

Tłumaczenia artykułów

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Coordination of tourist thematic routes – analysis of selected Polish and European systems¹

Key words: thematic route, cultural route, tourism product, route coordination, tourist route management, cultural tourism

Abstract: After discussing the meaning of coordination and the role of thematic route coordinator as well as defining the required scope of managerial activities, the author presents examples of the routes in the territory of Poland and Europe illustrating the most frequently encountered types of coordinators and most common models of route management in cultural tourism. He also points out to their strengths and weaknesses and formulates conclusions regarding this aspect of Polish thematic routes operation.

1. Outline of issues related to thematic route coordination. Presentation of essential studies and proposals

The significance of thematic routes², as both the main types of destinations in cultural tourism and the most common options on offer, has been widely discussed in publications, including those contributed by this author [Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2008a, p.291-311; 2008b; 2009; 2010; 2011a, 2011b]. It is not necessary to repeat the previously published considerations and conclusions related to this matter, yet it should be kept in mind that one of the proposals suggested that it would be a good idea to establish at least one regional thematic route in each province; such routes should have the status of material routes, i.e. developed tourist products [Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2008b, p. 28]. In accordance with the opinion presented and justified by this author a number of times, such status and level of options on offer ensure four essential elements for the concept and operation of a cultural route. In addition to the justified thematic profile, physical and systematic marking of the route and consistent access to the sites, these essential elements include **ongoing coordination** of the route operation [Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2008a, p. 294; 2008b, p. 25, 2010, p. 55-56]. The need of thematic route coordination taking into account the requirements of contemporary cultural tourism was also pointed out by other researchers from Poland and abroad: A. Steinecke [2007, p. 34], L. Puczko i T. Ratz [2007, p. 139 and 143], A. Stasiak [2006, p.26-29 and 34; 2007]. Studies focusing on various aspects of route operation, including the element of coordination (management) were conducted and reported in recent years by A. Stasiak [2006], A. Mikos v. Rohrscheidt [2008b, 2010; 2011b], and this particular aspect (referred to as route management) was investigated by Ł. Gawęł [2011a; 2011b]. On the other hand the most in-depth study of this aspect of thematic route operation in other European countries in recent years was conducted by K. Meyer-Cech [2003]. Especially in the light of analyses conducted by A. Mikos v. Rohrscheidt [2010] and the most recent

¹ Selected aspects of thematic route coordination were analyzed by this author, and the results of that review were presented during an academic conference and published in the article entitled „Koordinacja funkcjonowania szlaków tematycznych jako zarządzania produktem turystycznym – analiza porównawcza zakresu” in a collaborative publication *Kultura i Turystyka – wspólna droga* (Łódź 2011), pp. 55-77. The present article contains a more comprehensive discussion of these issues taking into account the remaining aspects of coordination.

² For definition of cultural route and thematic route, see Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2010, p. 28-31. The basic definition adopted for the needs of this study, and discussed in the above article is the definition proposed by L. Puczko and T. Ratz (2007): “Cultural route is a thematic route focusing on a cultural asset or element of cultural heritage, where the key role is played by attractions of cultural nature” (p.133).

study by Ł. Gawel [2011b] it seems that the most significant deficiency in the case of Polish thematic routes is indeed related to coordination, even at its basic level³. Taking into account conclusions presented by the six aforementioned researchers, in order to ensure adequate operation of a thematic route at a satisfactory level, there must exist a coordinating entity, and what is equally important its responsibilities must be well defined and performed with respect to the route (as a linear tourist product) and in relation to tourists (as its users/customers). The scope of coordinator's responsibilities should be defined in detail in relation to specific elements on offer within a given system. These responsibilities could be divided into *internal tasks* focusing on the route as a system as well as *external tasks* aimed at consumers, including entities organizing group tours (such as travel agencies, travel clubs and schools) and individual tourists (individuals or family groups). The scope of such responsibilities may obviously vary, yet it is possible to define the **minimum** scope essential for proper operation of the route. These absolutely basic tasks include: 1. **monitoring of the system and its condition**: signs along the route and at the sites, their condition and accessibility⁴, 2. collecting, producing, processing, updating as well as disseminating **information** related to the route, sites, and events, and 3. organizing or co-organizing **promotion** of the product. If possible, the coordinator should also perform some of the following activities: 4. **initiating new simple services and mediation** related to their distribution (these include e.g. touring, workshops, shows, etc.); possibly also designing/preparing new materials and/or organization of necessary training for personnel, 5. **organizing complex services** (such as local packets, regularly held events or thematic tours) within the entire route or related to specific parts of the route or sites (internal) and distribution of these (external) or 6. **commissioning, promotion, mediation and distribution** of events, services and products (such as tours or events) to external entities and ensuring their performance and quality of such services. The coordinator may also 7. regularly conduct/commission **measurements** of tourist traffic and assess opinions and preferences of tourists visiting the route; this provides an opportunity for detecting any deficiencies and for taking adequate decisions related to upgrading options on offer, as well as designing promotional activities addressed to specific groups or areas. Apart from this the coordinator may take on other functions, relative to the specific features of the route, including its profile, geographical location and available mobility options allowing access to and movement within the route.⁵

As a result of the coordinator's location and the range of its responsibilities with respect to the route, the coordinator should act as a representative of the entire route and be a natural partner for potential consumers/users of options on offer. Consequently they will ask the coordinator for logistic support in designing itineraries and organizing tours. As a partner for administrators of specific sites, entities organizing sightseeing tours as well as tourists themselves (e.g. those independently using options on offer along the route) the coordinator should be available for contact, at least on defined days/in specified hours. The significance of this aspect for the potential success of the system as an option for spending leisure time

³ This fact is best illustrated by the difference between the number of all options operating as thematic routes in Poland and those which at least have the status of real routes, i.e. with visible forms of coordination, even if it is less comprehensive than the essential scope described below. The study by Ł. Gawel lists as many as 348 of the former (2011b, p. 218-229) – as of August 2011. On the other hand Mikos v. Rohrscheidt provides a list of the latter; it shows that in spring 2010 there were only 46 options of this type (2010, p. 47-49); it is unlikely that the status of many of these options has changed since that time.

⁴ In the case of Polish thematic routes access to specific sites is frequently limited in various ways or simply not ensured by their administrators – to the detriment of the route; this particular factor, besides coordination, seems to be of critical importance for the success or failure of a route as an option on offer for tourists. More about this: Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2011a (p. 38-40 i 52-56).

⁵ For example: if there are no transport services between major or essential sites along the route the coordinator may operate or commission and monitor operation of mobility services along such routes. If there are bike trails in the area the coordinator may operate or support/monitor operation of bike rental in a few locations along the route.

is increasingly important given the consistent growth in the number of individual travellers. These customers want to maintain a significant degree of independence during their vacation without losing the opportunity to use competent information and benefit from available services meeting their expectations. In the case of an existing route it may not be necessary to establish new structures in order to adjust the coordinator's functions to such needs, yet this option frequently seems to be most effective. This is because the functions of the coordinator may also involve other tasks connected with the theme of the system (e.g. it may act as an administrator of a site) or with its location (local tourism organization for an area with a large number of sites along the given route); yet in such situation it is necessary to strictly define the issues related to financing the coordinator's operations and its responsibilities with respect to other partners of the route. However, assessments of specific routes and their operation (Meyer-Cech (5), Mikos v. Rohrscheidt (5) and Gawel (1) have shown that it is most effective to delegate the function of a route's coordinator to a professional entity employing personnel, which does not have to be large but it must be well qualified for the tasks, must receive remuneration for their work (hence, they must be employed under contract) and must be regularly appraised for their performance by the administrator of the route. Given the phenomenon of limited confidence, still visible in the Polish travel market, such solution makes it possible to increase the confidence of tour operators who see the coordinator as their partner within the area of the route, and in their business relations they can use e.g. detailed purchase orders or agreements for executing complex services. A coordinator providing information and services and executing these "on behalf of the route" also becomes a natural partner for more informed final customers (tourists), to a greater extent accepting such entity as a warrantor of the quality of services complying with the provisions of the Act on tourist services.

A comprehensive analysis of the potential of a number of Polish regional thematic routes for tourism conducted by A. Mikos v. Rohrscheidt [2010] included assessment of the method and scope of their coordination. That study focused on five Polish thematic routes: Piast Route, Pomeranian Loop of Cistercian Route, Pomeranian Amber Route, Michael Willmann Route of Religious Art of Baroque in Lower Silesia, and Industrial Monuments Route of Silesian Province. A comprehensive study of Austrian thematic routes by K. Meyer-Cech [2003] also contained an in-depth discussion of their coordination. An analysis published this year by Łukasz Gawel examined the management model used at Małopolska Wooden Architecture Route. For the purpose of comparison the author of the present study has recently carried out a complex analysis of one German thematic route operating as a well-developed tourism product and a fragmentary analysis of another route, related only to the aspect of coordination [Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2011b]. This article is an attempt to systematize findings reported by the above analyses and to draw conclusions based on them.

