
Public-Private Partnership and Strategic Documents for the Development of Regional Tourism: An Example of the Voivodships in Northern Poland

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Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of this article is to identify the place of public-private partnership in strategic documents of the local government policy of the voivodships of Northern Poland and – if PPP exists – to identify potential areas of its impact on the life of local communities.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The basic method used in this study is the analysis of the literature and the content of regional strategic documents in terms of identifying the partnership assumptions, on the one hand, and creating changes in the selected areas of tourism management and the quality of life of local communities.

Findings: Public-private partnership is indicated as an important management instrument, including tourism in the studied voivodeships of Northern Poland. The provisions in the strategic documents of these administrative units do not provide sufficiently strong grounds for recognizing that this instrument will be widely used in the implementation of the assumptions of the region's strategy.

Practical Implications: The results of this research may be a suggestion for a wider inclusion of public-private partnership both in the implementation of the current regional strategies and in the process of developing similar documents for future periods.

Originality/Value: The article contributes to the discussion concerning the role of public-private partnership for socio-economic development of regions. Author of this work is aware that it would be worthwhile to conduct the study in a dynamic perspective, i.e. at the implementation and monitoring stage, which would allow, to identify the real interest of regional governments on PPP in the tourism sector. However, this study reveals a gap in the scientific discussion about the place of public-private partnership in strategic documents at the voivodeship level in Poland

Keywords: Public-private partnership, tourism, strategic documents in regions.

JEL classification: H11, H75, H83, L38.

Paper Type: Research article.

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1. Introduction

Public-private partnership (PPP) is often seen as an escape from privatization. From this point of view, it is a strategic goal, supporting activities that do not interfere with the undertakings of the state or local government, but, on the contrary, they fit into the process of achieving the set economic and social goals. Analyzing various approaches to understanding the essence of public-private partnership, Linder (2002, pp. 25-33) distinguishes its six basic meanings, including understanding PPP as a manifestation of social renewal. The main message of this approach is to increase the society's participation in conducting activities under joint ventures to achieve goals jointly set with the government and to generate specific profits.

In the process of implementing projects under public-private partnership, participants adapt to each other in terms of not only setting the goals, but also optimizing the means of their implementation; private shareholders often refrain from deepening product diversification, and instead they offer attractive cooperation with local government bodies.

Unfortunately, many of them perceive partnership in a similar way – as a political tool that brings the state and local governments closer to private partners, but their mutual benefits are not equal. It is assumed that the private sector is the main producer of added value, while local governments or the state have a smaller share in this process. Referring this statement to the tourism sector, it can be noted that partnership is more often used in promotional activities than in investment or in the creation and sale of incoming tourism products.

2. PPP in Tourism in Poland

The tourism sector in Poland follows the above model of thinking and acting – tourism enterprises most often look for marketing support in cooperation with local governments, and local governments – for the dynamization of production and market processes managed by tourism enterprises. This indicates the “uniting” of the private and public sectors in the processes of searching for means of achieving separate goals rather than setting them. Admittedly, Cieślak and Kordasiewicz (2012, p. 1) state in their report that “more and more often the public-private partnership formula is also used in the field of tourism. Local government units noticed a significant potential in PPP which they want to use both to build a modern sports base and increase the quality of life of local communities”; however, the share of tourism projects in the total number of projects submitted for implementation in 2009-2012 is low.

The purpose of this article is to identify the place of public-private partnership in strategic documents of the local government policy of the voivodships of Northern Poland (zachodniopomorskie, pomorskie, kujawsko-pomorskie, warmińsko-

mazurskie and podlaskie) and – if PPP exists – to identify potential areas of its impact on the life of local communities.

The place of these five voivodships in the total number of PPP proceedings in 2009-2012 was less significant compared to other voivodships; in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship there were 4 proceedings, while in the Zachodniopomorskie voivodship 3 proceedings were announced, in Pomorskie and Kujawsko-Pomorskie 2 proceedings each, while in some voivodships there were 6. There were no PPP proceedings in the Podlaskie Voivodship. The above-mentioned document reports on the functioning of the new regulations governing the cooperation of the public and private sectors, mainly the Act of 19 December 2008 on public-private partnership (Journal of Laws of 2009, No. 19, item 100, as amended).

The second component of the research objective – determining the potential areas of impact of PPP and its management in conditions of uncertainty on the life of local communities – refers to the concept of Provan and Milward (2001, pp. 414-423) cited in the literature, which indicates the need to measure the effectiveness of PPP at three levels, community, network and organization/participant as the main stakeholders. The criterion of selection for the analysis of the above-mentioned five voivodships was the presence of natural values in their area which constitute an important component of the tourist potential of the region: lakes, forests, clean rivers and water basins.

