Sustainable development is a determinant of the functioning of health resorts. With the responsible use of the considerable natural, cultural and landscape assets they are usually “equipped” with, health resorts can be a model for sustainable development. It is important, however, to implement remedial measures and build and maintain the image of health resorts as tranquil places with unique landscapes of therapeutic value and attractive public spaces. High-quality therapeutic space in health resorts is determined by elements such as a clear connection with the surroundings by means of visual and compositional links, valuable natural environment assets (including the neighborhood of large forest complexes and areas protected by natural environment protection laws), well-preserved historic spatial layouts with historic sites, well-maintained areas of cultivated green with recreational functions, properly developed public spaces, favorable climate conditions, acoustic comfort, appropriate condition of the environment, good transport accessibility, varied offer of leisure activities (festival, concerts, sports events, organized tours), appropriate standard of living quarters and varied, natural therapy facilities, all connected by means of modern functional and spatial solutions (cf. Węclawowicz-Bilska 2008; Wójcikowski 2015).

Several of the above-mentioned investment projects implemented or planned in specific health resorts in Poland have an innovative character and are consistent with the principles of sustainable development. The objectives of these projects include improving inhabitants’ quality of life, which is

14. This investment project is to be funded with the prize received in the Eko Hestia competition.

linked with an improved quality of the environment and landscape, and enhancing the attractiveness of health resorts for convalescents and permanent residents. These investment projects are aimed, for example, at the restoration of historic layouts, highlighting landscape values (including the multisensory aspects), expanding the size of cultivated green areas and improving the aesthetic look of public space. It should be remembered, however, that measures aimed at improving the quality of landscape (including public space) of health resorts also require pro-environment actions and a more comprehensive view than just the modernization of sanatoriums and their surroundings. The regeneration of an entire town with which a particular health resort area is linked is also necessary.

The introduction of new spatial and form solutions in spa towns considerably increases their tourist attractiveness. It is also important to create innovative tourist products based on multisensory tourist experience. In modern times, tourists increasingly search for and collect sensations and experiences (Bernat 2014; Urry 2007). They long for direct contact with what is unique (one of a kind) or typical (characteristic of a given place), or with an unknown aspect of something that has been regarded as familiar until now. In the future, as Stasiak (2013) observes, areas that will be able to provide unique experience to tourists are going to gain the greatest popularity in the tourist market. The idea of the tourism of experiences necessitates the use of innovative solutions in the services offered by health resorts which, relying on their enormous potential, can contribute to economic and social growth of both the health resort towns and the regions. The nearby villages should also be involved in the activity of the health resort — e.g., by producing ecological food, developing agritourism and developing tourist and recreation infrastructure (cf. Niemiec and Trzcińska 2011).

Thus, the future of health resorts should not be limited to the traditional therapeutic services targeted at elderly and sick people. It should be based on the use of varied innovative solutions combining modern treatment and prevention methods with tourism and recreation in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. Health resorts should respond to the changing needs and preferences of increasingly demanding convalescents and tourists who follow the latest healthy lifestyle trends and focus on keeping fit and taking care of their appearance and well-being, in conjunction with active recreation and various forms of tourism, including tourism of experiences (sensory tourism) which has been gaining more and more popularity.

Future research should focus on an in-depth recognition of the role of protection zones in the functioning of health resorts in Poland. It is also important to look for the answer to the question of how to develop tourism in health resorts so that it does not damage their assets.

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Spa parks in: Inowrocław (A), Połczyn Zdrój (B), Busko Zdrój (C), and Solec Zdrój (D). Photo by S. Bernat