

# PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RECREATIONAL CYCLING IN THE POMERANIAN PROVINCE OF POLAND

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to identify and analyze factors determining the recreational cycling development in Pomerania (Poland), and then indicate the prospects of this type of recreation in the province. The paper describes the universal and the specific factors of the recreational cycling development in Pomerania. The universal factors include: recreational qualities, accommodation and transport accessibility, State Tourism Policy, legal, social and economic factors. The specific factors of the development include: the availability of cycling infrastructure, public transportation's adoption to the needs of the cyclists, availability and price of products for recreational cycling, safety of the cyclists, cycling enthusiasts' activity and competing forms of recreation.

The analysis shows that there is a significant potential for recreational cycling development in the province of Pomerania. The use of the potential will depend on the authorities policy and its investments as well as local bike organizations' activity, but the most important factor will be health-oriented social trends. The higher dynamics is expected within local cycle recreation and short cycle excursions comparing with cycle tourism.

**Keywords:** recreational cycling, cycle tourism.

## INTRODUCTION

The Pomeranian province is an area predestined to develop such activities like cycling because of the numerous qualities like culture or nature and also technical infrastructure. Nowadays cycling has been chosen by the local authorities as one of the priority areas to support among active tourism products in the Pomeranian province [11, p. 106]. Gdańsk is often referred to be the "bicycle capital of Poland". The regional authorities have recognized cycling as a matter of such significance that in a year 2012 they commissioned what was known as the *Green Paper*, which put forward the concept of cycling development in Pomerania. The document is to provide an incentive for cycling enthusiasts to debate and

express their views on the development of this area. Local authorities also support cycling through numerous investments in bicycle infrastructure and actions promoting cycling.

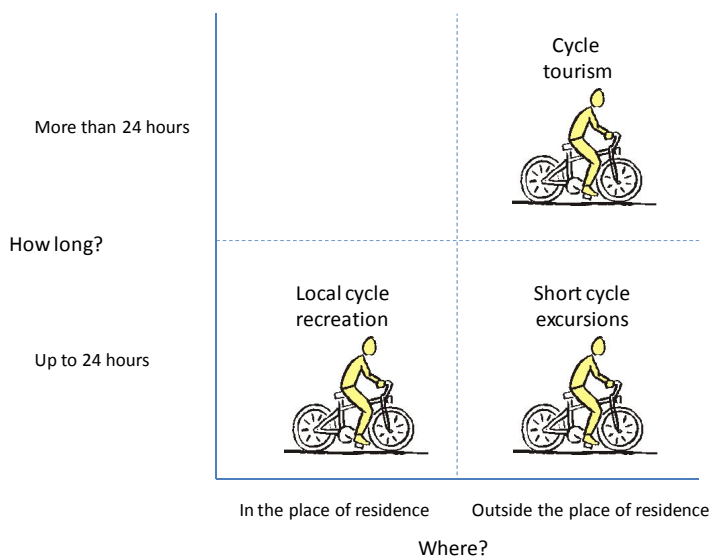
Activities aimed to create favorable conditions for practicing recreational cycling do not always help to increase the number of people benefiting from this form of recreation. The aim of this paper is to assess the prospects of the development of the recreational cycling in the Pomeranian province.

The research is based on industry reports, statistics, press releases and documents provided by public institutions. In addition, the author used its own research experience of cycle tourism and recreation.

## 1. CLASSIFICATION OF THE DETERMINANTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF RECREATIONAL CYCLING

S. Toczek-Werner [10, p. 11–12] emphasizes that recreation means "the restoration to life, strengthening, refreshing, as well as a new creation". The researcher cites several meanings of the term, including recreation as a set of activities that a person carries in her/his spare time, recreation as relaxation, removal of the effects of fatigue, or as a socio-cultural phenomenon. There are many forms of recreation, including passive and active. Recreational cycling is an active form of recreation.

The figure number 1 presents different recreational cyclists' behaviors.



**Fig. 1.** The categories of recreational cycling

Tourism is a narrower term comparing with recreation. E. Mazur called tourism one of the most worthy and desirable forms of recreation. In this study, cycle tourism includes people who practice cycling activity outside the place of residence for more than 24 hours [8, p. 22]

Cycle tourism is a segment of an active tourism. There are three types of cycle tourism: self-organised, organised by NGOs and organised by commercial organizations. Cycle tourism is a part of a widely understood cycling activity, which also includes cycle transport (eg. bicycle commuters).