Updating research connected with the nine previously analyzed routes was conducted in August 2011. It comprised eleven thematic routes in Austria, Germany and Poland; they varied in terms of reported profiles (yet each of them fitted in the wide range of cultural tourism), as well as types of coordinators, and models of coordination. The analyzed aspects included: the type of coordinator, model of route management (including method of executing coordination, the structural status and financing of personnel), and the scope of coordinator's responsibilities. To ensure better clarity of the findings, the latter aspect was divided into internal tasks, i.e. those performed in relation to the route as a system of tourism penetration as well as those related to customers, in accordance with the respective types of users. The data acquired by the aforementioned authors for their analyses conducted in 2003 and 2010 were expanded to include necessary details and updated by means of specific questionnaires addressed to entities coordinating the routes (all of these in August 2011; their contents reflected the data listed in Part 2 of this paper, which was only supplemented to include related changes and additional explanations). In order to increase

the representativeness of the group in question, two popular German thematic routes were also investigated in the same period using the same research method; one of them in the western part (German Fairy Tale Route), and the other in the eastern part of the country (Romanesque Road in Saxony-Anhalt). In all cases information related to specific services and provided on the websites of the routes was verified directly with the respective coordinators. The findings obtained using this procedure make it possible to identify coordination models used at specific routes and to attempt their classification; they also provide insight into the spectrum of management (coordination) operations, and a set of tourism-oriented services designed, managed and distributed by coordinators of thematic routes.

2. Aspect of coordination in the operation of thematic routes – results of analysis

The chapter consists of two parts. The first one comprises tables providing a description of coordination (management) in the routes subject to this review. The latter part, closing with a comparative table, and based on the previous analysis, contains a classification of types and models of thematic route coordination and points out their significant features, as well as strengths and weaknesses.

2.1. Scope of coordination in the selected routes

The following Tables 1-11 present the type and scope of coordination used in 11 routes, which were analysed taking into account the aforementioned recommendations and criteria. The tables are followed with comments referring to significant details and pointing out recent or currently introduced changes.

Table 1: Method and scope of coordination used at the German Fairy Tale Route

Name of route	Deutsche Märchenstraße / German Fairy Tale Route (Central and Northern Germany)
Profile of the route	literary / biographical (masters of the literary genre and their works)
Coordinator's name and headquarters	Deutsche Märchenstraße e.V.; Kurfürstenstraße 9; 34117 Kassel (Germany)
Type of coordinator	special non-governmental organization (association); separate section (office)
Concentration of responsibilities	exclusive scope of responsibilities and reason for establishing the section
Personnel: employment and financing	employer: members of the association of the route (local governments), staff: full-time employees working in the route's office
Scope of responsibilities related to the route	designing and coordinating thematic events, designing thematic packets, promotion (trade fairs, press trips), monitoring of markings – physical and in the system, inventory of the sites, updating and distribution of data, assessment of tourist traffic, local trainings
Scope of services for consumers	distribution of thematic packets, agency services related to organization group trips, tourist information (website, printed materials, non-serial publications), coordination of thematic events

Sources: Mikos v. Rohrscheidt, 2011b, www.deutsche-maerchenstrasse.com



Comment. From 2007 the German Fairy Tale Route is coordinated by a separate, specialized organizational unit (office), performing all the above coordinator's tasks. The office is the only executive organ of the route in all matters related to its operation, and its only representative body with respect to all its members (local governments), sites and partners, as well as customers. The tasks – described in more detail in a separate article (Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2011b) – are performed by the coordinator independently or delegated to other

entities under bilateral agreements; in the latter case it enforces their performance on behalf of the route.

Table 2: Method and scope of coordination used at the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska

Name of route	Wooden Architecture Route (frequently preceded with the adjective “Małopolski” referring to its location)
Profile of the route	route of architecture (kind) – as recognized cultural heritage
Coordinator’s name and headquarters	Urząd Marszałkowski Woj. Małopolskiego –Dep. Turystyki, Sportu i Promocji (Zespół ds. Rozwoju Marki Turystycznej Regionu) ul. Wrocławska 53, 30-017Kraków, anaw@malopolska.mw.gov.pl <i>delegated tasks are carried out by:</i> Małopolska Organizacja Turystyczna ul. Westerplatte 15, Kraków 31-033, biuro@mot.krakow.pl <i>and:</i> Małopolski Instytut Kultury, Kraków ul. Karmelicka 27, 31-131 Kraków, www.mik.krakow.pl
Type of coordinator	territorial public authority / regional tourism organization
Concentration of responsibilities	tasks are carried out by a number of people in a few institutions; each time these belong to a wider scope of responsibilities delegated to specific persons
Personnel: employment and financing	in each case – under employment contract with the above institutions
Scope of responsibilities related to the route	monitoring of signs along the route and at sites, ongoing inventory of the sites, promotion (including press trips), assessment of tourist traffic
Scope of services for consumers	tourist information about the system (website, printed materials), organization of regularly held events (music events, creative workshops)

Sources: Gawel 2011, info. Gawel 2011a, www.drewniana.malopolska.pl



Comment. From the moment the area was designated as a tourist route (2001) its coordination has been conducted jointly by two major entities. The formal coordinator is a public authority, and the related tasks are performed by

a special organizational, which also has other responsibilities. On the other hand most of the managerial activities are carried out by a regional tourism organization. Some typical coordination tasks (e.g. organization of regularly held events) are delegated to an institution of culture maintained by the local government (MIK). Hence, this is an example of typical dispersed coordination model. The scope of coordination is limited, since it does not include important activities aimed directly at tourists, such as organization of packets and trips within the area of the route, or distribution of services designed for tourists.

Table 3: Method and scope of coordination used at the Bregenz Cheese Route

Name of route	KäseStrasse Bregenzerwald / Bregenz Cheese Route (Vorarlberg, Austria)
Profile of the route	culinary route (production of Alpine cheese and culture of consumption)
Coordinator’s name and headquarters	KäseStrasse Bregenzerwald GmbH (company) Zeihenbühl 423, 6951 Lingenau; +43 (0) 5513 428 7041; e-mail: info@kaesestrasse.at
Type of coordinator	special enterprise – limited liability company (Käsestrasse Bregenzerwald GmbH), local tourism offices perform commissioned tasks
Concentration of responsibilities	exclusive scope of responsibilities and reason for establishing the enterprise

Personnel: employment and financing	one full-time employee; financing provided from contributions of 180 members of the association (production and processing enterprises, restaurants, museums, local tourism offices)
Scope of responsibilities related to the route	monitoring of signs along the route and at sites, updating data, preparation and distribution of information, representation during promotional events, representation of the route and its products in the media, promotion of food products among tourists
Scope of services for consumers	coordination of and agency services related to local packages, visits to plants, food tasting events, culinary events, information about events along the route

Sources: Meyer-Cech 2003, www.kaesestrasse.at



Comment. Until recently (2010) the route operated as an informal tourism-related cluster and its coordination (limited to monitoring of the signs and options on offer at the sites, as well as collecting, processing and distribution of information) was executed by an association for the promotion of the regional culture related to cheese (Verein zur Förderung der Bregenzerwälder Käsekultur) which was established in 1998 and handled other aspects of cooperation between its members, as well. In fact, the operation of the route was managed by an office with one full-time employee, who was also responsible for handling matters related to tourism in the commune. Fundamental changes in the route management were introduced in March-July 2011 in order to increase the size of tourist traffic; this is when operation of the route was delegated to a company which was established specifically for that purpose. Its statute and the rules of the office of the coordinator significantly expanded the scope of managerial responsibilities.

Table 4: Method and scope of coordination used at the Schilcher Wine Route

Name of route	Schilcherweinstrasse / Schilcher Wine Route (Western Styria, Austria)
Profile of the route	culinary route (culture of cultivation and consumption of rosé Schilcher wine)
Coordinator's name and headquarters	Tourismusregionalverband Süd & West Steiermark (regional tourism organization) 8552 Eibiswald 82; Tel.+43 (3466)43256; e-mail: info@suedweststeiermark.at (form.) Deutschlandsberg (commune): tourismus@schilcherheimat.at Weinland Steiermark (organization) www.weinland-steiermark.at
Type of coordinator	territorial tourism organization (micro-region)
Concentration of responsibilities	one of several scopes of responsibilities
Personnel: employment and financing	employees of regional tourism organization in accordance with their responsibilities, with no individual assignment of duties related to specific aspects and operation of the route
Scope of responsibilities related to the route	monitoring of signs along the route, updating information about the host plants and farms
Scope of services for consumers	providing information about products, sites, and events; distribution of the route maps

Sources: Meyer-Cech 2003, info TVSuWS, 31.08.2011



Comment. Only insignificant changes were introduced in comparison to the situation in 2003, described by Meyer-Cech. There are still problems with the identification of the route, compounded by the fact that some local brands are linked with the same culinary product [Meyer-Cech 2003, p. 146-7]. Management tasks related to the route are not specifically delegated and appointed to one of the entities.

