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## **Active tourism vs. 'krajoznawstwo': considerations about Polish history and geography in the context of sightseeing the area around the Lake Malta in Poznan**

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### **Abstract**

Among the fastest growing branches of the world economy, tourism is considered to be one of the main ones. It provides an opportunity to travel and explore the surrounding reality, including the diverse landscape. One of the most popular forms of tourism is still active tourism, which has a mass range and thus offers a more accessible educational offer in the field of natural and cultural heritage, history or geography. In Poland this is referred as 'krajoznawstwo'. The concept has not yet found an equivalent name in English, but it is very much related to tourism. In the Polish capital of Greater Poland region – Poznan, the area around Lake Malta is one of the areas where one can see many objects of interest for people who collect information about the area in the context of gathering knowledge about the country and the region. Not only a geographer or a biologist, but also all those who are comprehensively interested in the natural and cultural heritage, and in the future even in the history of the local participants in the Olympic Games, will find some information there. The main goal of the study is to show that 'krajoznawstwo' has many features in common with active tourism and it is difficult to be translated into English, where there is no clear

equivalent word. The second goal is to present the area of the Malta Lake in Poznan as a case study, a place for the realization of sightseeing interests and active tourism.

**Key words:** active tourism, krajoznawstwo, sightseeing, Lake Malta, Poznan, Poland

## **Introduction**

The multifaceted progress of the twenty-first century has meant that today's society lives in a dynamic environment of opportunities and forms of travel. Complementing this with developments in communication, medicine and knowledge, it has enabled people to discover new professions, often centred on individual activities and at the same time making it possible to work at any time of day or night, from any corner of the earth. The possibility of adapting work to one's own schedule has at the same time increased the amount of leisure time in society, including that devoted to tourism. Although its breakthrough on a mass scale occurred already in the second half of the twentieth century, the following decades opened up new opportunities for development. It is not without reason that at the turn of the century Gerhard Schulze developed the theory of The experience society – a concept associated with people living in affluence, which is characterised by experiential activities demanding more and more time, influencing more and more areas of everyday life, having a psychological dimension in terms of defining the meaning of life, and stimulating the aspirations of the broad masses of society to lead a comfortable life<sup>1</sup>. Widespread computerisation has resulted in a significant increase in computer work (and, in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, intensified it even further) and has thus ceased to burden workers with physical exertion to a degree that was on a completely different level only a few years earlier. The reduction of such activity caused an increase in interest in active tourism, a new form of tourism that came to replace the passive forms of tourism still common at the beginning of the twenty-first century, associated with the *sea-sun-sand* formula and organised holidays in mass form, introducing a catchword in the form of the words *entertainment-excitement-education*. Associated with a modern way of spending leisure time, it not only encourages physical activity, but also fosters the development of cognitive needs – basic human needs, developmental needs which are common in all cultures<sup>2</sup>. It can be contrasted with the Polish term 'krajoznawstwo', which appeared as early as in the seventeenth century in the works of Jan Ámos Komenský, who is regarded as the discoverer of philanthropic 'krajoznawstwo'<sup>3</sup>. Ludomir Sawicki described it in 1909 as a branch of geography seeking to understand the landscape, as well as a social movement<sup>4</sup>. The meaning of the term has evolved over the years, and in the 1990s for the first

time the concept of 'krajoznawstwo' was linked to tourism, with which it is now commonly associated, although its activities often concern activities not related to tourism but only indirectly related to it<sup>5</sup>.

### **Active tourism and 'krajoznawstwo' – similarities and differences**

In contrast to qualified tourism, which is understood as the highest form of specialisation in a given tourist discipline and requires special preparation, active tourism enables the regeneration of physical and mental strength and is a form of undertaking unspecified recreational, sporting or hobby activities in order to develop the intellect or physical fitness<sup>6</sup>. Sports activities are one of the important elements that often accompany active tourism, as the exploration of a specific tourist space during a hike is complemented by various physical activities, apart from the need for adequate fitness preparation to indulge in this form of tourism<sup>7</sup>. In some respects it may seem that active tourism has much in common with qualified tourism and even with related but not identical sports tourism<sup>8</sup>. However, active tourism is a broader concept, which includes qualified tourism as a special form connected with communing with nature and acquiring new cognitive and educational content, but more elitist, rigorous and requiring much greater skills than active tourism<sup>9</sup>.