There are many classifications of the factors influencing the development of recreation. Analyzing the approach proposed by selected authors [1, p. 71–105; 3, p. 105–148; 6, p. 33–46; 7, p. 7–20; 9, p. 38–51] and taking into account the characteristic of recreational cycling, including cycle tourism, the author proposed list of factors determining the development of recreational cycling. The classification includes universal factors affecting the development of recreation as a wider phenomenon and determinants specific to recreational cycling. The first group includes: recreational qualities, accommodation and transport accessibility, State Tourism Policy, legal, social and economic factors. The second group includes: the availability of cycling infrastructure, including bicycle trails, adoption of the public transportation to the needs of cyclists, availability and price of the products for recreational cycling, safety of the cyclists, cycling enthusiasts' activity and competing forms of recreation. The current and forecasted state of above factors will be presented in the next chapter of the paper.

## **2. ANALYSIS OF THE DETERMINANTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RECREATIONAL CYCLING IN POMERANIAN PROVINCE**

The analysis of the determinants of recreational cycling development leads to the conclusion that in the next few years, many factors will positively stimulate the development of the researched phenomenon in the Pomeranian province. In the past, growth resulted primarily from recreational qualities, both natural and anthropogenic, in recent years it was stimulated further by a strong bicycle lobby, fashion for cycling and the authorities aimed at the construction of cycling infrastructure.

The future dynamics of change will be influenced mainly by social aspect: cyclists and potential cyclists. Do they want to use new infrastructure, for what purpose, how often? To work, to relax, as a tourist? Here the picture is not clear. It seems that cycle tourism and other forms of recreational cycling should be considered separately.

**Table 1.** The impact of selected factors on the development of the recreational cycling in the Pomeranian province

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Recreational qualities	The high attractiveness because of the unique qualities of the natural and cultural heritage. Schneider rate – 81,9 for the province and 58,7 for the country (2012), Charvat rate - 279,9 for the province and 160,9 for the country (2011) [12, p. 54]	Stimulating
Transport accessibility	Good transport accessibility (road, air and water)	Neutral
Accommodation	Bed places in tourist accommodation establishments – 92 541, that is the second place in Poland in 2012 [12, p. 45]	Neutral
Adaption of public transport to cyclists needs	Facility for the transport of bicycles in almost every means of public transport	Stimulating
State Tourism policy	Cycling has been recognized as one of the most important tourism products in the Pomeranian province. Very intensive expansion of the network of bicycle paths during last few years. For example: network of cycle routes in Gdańsk has a total of 466 km [4]. Appointment of cycling officers in the municipalities; the introduction of a public bikesharing in Sopot	Stimulating
Law regulation	The gradual introduction of changes that are beneficial for the cyclists (eg. admission of children's trailer, the legalization of electric bicycles)	Neutral
Social area	Cycling is the most popular form of recreational physical activity (21% of citizens in Poland practise cycling [2, p. 212]). Cycling is the most popular sport in Poland. 51 percent surveyed by CBOS Poles declare that they are cyclists [5]. There is a fashion for a healthy lifestyle, a number of activities to promote active recreation, including biking is observed	Stimulating
Economic conditions	The uncertain economic situation affects the commercial cycling events, but has a little effect on the self-organization of cycling	Neutral
Safety of the cyclists	Unsatisfactory level of safety of the cyclists, but a gradual improvement is expected with the development of a network of bicycle paths	Neutral
Availability and prices of cycle tourism products	Limited offer of cycling events (very narrow market niche)	Neutral
Cycling enthusiasts activity	A significant number of active organizations, associations and cycling clubs (eg. Gdańska Kampania Rowerowa, Rowerowa Gdynia) influencing local authorities	Stimulating
Competing forms of recreation	Hiking and some forms of water tourism, such as canoeing, might be perceived as a competition for cycling. The other categories of active tourism, which require specific skills are not a threat for cycling	Neutral

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis shows that there is a significant potential for the development of recreational cycling in the province of Pomerania. The use of the potential will depend on the authorities policy and its investments as well as local bike organizations activity, but the most important factor will be health-oriented social trends. The higher dynamics activity, but the most important factor will be health-oriented social trends.

Cycle tourism is a form of recreation practiced by the most active cyclists. It seems that its popularity will continue to grow, but a significant growth should not to be expected. This is a relatively demanding form of tourism, so a group of people interested in it, is limited.

Meanwhile, other forms of recreational cycling - local cycle recreation and short cycle excursions - will grow faster. This illustrates the mechanism of popularizing cycling observed in recent years. In the 90s and beginning of the present century the high activity of Pomerania's cycling NGOs contributed to a creation of a number of new bicycle paths. Availability of bicycle infrastructure has prompted many people to return back or begin this form of activity. Many people seeing their friends, neighbors, co-workers on bicycles were also more likely to start cycling. This fits well into the broader trend of social care for the health and physical condition. In conclusion, the gradual increase in the number of people using recreational bicycles in residence, and during the holidays should be expected.

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