The route is promoted by an external organization (Styria association for the promotion of wine - Weinland Steiermark), with which the route coordinator is also formally associated, as well as by Styria tourism centre. This situation has both advantages (wider range of promotion, more funds) and disadvantages: promotional activities do not focus on the specific route. Due to the fact that the responsibilities are divided between various entities the route does not have its own Internet site (information is posted on a few websites, each of these provides differing range of information). Thematic events are organized and identified with specific locations (organizers), rather than with the route, which leads to loss of synergy effect. The route seems to be a typical example of a lack of specified coordination model.

Table 5: Method and scope of coordination used at the Lower Austrian Iron Route

Name of route	Niederösterreichische Eisenstrasse / Lower Austrian Iron Route (Lower Austria)
Profile of the route	industrial route (as cultural heritage of the region)
Coordinator's name and headquarters	Verein Kulturpark Eisenstraße-Ötscherland (Association of Iron Route Culture Park – Ötscher Region) 3341 Ybbsitz; Brunnengasse 2; e-mail: info@eisenstrasse.info
Type of coordinator	special non-governmental organization (association); separate section (office)
Concentration of responsibilities	exclusive scope of responsibilities and reason for establishing the section
Personnel: employment and financing	employer: members of the association of the route
Scope of responsibilities related to the route	monitoring of the condition of and signs along the routes, coordination of the route's own services (cableways), promotion of the route, coordination and promotion of local events, monitoring and distribution of thematic packet
Scope of services for consumers	information (5 centres), sale of the route's own services, packet services, agency services (accommodation, tours, micro-events, tickets for events)

Sources: Meyer-Cech 2003, info VKEO 28.08.2011; www.eisenstrasse.info



Comment. Since the time of the first scientific analysis [Meyer-Cech 2003, p. 171-197], the original linear route leading from Sonntagberg via Ybbs to Weyer has evolved into a territorial product, comprising the entire micro-region, where the central route is of major importance. During this time the structure of coordination has changed radically: the previously existing association of the route Verein NÖ Eisenstraße, which operated in accordance with unified coordination model, has merged with the local tourism organization (Tourismusverband Ötscherland), as a result a culture park was established within the entire region, and the central coordination model has been adopted. Partners of the route (park) include local governments, boards of specific sites (e.g. museums), and business entities (local mountain cableways, farms, accommodation facilities, etc.). The themes related to iron, its mining and processing became the foundation of the brand tourism product of the micro-region. Majority of coordination tasks are carried out by the management of the park, other (a variety of services, organization of events) are delegated to other entities under specific agreements.

Table 6: Method and scope of coordination used at the Piast Route

Name of route	Piast Route
Profile of the route	cultural heritage route / historical (beginnings of the Polish state)
Coordinator's name and headquarters	Organizacja Turystyczna „Szlak Piastowski” (tourism organization) ul. Rynek 14; 62-200 Gniezno, e-mail: it@szlakpiastowski.com.pl
Type of coordinator	special tourism organization
Concentration of responsibilities	main responsibilities as a coordinator, and the reason for establishing it
Personnel: employment and financing	employer: public authority – district government (formally, the office operates as the tourist information for the District of Gniezno). Staff employed full-time in the office.
Scope of responsibilities related to the route	monitoring of signs along the route and at sites, promotion of the route and sites, updating and distribution of information, designing and coordinating thematic tourism products, organization and coordination of services for tourists (touring, organization of trips), publications, organization of press trips, training for personnel (including guides)
Scope of services for consumers	information about the route and the sites (including the route's website), distribution of tourist services (tours, trips)

Sources: Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2010, www.szlakpiastowski.com.pl



Comment. From the start (2003), the special tourism organization with headquarters in Gniezno assumed all the essential coordinator's responsibilities (promotion, information, monitoring of signs along the routes). In recent years this entity has been significantly expanding the range of its operations and undertaking a variety of new initiatives: it organizes trainings for personnel providing services for tourists, it has introduced a number of specially designed options of visiting the route, acts as an intermediary in distributing some services (touring). Yet, it has not initiated all the tasks which improve attractiveness of a route for individual travellers, such as designing and distribution of packets (at least accommodation services), coordination of events along the route, as well as introducing and enforcing standard rules for providing access to minor landmarks. Additionally, its operations visibly focus on the city and District of Gniezno, neglecting other parts of the route. This reflects the interests of the founding authority, i.e. the local government of Gniezno District. The currently applied coordination, defining the relations between the coordinator, and partners/sites, can be classified as unified model.

Table 7: Method and scope of coordination used at the Pomeranian Cistercian Route

Name of route	Cistercian Route (Loop of Pomerania)
Profile of the route	cultural heritage route / religious (heritage of the Cistercian Order)
Coordinator's name and headquarters	Diecezjalne Centrum Informacji Turystycznej w Pelplinie (Diocese tourist information centre) Plac Tumski 1, 83-130 Pelplin; e-mail: info@pelplin.com
Type of coordinator	another public institution (organizational unit in bishop's curia)
Concentration of responsibilities	one of several types of responsibilities (including religious tourism and services for tourists at the local level)
Personnel: employment and financing	employer: church institution (Bishop's Curia). Staff (3 persons) employed full-time in the centre.
Scope of responsibilities related to the route	preparing publications about the route *monitoring of signs along the route and at sites is performed by regional tourism organizations
Scope of services for consumers	tourist information, agency services for organizing visits (only local – Pelplin), distribution of materials about the route

Sources: Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2010; www.pcs.pomorskie.eu; www.szlakcysterski.org; info DCIT (20.08.2011)



Comment. The Cistercian Route, existing throughout Europe as a distinctive thematic component of cultural heritage, has its own autonomous structures; in Poland these are *Rada Gmin Szlaku Cysterskiego* (Council of the Communes along the Cistercian Route) and *Rada Koordynacyjna Szlaku Cysterskiego* (RKSC - Cistercian Route Coordination Board). Yet the coordination tasks related to an existing tourism product are not performed by the first entity at all, and only to a small degree by the latter body (contrary to its name). In accordance with its mission, RKSC develops comprehensive promotional programs and monitors production of publications related to the route in the whole country [Cysterski Rada 2011]. Coordination responsibilities with regard to the Pomeranian Cistercian Route are performed by a church institution specializing in religious tourism. However, this entity also carries out only selected coordination duties: it provides information about the Route, produces information materials and other publications related to the theme. Tourism related services are organized by DCIT only in Pelplin (the headquarters) and the nearby area. On the other hand monitoring of signs along the routes and at the sites is performed by three regional tourism organizations in their respective provinces. No entity offers complex tourism services comprising the entire route (packages, tours), there is no monitoring of accessibility of specific landmarks for tourists and there is no coordination of the numerous thematic events. Additionally, the findings show that the actual quality of operations performed by a coordinating entity may depend on involvement of just one person – in the case of their absence (the person was on vacation at the time of the assessment) others cannot provide any information regarding issues other than related to Pelplin and its Cistercian landmarks. Conclusion: there is hardly any coordination performed within the route in question and the coordinator's responsibilities have not been clearly defined.

Table 8: Method and scope of coordination used at the Michael Willmann Route of Religious Art of Baroque

Name of route	Michael Willmann Route of Religious Art of Baroque
Profile of the route	artistic trail (religious art of Baroque)
Coordinator's name and headquarters	Fundacja Drogi Baroku (separate organization of the Foundation Education for Democracy – currently in the process of registration) Fundacja Edukacji dla Demokracji, ul. Nowolipie 9/11, 00-150 Warszawa Person in charge: G. Zajączkowski; e-mail: grzegorz@edudemo.org.pl
Type of coordinator	special non-governmental organization (foundation)
Concentration of responsibilities	separate unit in the foundation – the main responsibility
Personnel: employment and financing	by the „Drogi Baroku” Foundation, under the Civic Initiatives Fund; local coordinators for parts of the route (6 persons) are employed full-time by specific institutions.
Scope of responsibilities related to the route	collecting and updating information about the sites, publication of materials, monitoring of accessibility of the sites, preparing and publishing information materials, training and certification of local guides, trainings for administrators of sites
Scope of services for consumers	providing information about the route and the sites, publication and distribution of guide books

Sources: Mikos v. Rohrscheidt, 2010; www.drogibaroku.org; info. G. Zajączkowski 20.08.2011



Comment. Significant structural changes have occurred here since the summer of 2010, i.e. the time when the potential of this route for tourism was investigated [Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2010]. In accordance with the information provided by the coordinator, most of these changes resulted from the assessment of the route's potential and were inspired by recommendations based

on the findings of that study. The following modifications were introduced with regard to coordination: change of the entity responsible for the route coordination (a single employee was replaced with a special unit within the foundation); the function of local coordinators was introduced – they operate within their own institutions but have clearly defined responsibilities related to the route; the scope of coordinator's duties with respect to the route has been significantly expanded, and includes monitoring of landmarks' accessibility and trainings for personnel providing services for tourists. At present the coordinator is preparing (and is working towards obtaining legal rights) for providing selected direct tourist services. The currently applied model can be classified as unified coordination.