The basic method used in this study is the analysis of the literature and the content of regional strategic documents in terms of identifying the partnership assumptions, on the one hand, and creating changes in the selected areas of tourism management and the quality of life of local communities, on the other hand. It was assumed that the latter would be determined by selected features of social development, e.g., access to an enriched offer of leisure services, access to new forms of culture and education, growth and development of tourist and para-tourism infrastructure, etc.

The subject of the research were the provisions of the strategies of individual voivodeships for 2014-2022, included in the chapters relating to the implementation of the strategy (as regards the objective of identifying the place of public-private partnership in regional strategies). Selected areas of social development adopted as determinants of changes in the quality of life were described on the basis of objectives and priorities in the regions which constitute the key components of tourism management in the region.

It was assumed that the strategic documents of the analyzed voivodeships do not contain (do not define) cause-and-effect relationships between the intention to implement PPP and the standard of living in the region characterized by, inter alia, changes in the tourism potential and the impact of the degree of its use on the standard of living of local communities.

3. Public-Private Partnership in Strategic Documents of the Studied Regions

3.1 Pomorskie Voivodeship

The development strategy of the Pomorskie Voivodeship for the years 2014-2020 consists of 5 chapters, where the implementation of strategic goals is covered in Chapter III "Principles of the strategy and the role of the voivodeship self-government." Partnership as a way of implementing strategic goals of the voivodeship was included in the "Principle of multi-level management and partnership" (Strategia2020.pomorskie ..., p. 24).

The document specifies that this "means that it is necessary to strengthen the cooperation of entities involved in the implementation of the Strategy, which leads to the integrated and agreed implementation of development initiatives, to the improvement in coordination of actions taken, as well as to increased efficiency and effectiveness of spending public funds, taking into account involvement in the decision-making and executive processes of social and economic partners".

At the same time, the document states that "the implementation of this principle means that the undertakings important for the implementation of the Strategy will be analyzed in terms of the criterion of partnership and social participation" (Strategia.2020.pomorskie, p. 24). However, in the further part of the analysis of the above-mentioned principles, additional conditions for its implementation can be read, including pointing to "network undertakings of a supra-local scale, being a result of permanent cooperation of many entities and social acceptance".

Although this provision draws attention to the need to expand the scale of partnership, it does not refer directly to the potential social effects of this activity. Further specification of the principle of implementation of the discussed voivodship strategy draws attention to the need to relate it to the economic efficiency of projects, emphasizing the preferences of private capital involvement. "The second important point of reference will be the criterion of public-private partnership, which emphasizes the implementation of economically effective projects, in particular involving private capital, which leads to strengthening the impact and effectiveness of public intervention" (Strategia.2020.pomorskie ..., p. 25).

The benefits for the local or regional community are not directly reflected in the purposes which this principle serves, and in the means of achieving the objectives, one can see the potential of social benefits from the implementation of the tasks resulting from the Strategy in partnership. Each authority, and therefore also the regional one, is called to perform two functions: economic and social. The lack of reference in the description of the above principle and its implementation in the tourism sector to these functions suggests that the tourism policy may be treated in the region as an area of cross-sectoral activity.

The recent strategic document “Strategia2030...” (p. 130) stresses: “The entity responsible for the implementation of the Strategy is SWP which, in order to be effective in targeting and strengthening interventions, will work with multiple partners operating at various levels of development management. These include, among others, government administration, local government units, universities, NGOs, FLAGs/LAGs, social and economic partners, entrepreneurs, business environment institutions, as well as other regions, organizations and foreign and international institutions”.

3.2 Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship

The project of the Development Strategy for the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship until 2020, Modernization of 2020+ as at the date of the first analysis, i.e., October 16, 2013, is in the phase of completed public consultations, it consists of 9 chapters and 5 annexes. For the purposes of this article, the chapter “Implementation of the strategy” has been analyzed taking into account the assumption that PPP can act as a means of achieving strategic goals. The provisions of this chapter do not justify a convincing statement that PPP plays a significant role in the implementation of the strategy.

Its first principle speaks of openness to entities participating in the implementation of the strategy “The development strategy of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodship is ‘open’ in the scope of implementing entities – which means that when constructing the arrangements, it was not limited only to tasks falling within the competence of the voivodeship self-government – the strategy includes all issues important for the development of the voivodeship, regardless of the type and nature of the entity responsible for implementation”

(http://www.kujawskopomorskie.pl/pliki/strategia/konsultacje/Projekt_SRW_WKP.pdf Strategia.Projekt, p. 49).