One of the significant differences between the above forms of tourism is the saturation with sightseeing content, which in the case of active tourism is much more accessible, but on a much smaller scale of coverage, while in the case of qualified tourism it is at a noticeably higher level, often unattainable by many tourists as it places participants in the role of explorers and experimenters focused on the goal of increasing their knowledge about 'krajoznawstwo'<sup>10</sup>. However, there is no denying that both forms combine physical activity as the dominant manifestation of physical culture, as well as respect for cultural and natural heritage, which manifests itself in the willingness to care for heritage and natural resources as carriers of sightseeing knowledge. Each of the forms is evolving, and their developmental context depends on the specific needs of individual recipients, also in the field of 'krajoznawstwo', and in particular with regard to respect for nature or various other cognitive and socio-cultural values<sup>11</sup>. This is because the role of 'krajoznawstwo' is interdisciplinary, it allows, among other things, to perceive the reality in the context of cognition of a particular space, and it also includes the whole of cognitive activity together with the sum of the values produced and its results, with emphasis on recognizing the influence in the cultural context<sup>12</sup>. Nowadays it is even understood as an idea and attitude that directly connected people to their surrounding environment and heritage<sup>13</sup>. The terminological distinction between the terms

'krajoznawstwo' and 'tourism' makes it clear that the former does not fall into the category of 'tourist activity' and is not the same as 'sightseeing tourism', which is closer in meaning to the German term 'Besichtigungstourismus' and the English term 'sightseeing tourism', as well as 'heritage tourism' considered in the Western literature in terms of cognitive tourism. For this reason, due to the lack of a broad scope of the concept, the term 'krajoznawstwo' is used only in Poland. In English it is simply described as 'touring' and 'sightseeing', and the English Wikipedia considers it as 'local history'. A similar proposal for the German-language version, which suggests the term 'Ortsgeschichte'.

The close connection of active tourism with regions with intact natural environment, which are interesting from the 'krajoznawstwo' point of view, creates a possibility of satisfying tourist social needs. Especially that in the times of spreading technology and developing means of reaching the largest group of people through electronic devices called mass media, a person has more and more often the possibility to get to know the natural environment in a way other than direct observation. This, however, may encourage contact with nature and evoke the desire to commune with nature, as by watching TV or surfing the Internet in search of interesting sightseeing issues, man may feel the need to go out and strengthen his direct relationship with nature and wildlife. This makes the person able to appreciate the quality and value of the experience of the countryside to the maximum<sup>14</sup>. Values will come first of all from personal contact with natural and cultural heritage and relations with people sharing similar interests, encountered on routes or in the most interesting places visited by visitors from the tourist perspective, most often with low civilization impact and high level of natural landscape. Equally important seems to be the integration with various other areas of life, as well as socialisation, as the knowledge and experience acquired by the tourist should be shared with others, infecting with passion for tourism in its broadest sense, and thus also for 'krajoznawstwo'<sup>15</sup>.

### **The area around the Lake Malta – a place for everyone**

One of the places that tourists like to visit in the capital of Greater Poland region – Poznan, are the surroundings of Lake Malta<sup>16</sup>. However, the oldest history of the area is connected with the twelfth century Order of St John of Jerusalem and Duke Mieszko III the Old, who invited the monks to Poznan. In the sixteenth century, the Joannits were granted permanent use of the island of Malta by Emperor Charles V, so they came to be known as the Cavaliers

of Malta, and the surrounding green areas on the river Cybina as Malta. During the three partitions of Poland, this area was the most popular excursion destination for Poznan citizens. Mainly because on the right bank of the river there were many reminders of the former political and national independence, such as Ostrów Tumski, which even today is the place of graves of the first rulers of Poland<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, the area in the Cybina valley was distinguished by a varied landscape, full of blooming meadows, sandy hills, forests, ponds and suburban gardens. The area on Cybina turned out to be ideal for the activities of the 'Sokol' Gymnastic Association established in 1886, which set itself the goal of developing physical education and organizing entertainment, cultural and educational events<sup>18</sup>. The residents of Poznan enjoyed leisure and entertainment on the island of Malta. In 1912, the structures of Poznan scouting were established to prepare cadres for armed struggle against the invader, in which the strongest link was young people who did not continue their education. Scout troops traveled to Malta, where they exercised military prowess. In 1917, a competition was announced to build a sports center for young people in this place, because this place was visited by crowds of young people from Poznan to practice physical activity under the guidance of instructors from the 'Sokol' organization. Two years later, after Poland gained independence, the area was officially handed over for use by young people and it included playing fields, gymnasiums, bathrooms and rest houses surrounded by numerous walking paths. Although the plans to continue the development of the area were significant, World War II stopped them. During its duration, the Germans, using slave labor, began to enlarge the existing fish ponds, and the whole area was turned into a lake in 1952, where in 1956, 1958 and 1961 international canoeing and rowing competitions took place. Until the end of the 1970s, the reservoir served as a water sports center in Poland, where water and motorboat events were organized<sup>19</sup>. Unfortunately, over the years the facility ceased to meet the current standards for holding sports competitions, the lake became gradually shallower and the water was increasingly polluted. In 1980 a modernisation of the facility began, and two years later renovation and deepening of the reservoir started. The work was completed in August 1990 and the site, apart from being an extremely attractive sports area, is now one of the popular tourist destinations in the region.