Table 9: Method and scope of coordination used at the Industrial Monuments Route of Silesian Province

Name of route	Industrial Monuments Route of Silesian Province
Profile of the route	industrial route (as cultural heritage of the region)
Coordinator's name and headquarters	Wydział Promocji i Współpracy Międzynarodowej Urzędu Marszałkowskiego Woj. Śląskiego ul. Reymonta 24, Katowice, promocja@slaskie.pl (in cooperation with Silesian Tourism Organization) Śląska Organizacja Turystyczna, ul. Mickiewicza 29, 40-085 Katowice; info@silesia-sot.pl
Type of coordinator	territorial public authority (region)
Concentration of responsibilities	one of the major responsibilities delegated to the unit (designated personnel is in charge of the route)
Personnel: employment and financing	personnel employed full time in the specific organizational unit of the office – in accordance with their responsibilities
Scope of responsibilities related to the route	monitoring of signs and options on offer at the sites, collecting and updating information on the sites (including the route website), coordination of events along the route, promotion (including press trips, and trade fairs). Some promotional activities, distribution of information and assessment of tourist traffic was delegated to the Silesian Tourism Organization. The main event along the route (Industriada) was commissioned (awarded by tender) to a third party.
Scope of services for consumers	monitoring of signs along the route delegated to the Silesian Tourism Organization. Distribution of information and materials delegated to the Silesian Tourism Organization and information centres at the sites along the route

Sources: Mikos v. Rohrscheidt, 2010; www.zabytkotechniki.pl; info. Z. Petelenz UMWŚ 29.08.2011

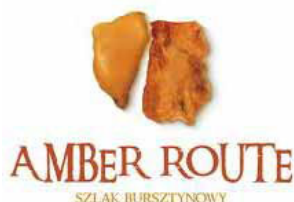


Comment. The route was developed as a brand product for cultural tourism in the region, and is recognized as such not only by tourism industry but also more and more often by customers. This has been accomplished thanks to well designed promotion using a variety of channels. Formally, the coordinator's function and most of its responsibilities (including all the essential tasks) are performed by a specific unit designated within a public authority; related tasks are among the unit's major responsibilities. Some tasks are commissioned to third parties – a tourism organization or a private entity under an agreement, or as a result of tender. In such a case the coordinator monitors performance of such tasks. Recently the scope of managerial operations has been expanded and includes organization of the main annual event. The coordinator does not provide direct services to tourists. The applied model can be classified as central coordination.

Table 10: Method and scope of coordination used at the Pomeranian Amber Route

Name of route	Pomeranian Amber Route
Profile of the route	crafts and trade (history and acquisition of a raw material, its processing and related trade) – one of the region’s brand tourism products
Coordinator’s name and headquarters	Pomorska Regionalna Organizacja Turystyczna (Pomerania Regional Tourism Organization -PROT), ul. Długi Targ 8-10; 80-958 Gdańsk www.prot.gda.pl
Type of coordinator	territorial tourism organization (region)
Concentration of responsibilities	one of the organization’s many responsibilities
Personnel: employment and financing	staff of the organization handles matters connected with the route – no specific unit has been established
Scope of responsibilities related to the route	monitoring of sites and of signs showing access to them, preparation of information about the route, promotion of options on offer at the sites and along the route (no separate website)
Scope of services for consumers	providing information about the route and the sites, as well as services and events along the route

Sources: Mikos v. Rohrscheidt, 2010; info. PROT 23.08.2011



Comment. In accordance with both an official statement published on the organization’s website and information obtained directly, the coordinator (PROT) does not treat the route as a linear system of tourism penetration, or as a cultural route based on its numerous functions (including the informative function as well as that related to experiencing cultural heritage); instead, the route is envisaged as one of the “projects” designed to boost tourism in the region, and its purpose is to “use amber related heritage for creating competitive options for tourists”; alternatively it is understood as a tourism product, yet it is not clearly defined or designed as packets of services. Similarly, there is a problem related to uniform information about the route. Specific parts of information (about events, sites and services) can be found at three different websites administered by: PROT, Amber Route (contrary to its name this is a website of a tourism project and not the route) as well as a tourism website for the Tricity. The existing website of the route does not even present it in a typical linear form (neither can such information be found in published materials); rather than that it presents a list of attractions and other sites related to amber, and their location on the map. Even though the coordinator’s materials (info PROT) show that designing, creating packets and commercialization of the options on offer are recognized as priorities within the coordination of the Pomeranian Amber Route, yet at this point it is difficult to find links between the route and specific services provided for tourists.

Table 11: Method and scope of coordination used at the Romanesque Road in Saxony-Anhalt

Name of route	Strasse der Romanik (Sachsen-Anhalt) / Romanesque Road in Saxony-Anhalt
Profile of the route	architecture (Romanesque style, comprising the historical period from 950 to 1250)
Coordinator’s name and headquarters	Formally: Landestourismusverband Sachsen-Anhalt / National Tourism Union Tourismusverband Sachsen-Anhalt e.V., Postfach 1518, 39005 Magdeburg Some responsibilities: Ministry of Economy and Labour (of S-A land), tourism section www.sachsen-anhalt-tourismus.de <i>and</i>

	National Association for Investments and Marketing (IMG) IMG - Investitions- und Marketinggesellschaft des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt GmbH, Am Alten Theater 6, 39104 Magdeburg tourismus@img-sachsen-anhalt.de
Type of coordinator	territorial tourism organization (at the Land level)
Concentration of responsibilities	one of the organization's four key responsibilities
Personnel: employment and financing	designated unit within the central office of the union is exclusively in charge of the route (romanik@ltvlsa.de)
Scope of responsibilities related to the route	collecting and updating information about services, monitoring of signs along the route and at sites, co-organization of events, organization of the competition for the best tourism product along the Route (annual award). Promotion of the route delegated to IMG; financing and strategy managed externally (Ministry).
Scope of services for consumers	operation of the Route information centre (Haus der Romanik, Magdeburg), organization of regularly held events in a few locations, distribution of materials about the route, the sites, events and services, agency services related to tour guides (only in Magdeburg)

Sources: www.sachsen-anhalt-tourismus.de, www.strasse-der-romanik.net; info. Strase d. R. (24.08.2011); Ministerium f. Reg. Entwicklung, SA (31.08.2011)



Comment. Coordination of the route is ensured by a large tourism organization, which recognizes related tasks among its strictly defined statutory objectives (identified as 4 pillars of its operation). One of these is the country's own "brand" route. A special unit is in charge of organizational matters while services for tourists are provided by a modern tourism centre which is a part of the organization and is located in the vicinity of the most important site (Cathedral in Magdeburg). Promotional operations are performed by a marketing entity cooperating with the organization under an agreement (this is one of its many areas of operation), while strategic decisions and financial matters are handled by the relevant ministry (of the Land). This structure can be classified as a typical dispersed model.

2.2. Types of coordinators and route coordination models

The review of entities involved in coordination of the thematic routes discussed here and the scopes of coordination and methods of performing the related duties, as well as a short review of both tangible routes (subject to some level of coordination), which operated in Poland in 2010 [Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2010, p. 47-49], and selected European routes, provide enough data allowing for initial classification. Due to the limited number of routes included in the above analysis, some additional examples are provided, each time with reference to relevant documentation; nevertheless, it should be remembered that the following discussion presents the most frequently encountered rather than the only existing types of coordinators and coordination models.