On the other hand, in the second principle, the dominant role of local government has been highlighted: “The voivodeship self-government is an entity of dominant importance in the implementation of the provisions of the Strategy, where four levels of its impact are indicated...” (Strategia.Projekt, p. 50). One of the above-mentioned levels is the “Plane of indirect impacts – the influence of the voivodeship self-government by initiating cooperation and engaging as a partner in the implementation of projects that do not fall within the competence of the voivodeship self-government” (Strategia.Projekt, p. 50).

The final document indicates entities responsible for the implementation of the “2030+ Acceleration Strategy” as well “when drafting the arrangements, people were not limited only to the tasks within their competence. The Strategy includes all issues important for the development of the voivodeship, regardless of the type and nature of the entity responsible for their implementation. Thus, it will be

implemented by various entities” (Strategia rozwoju województwa kujawsko-pomorskiego do 2030 roku – Strategia Przyspieszenia 2030+, p. 221).

3.3 Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship

The strategy of the analyzed voivodship until 2020 is based on the structure of 12 chapters. As a task aimed at solving the research problem, the analysis of chapter 10 “Strategy implementation” was undertaken. Its provisions do not specify the implementation tools, but only refer to the need to synchronize the strategy with other documents (not always coinciding with the periods they cover) of long-term development, including the Tourism Development Strategy until 2015.

This chapter, although short, contains a clear reference to the need to use public-private partnership to implement the established priorities and objectives. “The strategy is implemented through voivodship programs prepared for subsequent multi-annual budgetary periods, adopted by the voivodship assembly, and then the resulting operational programs, under which development projects are financed.

They can take the form of independent tasks of entities implementing the strategy, or tasks of joint public entities or joint tasks on the basis of public-private partnership” (Strategia 2020, p. 86). The document extending the voivodeship development strategy until 2025, in chapter 11 devoted to the implementation of the strategy, contains a direct reference to the role of public-private partnership “The strategy of the voivodship self-government, like other strategies of public institutions, touches upon the issues of various organizations, including business. The socio-economic development of the voivodship depends, and it will be emphasized in the implementation of this Strategy, on public-private cooperation for the benefit of the region” (Strategia 2025, p. 75).

In connection with the social goals of the strategy, it can be seen that PPP has been included as a means of achieving them. Exactly the same sentence as above was included in the next document (Strategia 2030, p. 79). The Strategy 2030 also added that “The activity of local governments and economic organizations will play a special role in building the climate of trust, and non-governmental organizations with which the openness of self-government will correspond.”

3.4 Podlaskie Voivodeship

The analysis of the “Implementation System” of the strategic document of the Podlaskie Voivodeship indicates partnership as the key principle of implementing the strategy (this principle is listed as the first one). In achieving the assumed goals of the Strategy, as well as in the monitoring and evaluation of interventions, public and private entities, whose decisions have the greatest impact on the course of development processes in the region, must participate in co-participation. Social and economic partners are included from the very beginning and at every stage on equal

rights (SWP, p. 57). The recent strategic document of the Podlaskie Voivodship stresses that “public, private and social entities whose decisions have the greatest impact on the course of development processes in the region must participate in co-decision processes. The social and economic partners are involved from the outset and at every stage on an equal footing” (strategia.wrotapodlasia.pl/strategia_województwa_podlaskiego2030_eng. p.82).

In none of the previously described strategies of selected voivodeships from Northern Poland, partnership as an instrument for the implementation of strategic goals has been so clearly emphasized. This proves the awareness of local government authorities regarding the need to use PPP as a condition for economic and social development, which is also reflected in other parts of the strategy.

3.5 Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship

The Development Strategy of the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship with a perspective until 2020 (SRWZ, 2020) was adopted on 22 June 2010. It was a coherent and comprehensive concept for the development of the region in the medium term (Strategia rozwoju województwa zachodniopomorskiego do roku 2030, s 9). The above-mentioned document with a perspective until 2020 indicates the need to support research and technological activities as well as cooperation in the field of creating tourist products (SRWZ, 2020, p. 97)

This strategy was implemented with the help of various programs reflecting the interests of the society, e.g., the development of the region by increasing the competitiveness of the economy, spatial and social cohesion and increasing the standard of living of the inhabitants. Some goals relate directly to the quality of life through improving living conditions by preserving and protecting the natural environment and increasing the social base of the voivodship. This provision makes direct reference to PPP as a means of achieving strategic goals.