Its present development is conducive to active tourism, i.e. outdoor recreational activities such as water sports, running, nordic walking, cycling or playing various outdoor games in an extremely attractive location associated above all with elements of natural heritage of the country – the lake is home to one of the six sites of green algae and dipterocarp

in Poland, which was the fourth known location of the occurrence of this species in fresh waters of Poland. The area around the lake is also home to various rocks, including granite, marble, sandstone, pegmatite and diorite.

Figure 1: A diorite found in the forest surrounding Lake Malta.



Source: personal collection.

Devotees of ‘krajoznawstwo’ understood as a desire to acquire all information about the places of a given country, as well as to collect information on geology, meteorology, flora and fauna, may find in the area around Lake Malta many interesting issues worth deepening. In the course of field studies, various geographical processes may be observed, including geotropism (also called gravitropism), i.e. movements of plant organs induced by a gravitational stimulus, and creeping – the slowest geological mass movement consisting in slow movement of the top layer of a slope<sup>20</sup>. Its visible effect is the leaning of trees, which grow out of the ground in the direction of the slope and have trunks arched towards the vertical.



Figure 2: Processes of geotropism and creeping in the forest surrounding Lake Malta.



Source: personal collection.

Interestingly, water aeration processes – the processes of increasing or maintaining oxygen saturation of water, are also noticeable in the surroundings of Lake Malta<sup>21</sup>. It is often used to manage reservoirs, ponds or lakes to address low oxygen levels or algal blooms.

Figure 3: Water aeration process in the surroundings of Lake Malta.



Source: personal collection.

At Malta Lake one of the most important objectives of ‘krajoznawstwo’ – providing knowledge – has been meticulously taken care of. In addition to the numerous plaques accompanying the surrounding infrastructure, some of the information has also been placed in other forms, for example stones to which information plates have been attached.



Figure 4: Stone informing that in the past there was the largest floating fountain in Poland on Lake Malta.



Source: personal collection.

Apart from making use of the natural remains, the current administrators of Lake Malta are also trying to broaden the spectrum of information that tourists can obtain about the lake itself, its surroundings, the people associated with it and even the city as a whole. One example is the initiative to commemorate all the Olympic medallists who have represented the city of Poznań during the Olympic Games and brought fame to the city. Currently, 21 pedestals have already been installed, on which glass plaques will be mounted to blend in with the space and the surroundings<sup>22</sup>. On these boards, people will be able to read the name of the athlete in question and see what the medal that the athlete brought back from the Olympic Games looked like, which will certainly be of particular interest to Olympic tourists<sup>23</sup>. The plaques will be a project to commemorate the people who wrote the history of Poznań's sport from before World War II until the recent Tokyo 2020 Games.

Figure 5: Pedestals along the main avenue surrounding Lake Malta to hold plaques dedicated to the Olympic medallists.



Source: personal collection.

However, this essential role of the complex, which facilitates active tourism, is the role of the area around Lake Malta as a place for recreation and sports activities. Historically it was given the function of a water sports track and bathing area . In the 1980s sport and recreation facilities were extended, and in the early 1990s a ski slope covered with plastic was opened, which is used by boarders all year round. When the weather is good, the 18-hole mini-golf course and climbing walls are popular<sup>24</sup>. Regardless of the weather and season, there are also pools in the Maltese complex intended for sports swimming and competitions in this discipline of European and world rank, as well as for amateur training and recreational swimming. One of the pools is suitable for water polo, diving, diving and synchronised swimming. There are lifeguarding and swimming courses and other recreational activities in the pools. Visitors to the Malta Baths can choose from several types of saunas. Conditions for active leisure are created by a rope park in a forest by Lake Malta, as well as by the surrounding infrastructure, including playgrounds for playtop street games.



Figure 6: Group of people using playtop street infrastructure during the physical activities.



Source: personal collection.

## Summary

Summarizing our considerations so far and referring to the objectives of the presented work, the concept of 'krajoznawstwo' in English is not clearly defined but has many indisputable features in common with active tourism. The relationship between active tourism and 'krajoznawstwo' shows that many links can be seen in their scope. Tourism in combination with 'krajoznawstwo' plays a key role in the process of learning about the country and the world. Practising active tourism can be a platform for tourists to acquire knowledge of the Polish natural and cultural heritage, which in turn can also strengthen multi-generational aspirations to emphasise the role of the country in terms of its history or geography. The role of active tourism, which has a mass range and thus offers a more accessible educational offer in the field of natural and cultural heritage, history or geography, is invaluable in this case. The surroundings of Lake Malta in Poznan can be an object of interest for tourists and 'krajoznawstwo' enthusiasts, as they are connected with an extraordinary history and combine

natural and cultural values, at the same time making it possible to practice both active and passive tourism.

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