Types of thematic route coordinators:

Territorial public authority. Most frequently this is an institution of a local or regional government. Yet, the priority assigned to coordination responsibilities within that entity may vary, which will lead to specific results. Seemingly the optimal situation is when coordinator's responsibilities are delegated to a separate organizational unit, where the related duties constitute the only or the main scope of operation; such unit functions in accordance with a detailed statute defining competences and rules of supervision. This organizational model is particularly desirable if the thematic route is designed as the region's brand product. This solution facilitates focus on managing the route (which may lead to expanding the scope of operations and increased involvement) and makes it possible to appraise and enforce

performance of those in charge. Yet, due to their status and structure, public institutions cannot perform some of the necessary operations related to the route and its functions, therefore various tasks, such as direct services for tourists, organization of events and other activities of commercial nature, must be appointed to other entities. Ł. Gawęł [2011b, p. 83] points out that these most frequently are public entities, in some ways subordinate to authority institutions. This in turn may lead to various pathologies. The author of the present study believes that in order to reduce such risk, and improve the effectiveness of the route's operation it is necessary to strictly define the tasks commissioned to independent partners (organizations and commercial entities), where financial settlement of the relevant contract depends on performance appraisal, carried out in a specified manner. From the point of view of the system's operation and tourism management, significantly less effective coordination is ensured by an organizational unit performing a number of other duties in addition to these responsibilities, particularly if there is no designated personnel and no communication channels have been defined to ensure contact with persons providing services for tourists within the route. Coordination performed by public authority is found to be least effective in a situation where responsibilities are divided between various organizational units, or even between different governing bodies or other institutions and organizations (a typical example in the group of routes discussed here is the Małopolska Wooden Architecture Route). Such situation hinders decision-making processes, and what is equally important – the relevant entities do not identify with their duties and functions related to the route coordination, as a result the allocation of responsibilities becomes blurred, to the detriment to the development and success of the route. As an example, it becomes more difficult to implement programs aimed at organizing the route's operation [Gawęł 2011b, p. 83]. Due to such "blurring of functions" there is no recognizable leader, which may be identified with the route by potential partners and customers/users (e.g. tour operators).

Examples of routes coordinated by territorial public authority: Małopolska Wooden Architecture Route, Industrial Monuments Route of Silesian Province

Other public entity or institution. This is a rare type of coordinator in Poland, most possibly due to the fact that few public institutions identify with cultural heritage and are aware of various benefits resulting from its use for tourism-related purposes. In Poland coordination of routes (focusing on religious themes) is occasionally performed by church organizational units. In other countries these may also be public bodies and institutions established to e.g. ensure preservation of landmarks and promotion of cultural heritage. Advantages and drawbacks in this model are generally the same as in the case of territorial public authority, yet it seems that it is easier for institutions having well-defined profiles to assign related tasks to a special organizational unit, to identify with the themes and purposes of the route, to adequately design the thematic profile for the system and to maintain good quality of information about the landmarks. On the other hand, as illustrated by the investigated example, it is difficult for an institution which does not have connections related to the commercial aspect of tourism to develop professional level of relevant services, to establish and enforce standards, and ensure adequate monitoring of the route's operation.

Examples of institutional coordinators, other than representing the state: Pomeranian Cistercian Route (a department within a church authority), Route of Parks and Gardens (European Institute of Cultural Routes, established by the Council of Europe).

Territorial tourism organization (at local or regional level). This is quite a common type of thematic route coordinator. The routes reviewed earlier provide examples of regional organizations (Romanesque Road in Saxony-Anhalt, Pomeranian Amber Route), as well as micro-regional and local (Schilcher Wine Route, Lower Austrian Iron Route). This type of coordinator usually endures good distribution of information related to the route and its active promotion; on the other hand the level of coordinator's identification with the route depends

on whether this is the main (brand) tourism product of the region, or perhaps it is one of the numerous products managed by the organization, or one of the many areas of its operation having the same or even inferior status. Just like in the case of a public authority, performance of coordination to a large degree depends on the position of the route-related tasks within the organization, i.e. whether there is a special unit designated for that purpose, and its responsibilities have been specifically defined. Tourism organizations tend to more frequently assume functions related to providing direct services to tourists or at least their efficient coordination and distribution via the headquarters and/or network of information centres in specific locations. In this case, providing resources for tasks related to the operation of the route may be a challenge. Organizations rely on special subsidies from public funds, and they must negotiate the size of such support on a case-by-case basis; otherwise it is necessary for them to convince members of the organization, other than those connected with the route, to provide financing for its development at the cost of other projects and products which may be of central importance to them. This task seems to be easier if the organization conducts lower scale operations, and if members of the organization to a greater extent identify with the route as a brand (or major) product. Alternatively, if a single organization (particularly small and financially weak) coordinates a number of routes, this may lead to reduced identification of an area with a given product and to hindered development of the latter, since the scanty resources, financial, organizational and human, are excessively scattered. In such situations the development of projects stops at the level of virtual routes, and the organization cannot adequately fulfill functions related to communicating cultural information, thematic arrangement of geographical territory and promotion of the area, and – even more so – economic expectations. An example of such situation is provided by the Beskid Niski Local Tourism Organization [Beskid niski 2011], which has established, and to a limited degree coordinates, a number of thematic routes, which in fact are virtual options. Besides the cases of independent coordination we can frequently encounter (particularly in Poland) examples of cooperation between tourism organization, where specific coordination tasks are commissioned by the formal coordinator. This happens quite often if the formal coordinator is a territorial public authority (Industrial Monuments Route of Silesian Province, Małopolska Wooden Architecture Route).

Examples of routes coordinated by territorial tourism organizations, in addition to the aforementioned: Małopolska Fruit Route, Petroleum Trail, International Route of Aleksander Fredro [Beskid Niski 2011]

Special-purpose tourism organization. This is a suggested term for an organization established exclusively or mainly to function as a route coordinator. In this case there is complete identification with the name of the route and with its purpose, therefore the organization is a natural and reliable partner for other entities operating in tourism industry; it is also easily recognizable for tourists, which is reflected in the size of demand for services and their distribution. If the organization has a well-designed statute and the conditions of cooperation are defined properly, members of such an organization (sites, communes, institutions, business entities) understand their own impact related to its shape and operations (which instigates grass-roots initiatives), and they can more easily build a direct relationship between its commercial success and their own profits (both in terms of PR – as partners of a route with well-known brand, and in financial terms – as beneficiaries of endeavours promoting tourism, or suppliers of specific services and entities sharing profits). Special-purpose organization may also perform all responsibilities of coordinator, including the external tasks, taking advantage of e.g. a legal status of a tour operator – in such a case it may easily become a leading entity organizing visits within the route. A specific challenge, particularly faced by small organizations and routes with low degree of recognisability, may

be connected with acquiring funds for the organization, particularly at the early stage of the route's operation.

Examples of routes coordinated by special-purpose tourism organizations: Piast Route [Szlak Piastowski 2011], Via Jagiellonica [Szlak Jagielloński 2011].

Non-governmental organization (association, foundation, other – most frequently created **for specific purpose**). This type of coordination is used for a large group of foreign thematic routes. Given the possible forms of organization and diverse legal systems in which these entities exist, there are significant differences related to specific statutory provisions, and the ranges of undertakings. Typical features of managing systems in this group include: relatively large focus on themes and products on offer along the route; strong emphasis on partnership (required by the organization's statute) resulting in a significant number of grass-roots initiatives (frequently concerning events and additional services or modules of thematic options on offer in specific locations); high operational effectiveness (resulting from the flexible structure and the possibility of including new entities, modules, sites, ideas); possibility to regularly evaluate the system and assess the coordinator. Professionally operating coordinating office maintained by the organization is of great importance for the overall effectiveness. Well-designed legal framework provides opportunities to maintain the essential purposes of a cultural route (participation in culture, transfer of heritage) – and this is a feature positively differentiating this type of operator from the equally (or even more) effective commercial coordinator. Despite numerous examples showing effective operation of routes managed by this type of coordinator, there are also situations in which this type of entity is not able to meet all expectations. This happens e.g. when the newly established association is too weak (e.g. in financial terms), when its members are unable or unwilling to provide funding for initial expenditures, e.g. signs along the route, standard amenities for tourists, such as car parks, sanitary facilities, and later on to cover the costs of the coordinating unit (office, personnel). In such cases the development of the route is very slow, or none at all. Examples include the interesting concept of the Route of the Knights Templar [Templariusze 2011]: the association has operated for 5 years, yet its offering still has strictly virtual form. Some associations may be doomed to failure because of the essentially poor concept of the route; to be successful as a tourism product it should be designed realistically, located within a uniform territory and attractive for potential customers⁶.

Examples of routes coordinated by non-governmental organizations: Michael Willmann Route of Religious Art of Baroque (foundation), German Fairy Tale Route (association), Lower Austrian Iron Route (association), Cultural route of CE „El legado andalusi” (foundation) [Andalusi 2011].