Actors responsible for the implementation of the Strategy at this level were ranked by dividing the functions and activities into five groups, government administration, voivodeship self-government, powiat self-government, communal self-government, private and non-governmental initiatives, including public-private partnerships (SRWZ, 2020). The above provisions of the strategic development document for the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship prove that the role of PPP in shaping the living standards of its inhabitants is perceived at the regional policy level. In the implementation of the strategy, it is stated that some tasks will also involve private financial resources in the framework of the so-called public-private partnership (SRWZ, 2020, p. 100).

Implementation process of the development strategy 2030 for the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship provides the involvement of four groups of entities: the executor (voivodeship self-government), partners in the region, partners

in the country and allies (Strategia Rozwoju Województwa Zachodnio-pomorskiego do roku 2030, p. 59). This can suggest that the role of PPP will increase and activate the socio-economic development of the region.

3.6 Potential Benefits of Public-Private Partnership in Tourism

Countries supporting the functioning of the tourism sector through public-private partnership (PPP) find the key to higher effectiveness of the activities of the National Tourist Organizations (equivalents of the Polish Tourist Organization), commercial tourist entities and local governments. The measurability of this efficiency is one of the basic problems that requires new research. The above results, inter alia, from the following premises:

- PPP is conducive to the implementation of tourism policy (Marciszewska and Miecznikowski, 2003), mainly in the field of development of tourism infrastructure and training of staff for tourism; the first of the lines of action under public-private partnership may lead to the development of quantifiable effects, while the second one requires both a quantitative and qualitative approach to potential effects.
- PPP is an effective form of conducting tourism marketing, incl. through (Marciszewska, 2006):
 - creating a possibility of setting common marketing goals, both market and social ones;
 - creating favorable conditions for rationalizing marketing expenses and shaping proper relations between costs and jointly set priorities;
 - optimizing the relationship between the involved private and public capital.

A strategic view of public-private partnership in tourism draws attention to the need to build a competitive advantage, on the one hand, and its role for the quality of life of local communities, on the other hand. The literature presents various approaches to measuring the effects (or effectiveness) of activities in a partnership also understood as a network. Austen (2012, p. 174) notes that “network efficiency can therefore be defined as improving the welfare of customers (citizens) and the quality of services provided.” This understanding of the partnership effects also covers the quality of life of the region's inhabitants.

The analysis of the importance of individual factors shaping the competitive advantage of the tourist entities in the region requires defining the most important determinants of its development. Taking into account the strengthening position of the client-tourist on this market, they can include, among others:

- quality of tourist services,
- standard and availability of tourist infrastructure,
- prices,
- marketing activity and its effectiveness.

On the other hand, from the point of view of members of the local community / region residents, their sense of improving living conditions will depend on the following factors:

- accessibility (physical and price) of tourist infrastructure – often also serving as a recreational base for residents,
- standard and location of the educational base (schools, kindergartens),
- communication infrastructure,
- esthetics of the town and region,
- the condition of historic buildings (if there are any in the town).

It follows from the above that appropriate tourism development is, on the one hand, a condition for the satisfaction of residents, and on the other hand – an important component of the tourist supply and a factor of satisfaction for tourists.

The nature of entities operating on the tourism market (hotels, catering companies, sports and recreation centers, culture and entertainment centers) requires great investments – both in their modernization and construction of new ones. The domination of small and medium-sized enterprises on the Polish tourism market determines the limits of their financial and managerial possibilities in the field of tourism development. Public-private partnership is becoming a real way of extending investment opportunities in the field of tourism development (apart from financing from external funds), and thus – increasing the availability of services for organizing leisure time for residents. The development of this type of investment depends on innovation not only in terms of technological and organizational solutions, but also in meeting the changing human needs of tourists and local communities.

Tourism business support institutions (including universities, research and development centers as well as state and local government authorities at all levels) should cooperate to improve the quality of life in the region. The development of the supply of tourist services is an integral part of this process and thus contributes to the quality of life of both groups of entities – tourists and local communities. Taking into account the economic limitations of tourist entities of various types (commercial enterprises, local governments, etc.) which are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine, PPP should be perceived as a means of increasing the probability of creating phenomena supporting the building of a new quality of life for local communities.

In a difficult post-pandemic situation and in a complex geopolitical situation, one cannot trust only the market and its rules – both in terms of new jobs in a given area and an improvement in the living conditions of inhabitants in terms of society. Public-private partnership, understood as a new form of managing socio-economic processes based on mutual understanding and support of private and public capital, is becoming a real formula for striving towards quality and innovation in tourism.