Enterprise (company organization, commercial enterprise of varied legal and organizational form, including partnerships). The situation when the responsibilities of coordinator are performed by a commercial entity most frequently results from: 1) its natural position as a supplier of a service which is significant for the route (e.g. the main or the only operator of transport along a waterway or railway), or 2) its original role as an entity establishing a route (when e.g. a company or a number of businesses from a given sector establish a route linking their places of production, distribution, private museums, etc.), and finally 3) the fact that a company has been established by entities which are members of an existing or newly created route and owners of significant elements of the route (e.g. in the case of a culinary

⁶ A good example of such hybrid entity is the Grunwald Route Local Tourism Organization operating as an association (KRS No. 0000380548), registered in ... Łódź and theoretically comprising nearly 100 locations in seven provinces. Faced with such imagination of its designers, one cannot help but ask: who is this route created for? Who on earth will want to travel to Grunwald via ... Wolbórz?

route). With this type of coordinator, and when management of the route is its main area of operation, we can see the most far reaching identification with the route (success of the route as a product is equivalent to the coordinator's financial success) which obviously motivates towards effort to enhance the product, expand the range and achieve high standards of services, and conduct effective promotion of tourism and the product. Business entities acting as coordinators strive to build the widest possible range of options on offer along the route and to perform the coordination functions described in chapter I at the most comprehensive level, frequently showing great creativity and flexibility in this respect. Problems, however, may arise in the area of designing the theme of the route (and with regard to cultural authenticity of specific sites) as well as in proper development of the educational aspect. As a result of their natural tendency to expand both their tourism-related product and the target group of customers (leading to increased profits) commercial coordinators may include new locations/sites or create new modules of the product at the cost of due attention to these spheres of the route as an element of heritage, significant for the transfer of historical and cultural information. We can also encounter (predominantly local) routes managed by commercial operators for whom this is only a secondary area of business, or even merely a part of their strategy for promoting their brand.

Examples of routes coordinated by commercial entities: Bregenz Cheese Route; in Poland - Ostródzko-Elbląski Canal – a waterway administered by Żegluga Ostródzko-Elbląska [Żegluga O-E 2011].

Tourism cluster. The concept of tourism cluster refers to informal cooperation of several entities within a given area for purposes related to tourism and involving only some areas of their overall activity; in fact such partnership does not exclude competition between these entities. Some thematic routes are based on clusters. Even though no such case was found in the group of routes analyzed here, a review of related literature shows that the formula of tourism cluster may also be used in route coordination [Derek, Kowalczyk 2009], at least at the stage of their initial organization. Yet, in-depth analysis of a number of thematic routes and their organization over a period of time shows that the informal cluster turns out to be insufficient at a specific stage of constructing a region's brand product for tourism. It is necessary to move to a higher level of organization once it is decided that the thematic route should be transformed into a complex product, with professional and flexible managing body capable of taking quick decisions and having the capacity to provide services to tour operators and individual tourists, as well as organize major thematic events. This happened in the case of Bregenz Cheese Route, where members of the cluster noticed it had exhausted its potential for growth. The Lubuskie Route of Wine and Honey was established in 2006 as a cluster, yet from the start it was affiliated with the Winemakers Association of Zielona Góra. Today its organizational formula is gradually changing and it has become the main area of operations carried out by the Association, which is also its formal coordinator. Yet, cluster may be the most effective form of organization for small territories (communes, isolated villages/towns, micro-regions) with unique but insufficiently recognizable type of attractions. Linear connection between participants of the cluster following a selected theme constitutes a virtual route, which is a suggestion for a thematic walk rather than a specific product, and as such it is not subject to this review.

Examples of routes based on clusters: Bregenz Cheese Route (until mid-2011), Pottery Route in Podkarpacie [Derek, Kowalczyk 2009, p.36], Lubuskie Route of Wine and Honey (until approx. 2010).

Special-purpose cooperative team. This term seems to most adequately describe non-commercial operational groups, which in various countries are referred to by various names (e.g. in German: "Netzwerk", in English: "network", in Polish: "lokalna grupa działania")

(local action group) or other). In terms of methods used in their operation such teams are similar to clusters – indeed, these are groups cooperating on an on-and-off basis, sometimes under informal agreements, and sometimes formalized to an extent recognized as necessary by its members (e.g. cities or sites); they do not have a status required for obtaining legal personality (such as association or foundation), and therefore they do not have various rights resulting from that. What sets them apart from clusters is the fact that their cooperation is not based on commercial objectives. None of the routes reviewed in this article are currently coordinated by this type of managing entity. It is possible, however, to point out some, e.g. German Fairy Tale Route where the coordinator quite recently operated in this manner [Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2011b]. Cooperative teams manage various well-known European routes operating on international level, as well as small regional or even local thematic routes. Just like in the case of clusters, this type of coordination seems to be sufficient only in the initial “start-up” phase; later on, when the route is gradually developed into a tourism product, special-purpose cooperative teams tend to transform into associations or tourism organizations – this in fact happened in the case of the aforementioned German Fairy Tale Route, in Poland in case of the Trail of Wooden Churches in the Zielonka Forest in Wielkopolska (from 2000 a formal association of communes) or the Tatarian Route (coordinating team transformed into an association in 2007).

Examples of routes coordinated by special-purpose cooperative teams: Die Hanse [Hanse 2011], Via Regia [Via Regia 2011], (belonging to the group of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe).

Basic models of route coordination

The above review makes it possible to identify the most frequently encountered models of route coordination, their typical features, as well as strengths and weaknesses, taking into account specific examples. By comparing their common traits and applying necessary simplification we can distinguish four existing coordination models.

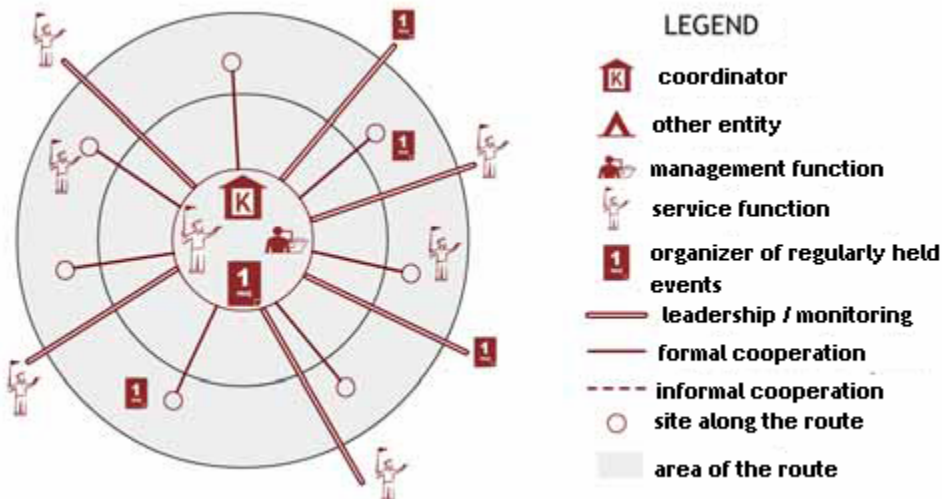
Unified model. The formally established coordinator is the only entity combining and executing tasks at the level of the route, both in relation to the structure of the system (product), and with regard to tourists (customers). Being the only responsible entity, the coordinator performs at least the minimum scope of tasks: monitoring of signs, collecting and distribution of information about the sites and options on offer, and promotion of the entire route. It is also the only entity creating or commissioning and distributing other services connected with the functions of the route. Therefore such coordinator is the only reference point for the specific, seemingly “atomized”, sites and other partners of the route. In relations with them, the coordinator is the only entity representing the route, as an area designed to be used for tourism related purposes. The specific sites and other members are passive with respect to the route, i.e. they “live their own lives” and the fact that they are a part of the route means they can use the theme (benefitting from the “brand” created this way) and possibly services provided by the coordinator. An extreme example of unified structure is encountered in case of one-person administration, which means that coordinator’s tasks within the route are performed formally and physically by one individual⁷ or by an office maintained by one person - it seems, however, that this model is typical for routes at initial stages of their development, and then coordination is formally delegated to an organizational unit, office or team. **Advantages** of such model include the efficient functioning of a route as a whole

⁷ Such situation existed until 2010 in the case of the Bregenz Cheese Route (one-person office) and at Michael Willmann Route of Religious Art of Baroque (a physical person). In both cases the situation changed during last year, which shows that the model is not recognized as effective. Other research findings seem to confirm this opinion. Even the most involved person cannot be available at all times to handle matters related to services for tourists; additionally, formally established structures are perceived as more reliable by partners.

(product), clearly defined scope of coordinator's responsibilities, and the resulting simplicity in appraising the coordinator's performance. **Drawbacks** may include insufficient identification of other entities with the route as a whole and inadequate effort towards its success, including lack of endeavours aimed at expanding options on offer along the route (this can be alleviated by financial mechanism established as an incentive e.g. by clearly defining the rules of sharing profits gained on newly introduced options on offer).

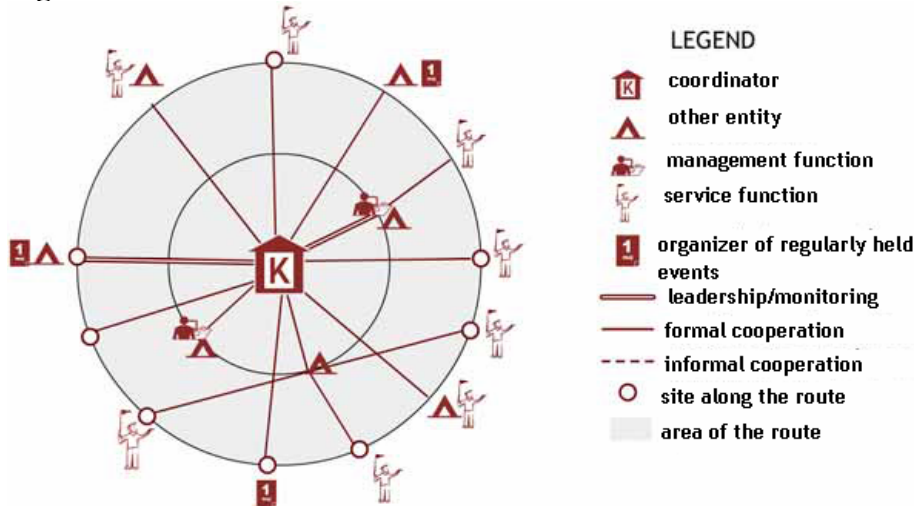
Examples in the group of analyzed routes: German Fairy Tale Route, Bregenz Cheese Route, Piast Route.

Figure 1. Unified model of thematic route coordination



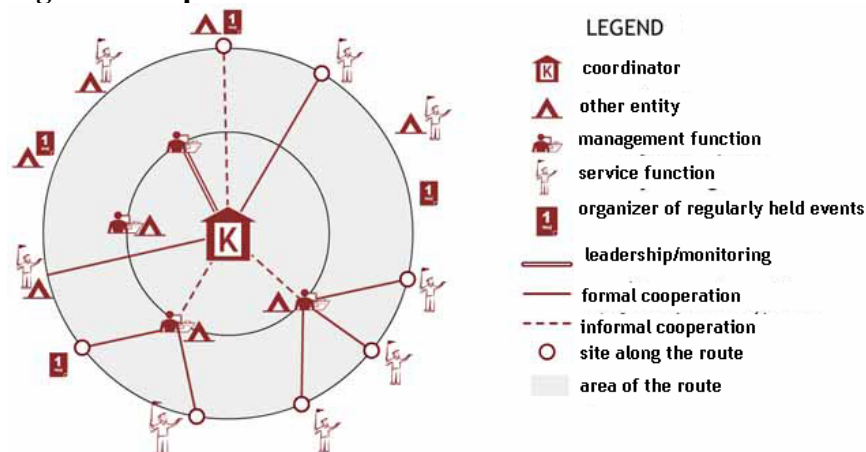
Central model. In this model a clearly defined coordinating centre executes specified managerial duties related to the route, yet there are also a few or more cooperating entities. These perform selected managerial tasks or services, which may relate to selected areas of operation within the entire route (e.g. tour operation, organization of packets, events, etc.), and include complete set of services in selected key sites or locations (e.g. the main landmark, museum, specific towns/villages) or services related to parts of the route. The central entity (usually the formal coordinator) delegates specific responsibilities (areas of operation) to other entities, and supervises their performance. **Advantages** of this model include: professional level of executing specific types of managerial duties, relatively lower costs of the route's operation, greater involvement and creativity of specific entities, as well as (only when competences are clearly distributed) possibility to enforce performance of specific tasks. A possible **drawback** may result from excessive focus of the partners on their own operations (particularly if these allow for gaining notable profits) where at the same time they neglect activities aimed at the increased recognizability of the route as a whole and at its success as a complex product.

Examples in the group of analyzed routes: Lower Austrian Iron Route, Michael Willmann Route of Religious Art of Baroque, Industrial Monuments Route of Silesian Province.

Figure 2. Central model of thematic route coordination

Dispersed model. The typical coordination functions in this model are distributed between various entities (departments and institutions, organizations, sometimes sites and enterprises or even individuals). This may result either from the previously existing distribution of competences between formerly operating bodies (when for various reasons there is no will or possibility to transfer such competences), or pursuant to an agreement made by independent entities where managerial responsibilities connected with the operation of the route may be assumed by or distributed between them; such responsibilities as a rule are treated as additional duties (e.g. promotion, monitoring of signs, information about the route, transport for tourists, etc.). In the case of Polish routes the dispersed model is characterized by far-reaching autonomy of specific entities, which focus on performing their respective duties. Yet, responsibilities related to the route are predominantly seen as additional tasks of secondary importance. Specific variation of this model may be based on tourism cluster, whose strengths and weaknesses have been described above. Possible **advantages** in this case include professional level of performance in tasks matching the specialization of a given entity (e.g. organization of events). The most significant **drawback** is related to insufficient identification of entities with the route and the resulting lack of involvement in promoting it as a product.

Examples in the group of analyzed routes: Romanesque Road in Saxony-Anhalt, Małopolska Wooden Architecture Route, Pomeranian Amber Route.

Figure 3. Dispersed model of thematic route coordination

Unspecified model (in fact – lack of model). This term can describe a number of various situations related to management of thematic routes. One of these, rarely encountered today, is connected with operation of a route where the coordinator is not clearly defined, and may be recognized as a result of custom, or aspires for the function without consent from the remaining entities, locations or sites. Otherwise, the coordinator may perform its managerial operations at the level which is below the minimum scope, or only in relation to a small part of the area comprising the route. In the case of numerous routes, including two analyzed in this paper, coordinator is, in fact, known by name, yet it performs only some activities from the list of typical responsibilities (e.g. promotion or tourist information), or it fulfills its function only with respect to one part of the route, and therefore does not meet expectations of tourists or entities operating within tourism sector. Another example of unspecified model is a situation when selected functions of route coordinator are performed by different entities, and each of these recognizes itself as the coordinator; this situation is most frequently encountered if no detailed assignment of responsibilities was defined. It is impossible to identify advantages of such situation, which is obvious given the aforementioned expectations held by tourists visiting modern thematic routes. On the other hand, its **drawbacks** include most of the negative aspects listed in previous models, and most notably: the low level of identification of sites and entities with the route (in extreme cases – lack of awareness about being part of the route), their poor involvement for the joint product, and most of all the long term effect of visitors' disappointment resulting from the confrontation of their typical expectations with the inadequate and unsatisfactory opportunities along the route which inevitably leads to a failure of the route as a thematic option.

Examples in the group of analyzed routes: Schilcher Wine Route, Pomeranian Cistercian Route

Options on offer and services provided for tourists by routes managed in accordance with the first three coordination models may range from the minimum scope to a wide spectrum greatly exceeding typical responsibilities of coordinator listed in chapter 1. The optimum scope of such responsibilities should be defined after careful analysis of the cultural route potential, which should include: identification of recognizability and popularity of the subject matter of the route and its sites, current tourism-related demand in the given area, mobility options and tourism-related infrastructure (e.g. accommodation and catering facilities), potential of the area for organization of events as well as profile of the target group of customers (and their needs). The final, fourth model (if it is, in fact, legitimate to use the term with reference to so many different structures and situations) seems to be typical for transitory stages in the process of establishing a route; on the other hand if it is used in systems operating for a long time, it proves to be so ineffective and flawed that efforts aimed at transformation into one of the remaining three models should be recommended not only as necessary but also as urgent.

Table 12, below, shows findings of comparative analysis of the routes discussed in this paper in terms of their coordination. The list in each case specifies the type of coordinator, the coordination model and range of actually performed managerial functions, in this case limited to the nine most important areas of operation selected in accordance with the recommendations contained in chapter 1. Specific types of activities were taken into account if they are performed directly by the coordinator and if they are formally delegated to and carried out by third parties.

Table 12. Types of coordinators, models and scope of coordination in the analyzed group of thematic routes

Name of route	Type of coordinator	Coordination model	ZI	DI	PI	MO	US	PA	PR	TO	EV
G. Fairy Tale Route (DE)	NGO (association)	unified	+	+	+	+	+	Z	+	Z	-
Wooden A.R. (Małopolska) (PL)	TWP (region)	dispersed	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	+
KäseStrasse (AT)	PKOM (partnership)	unified	+	+	+	+	Z	Z	+	-	+
Schilcher Weinstr(AT)	TOT (micro-region)	unspecified	+	+	Z	+	-	-	Z	-	-
NÖ Eisenstrasse (AT)	NGO – (association)	central	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Piast Route (PL)	COT (of the route)	unified	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Cistercian R. (Pomerania) (PL)	INS (Church)	unspecified	+	+	-	-	+	-	Z	-	-
MWR of R.A. of Baroque (PL)	NGO (foundation)	central	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
Industrial MR of SP (PL)	TWT (region)	central	+	Z	+	Z	-	-	+	-	Z
Pomeranian Amber R. (PL)	TOT (region)	dispersed	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	-
Romanesque R. in S-A (DE)	TOT (land)	dispersed	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	+

Legend. Abbreviations for coordinators: TWP – territorial public authority, TOT – territorial tourism organization, COT – special-target tourism organization, NGO – Non-governmental organization, INS – Other public institution, PKOM – commercial entity. Abbreviations for tasks: ZI – collecting and updating info about sites, DI – distribution of information about sites, PI – Internet website of the route, MO – monitoring of signs at sites and/or along routes, US – providing or distribution of simple services, PA – producing or distribution of service packets, PR – promotional activities related to the route, TO – organization of trips along the route, EV – organization or coordination of events along the route.