The cooperation may provide a competitive advantage for the market of tourist services in the region in relation to other sectors, on the one hand, and to the European market – on the other. Investments in tourism go far beyond the financing of national heritage and cultural projects; tourist and communal infrastructure is becoming a new challenge for tourist entities of all types and levels. Indirectly, their development influences the activation of urbanized areas and causes the redistribution of financial resources according to the criterion of tourist attractiveness of cities or regions.

Thus, the development of tourism, based on quality and innovation, becomes a factor in the development of the economy and society, provided, however, that both phenomena become a common concern for public and private entities operating in partnership. This challenge is of particular importance in the era of reconstruction of the condition of tourist entities seeking tourist arrivals after the collapse caused by COVID-19

Like any area of socio-economic life, tourism undoubtedly requires constant investments in infrastructure – not only in the preservation of anthropogenic tourist values, but also, and perhaps above all, in human capital, which mainly determines the attractiveness and functionality of the tourist and recreational material base. A man with his competences contributes to the broadly understood quality of life of the inhabitants of the region.

The impact of partnership in the region's tourism sector on the process of socio-economic development on the macroeconomic scale is manifested through its activating role in relation to other sectors. However, the above considerations suggest that the development of tourism infrastructure often exceeds the capabilities of one sector, with the current problems in the sphere of public finances, on the one hand, and the unstable tourism market, on the other one. However, the development of public-private partnership in the tourism sector faces many barriers. Among others, these include (Marciszewska, 2007; Vaillancourt Rosenau, 2002):

- awareness – fear of losing independence in decisions,
- market – fear of competition,
- institutional – various forms of ownership and different legal forms of individual entities hold back the readiness for PPP; the new act in this matter should gradually eliminate this barrier;
- knowledge barrier – training in this field required for employees and decision-makers of all types of entities;
- economic – fear of the necessity to share not only costs but also the effects of activity.

Regardless of the above-mentioned obstacles, in many countries, public-private partnership is considered an effective form of stimulating economic growth and creating new jobs. Among others, PPP allows creating a common platform for action

uniting the policy of the state/regional/local authorities with the activities of tourism enterprises, ensuring the implementation of both economic and social goals, although the interest of commercial entities may be in conflict with the public interest (Wanhill, 2001).

In PPP, areas can be promoted jointly, and the public sector, participating in making decisions on the development of tourism infrastructure, can “guard” the effective use of resources (human, financial, material, information ones) in the region. Through this participation, the public sector can “control” the proportions between the development of individual sectors of the economy, taking into account the priorities of the country/region. Joint action is the right path to innovation, which is still a weakness of the Polish tourism sector (Marciszewska, 2007).

4. Conclusions

Public-private partnership offers the following opportunities for the socio-economic development of the region, including the tourism potential:

- it enables the implementation of goals and tasks that go beyond the competence and/or resource capabilities of separate entities;
- it eliminates potential conflicts of interest;
- it stimulates the development of new jobs;
- it enables a more complete implementation of the social functions of the state (also through local governments) through the activities of economic entities in the tourism sector;
- tourism enterprises gain a wider range of competences and access to resources.

According to the Cieślak and Kordasiewicz’s Report, (2012, p. 35) “The analysis of the presented data leads to a basic conclusion about the insufficient use of the PPP formula for the development of the sports, recreational and tourist infrastructure market in Poland and the low effectiveness of the announced PPP procedures”. In strategic documents of the surveyed voivodships with significant tourist attractiveness, PPP appears as a directly or indirectly indicated instrument for achieving the objectives and priorities of the region. Only in one case out of the five surveyed ones, PPP was shown as an instrument of increasing the quality of life of the region's inhabitants.

The literature indicates many threats to the implementation of the partnership. Austen (2012, p. 179) notes that partnership “may achieve insufficient results, assuming that an appropriate set of criteria has been established to measure effectiveness.

Examples of causes include management errors or poor cooperation between partners, which are factors that are under the control of managers. Secondly, however, it can happen that the performance of partnerships is assessed using the wrong criteria, so it is so important to define what criteria reflect the performance of

the partnerships.” When trying to determine how partnership affects the quality of life of the society – even assuming that it is defined, *inter alia*, through the factors identified above – the effects of the partnership require separate research, both at the economic and social level. This research should be carried out in at least three areas of PPP operation identified by Szwichtenberg (2008, p. 163), tourist infrastructure, road infrastructure and comprehensive promotional activities. These indications set the directions for future research on the possibilities of extending the use of PPP in the tourism sector.

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