Tasks: + performed by coordinator, – task is **not** executed at the route, z – task commissioned to a third party.

3. Conclusions and recommendations related to Polish thematic routes

Suggestions proposed by researchers of cultural tourism, which were presented in Chapter 1, and the analysis of coordination models and scope in a number of Polish and European thematic routes provide grounds for conclusions of general as well as more specific nature.

Bearing in mind expectations of tourists as well as the growing demand and options on offer in the segment of cultural tourism discussed here, we should remember that even the lowest level of coordination within a thematic route is better than its complete lack. Nothing but an existing management centre provides a guarantee that the catalogue of products along a thematic route is a long-term proposition, rather than a one-time or virtual option. This way it becomes possible to monitor and maintain the basic standards of operation (e.g. signs along the route and at sites, updating tourist information, accessibility of sites). This is confirmed by thematic routes which are successful tourism products, including those assessed in this study: e.g. German Fairy Tale Route and Industrial Monuments Route of Silesian Province.

The most frequently encountered coordinators of thematic routes in Poland include territorial (regional or local) tourism organizations as well as territorial public authorities. The function of coordinator is performed less frequently by special-purpose tourism

organization or non-governmental organizations, and quite rarely - by tourism clusters or special-purpose action groups. The least frequently encountered in this role are business enterprises, and public entities and institutions other than territorial authorities. These proportions are slightly different in other countries: relatively large number of routes are coordinated by special-purpose cooperative teams (virtual options) and non-governmental organizations and special-purpose tourism organizations (routes with material status); on the other hand territorial public authorities less frequently perform the function of coordinators.

In the initial stages of their development, thematic routes are relatively frequently coordinated by special-purpose teams or clusters and in Poland also by territorial public authority. In the light of the comparative analysis of the selected German, Austrian and Polish thematic routes in terms of their coordinators' effectiveness, we can draw a justified conclusion that by establishing and operating a coordination centre, which is independent from public authorities, it is possible to perform coordination duties more efficiently, and to expand the scope of coordination as well as increase involvement of entities constituting the route. Changes in managing structures and the coinciding developments in products on offer along these routes in recent years prove that introducing this type of coordinator is a natural step towards developing the route to the level of mature tourism product.

From the point of view of effectiveness (including impact on improved recognizability, development of the product, operational efficiency and, as a result, increase in the number of visits) it seems the best results are achieved if the coordination of the route is performed by (special-purpose) non-governmental organization (association, foundation) or special-purpose tourism organization. This is confirmed not only by the examples of well functioning routes from other countries, but also by the trend, which can be observed in the group of the analyzed routes, to transform the coordinating bodies from informal (such as special-purpose teams and clusters) into the aforementioned types characterized by higher level of organization.

In addition to their original purpose of exhibiting the region's cultural heritage and the generally appreciated educational function, many of the thematic routes existing for a long time and expanded in accordance with a carefully designed concept and properly coordinated (for a wide range of operations), as a result assume an additional function of the region's brand product (examples: Lower Austrian Iron Route, Bregenz Cheese Route, to a degree Piast Route). This approach provides an opportunity to gain certain advantages (unique position in the tourism market of the country or even continent, better recognizability of the region as a tourist destination, recognition of the standard of provided services) in the conditions of growing competition to attract cultural travellers. The evidence that such advantages are taken into account can be seen in the fact that some new thematic routes from the start are designed as brand products (Industrial Monuments Route of Silesian Province, Pomeranian Amber Route, Strasse der Romanik in Saxony-Anhalt).

Within the group of most frequently encountered management systems, it seems the central coordination model is most effective for thematic routes, as it facilitates quick response to changing (e.g. seasonal) demand and flexible adjustments in options on offer, rapid implementation of uniform standards, effective communication and cooperation between the entities constituting the route, and organization of integrated promotional campaigns. Furthermore, it clearly defines responsibilities for the development of the route and makes it possible to enforce adequate performance of the related duties. This model does not contain the basic drawback of the dispersed model (scattered responsibilities, retarded decision processes) and the unified model (impaired bottom-up initiatives and involvement). Additionally, the so-called unspecified model coordination seems to be the least recommendable for thematic routes.

If it is assumed that a thematic route is going to be developed as a real, i.e. long-lasting option for tourists with a variety of services on offer, it is necessary to acknowledge

the inevitability of expenditures related to its coordination (office, personnel). While accepting the need for this investment, and taking into account the desired result, it is also necessary to carefully choose the type of coordinator and coordination model. Costs of coordination may periodically be reduced, by delegating the coordination to an entity which has other functions related to tourism (e.g. local tourist information unit, personnel of a key site along the route); in such case it is necessary to clearly specify the coordinator's responsibilities related to the route as a whole, and then appraise its performance. Yet, from the point of view of the route and its partners the best choice is a coordinator for whom the route is the sole or the most important responsibility.

The findings obtained through the analysis of selected operating thematic routes provide grounds for a significant recommendation related to material routes (i.e. advanced tourism-related products in the form of routes) which, in this author's opinion, should exist in each region of Poland. It seems that it is in the best interest of all the stakeholders, i.e. the route itself, its members and partners, as well as the region as a tourist destination to ensure coordination based on the most suitable model, where all the responsibilities are clearly defined and include operations related to the system as well as activities (i.e. services) performed for customers – tourists. Regardless of the coordinator type, in the case of a route which is a region's brand product for cultural tourism, such managerial function should be delegated to a specially designed organizational unit, with highly qualified personnel, and financing provided for long-term employment; such unit should be subject to regular supervision and appraisal of performance.

4. Conclusion

Thematic routes may fulfill a number of significant functions related to: leisure management and organization of trips (tourism related aspect), distribution of values and legacy of various branches and types of culture and building cultural identity of regions (cultural aspects), promotion of their respective areas as tourist destinations and the economic growth of these regions (economic aspects). To ensure that at least some of them meet such broad expectations, those responsible for their organization and ongoing operation should immediately initiate well-designed action. One of the aspects of crucial importance for this group of products related to cultural tourism is their coordination, which has been discussed and assessed in this study. The above analysis provides evidence for justified conclusions which should be taken into account in developing options on offer and in coordination of such systems, which by their authors are designed to operate as advanced, standardized custom-tailored products catering for increasing expectations of travellers. Opinions presented in this article are based on the analysis of a limited sample. Yet, according to this author the findings shown here provide sufficient evidence supporting the claim that the need for efficient coordination by means of modern tools in this group of routes is absolutely obvious. The author also believes it is necessary to continue analyses related to this aspect of routes' operation, where the assessed sample (of thematic routes) will be broader; additionally such studies should examine further changes connected with coordination and evaluate (at a later time) the results of managerial operations by means of broad quantitative and qualitative assessment of preferences reported by tourists visiting specific routes. Indeed, nothing but regularly conducted surveys designed to examine opinions of final users of routes will make it possible to adequately define, and later regularly redefine, the specific list of tasks to be performed by route coordinators. These will obviously include continuous modification of the options on offer, which on the one hand must be based on cultural authenticity and on the other – should be attractive for various groups and successive generations of tourists.

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Koordinacja turystycznych szlaków tematycznych – analiza wybranych systemów polskich i europejskich

Słowa klucze: szlak tematyczny, szlak kulturowy, produkt turystyczny, koordynacja szlaków, zarządzanie szlakiem turystycznym, turystyka kulturowa

Streszczenie: Po wyjaśnieniu znaczenia koordynacji i roli koordynatora szlaku tematycznego oraz ustaleniu pożądanego zakresu działań zarządczych, na przykładzie zbadanych szlaków z terenu Polski i europejskiej zagranicy zaprezentowano najczęściej spotykane typy koordynatorów i najpowszechniejsze modele zarządzania szlakami w turystyce kulturowej, wskazano ich mocne i słabe strony oraz sformułowano wnioski odnoszące się do tego zakresu funkcjonowania polskich szlaków tematycznych.