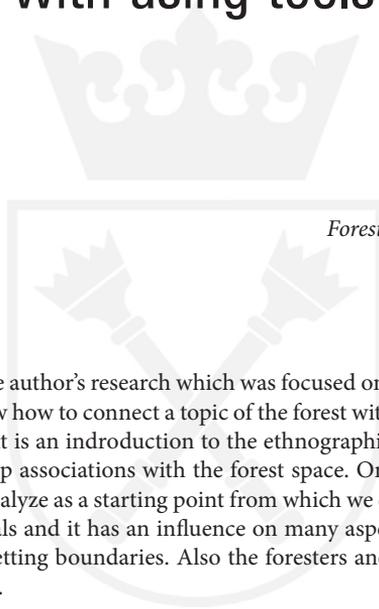


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Cultural and social meaning of the forest. Research with using tools of the space anthropology



Forest is the aristocrat of a landscape

Hermann Stoetzer

Abstract

The paper is a report from the author's research which was focused on a cultural and social meaning of the forest. Its aim is to show how to connect a topic of the forest with tools of the space anthropology. The main part of the text is an introduction to the ethnographic region of the Tuchola Forest (*Bory Tucholskie*) and its deep associations with the forest space. On this example the author presents that the forest can be analyze as a starting point from which we can understand a local society; all the time it surrounds locals and it has an influence on many aspects of their life, e.g. economy, history, beliefs, worldview, setting boundaries. Also the foresters and a new phenomenon of Saint Hubertus cult are mentioned.

Keywords: forest, Tuchola Forest (*Bory Tucholskie*), space anthropology, human-nature relations, boundaries, Saint Hubertus cult.

Introduction

In this paper I want to focus on the subject of the forest and its analyses in ethnology surveys. In my humble opinion, this topic is frequently omitted and neglected in Poland. If it is undertaken, it frequently refers to relations between residents of the countryside from the XIXth and the beginning of the XXth century and the woods which were plundered and destroyed by peasants. However, very little is known about changes in valuation and meaning of this space, both in the

past and the present. The figure of the forest is still perceived as constant, invariable. One of my goals here is to show that the forest is constantly the product of society; it changes with a community and its culture. The Forest, nature and all its other indications as such, constitute biological and natural formations which people have found. Nevertheless, their interpretations are nothing else but cultural actions (Zięba 2006: 11). The signification of the forests, as seen by the people, mostly depends on particular culture and its context. It is culture which tells us how to understand them and it is the worldview of the specific community that will be the key to locate the forest in its system of values.

But on the other hand, I think that the forest can be the key to understanding the society, which populates wood complexes, like this in The Tuchola Forest region. People in that areas are all the time surrounded by the forests, living in their shadow. It is obvious that the forests must have a great impact on most aspects of their life. As a result, ethnologists can look for an impact of wood not only in the economy but also in beliefs, legends, songs, rites and even in a religion, a worldview and a space.

With the example of my research, I would like to show, that the space anthropology is a very useful tool for ethnographic research. As it was mentioned, the forest is a variable construct, ambiguous space (the issue of ambiguity will be continued in the further part of this work); its perception depends not only on changes in a society but also on its users. Natives, tourists, forest workers, foresters, hunters etc. perceive it in a different way. What is more, the same people can use and give a power to the forest in different ways, depending on a situation. Good example of this conception are cases of foresters and Saint's Hubert cult. Firstly, it shows that place of work can be tamed and cognized by activities, time spent in that area and also by special convictions connected with specificity of the job. Secondly, it confirms that the forest is perceived in various ways by many users.

My main goal in this article is to convince other students of ethnology and cultural anthropology (or even ethnologists) that the topic of human-nature relations is still noteworthy and in the light of the latest social changes it should be refreshed. Humanity uses nature in an increasing number of variants, what brings huge modifications in that relations. What is more, it develops new attitudes towards the environment. This gives a great potential to ethnological research.

The place of forest in awareness

People have always been surrounded by nature and its manifestations. In opposition to this, man has developed its own unique feature which is culture. It is always next to people, so it affects their vision of the world, imagination and beliefs. Forests¹ are prevalent on the almost entire globe. Undoubtedly, it is a com-

¹ I have to mention here that according to Polish law: Forest is a ground of an uniform area not smaller than 0.1 hectare covered by forest vegetation (forest cultivations): tress, bushes, under-

plex aspect of nature which combines a wide variety of factors; it constitutes a curiosity and phenomenon. One of the most incredible aspects of forest is its diversity. A multitude of various species of plants, animals, fungi and microbes co-exist on the principles of harmony and symbiosis. This community is ruled by its own fixed order (Zięba 2006: 5–7).

People have been looking at forests and exploring their elements since the moment they were able to reflect on themselves. They watched closely the surroundings which conditioned their survival. The way that their existence is going to look like, highly depends on the environment in which they are going to live. Moreover, people realized that they constituted a part of nature. These are its elements (nature) which were cherished as the very first ones. The cave painting appeared, illustrating roe deer, bison along with the scenes of hunting which could have magical significance (Kiełczewski, Wiśniewski 2004: 55–56). This is where the role of creating culture from nature and forests began, and it left its marks in all the previous ages. People cannot set themselves free from nature because they are its elements themselves. Hence, there is no other choice but to try to accept it and use it for its own purposes.

It can be done in many various ways; the most obvious is the economy, the forest is used to meet needs and give food, fuel or job.² The forest can be a boundary which divides a landscape and creates regions by closing a community in mid-forest areas (Grad 2000: 17–20). Then, it is a well known place for rebellious and endangered ones, where they can find a shelter (Śmiałowski 2006: 179). Another domain of the forest is its vision seen as the pursuit of happiness (Wenerska 2000: 361). According to legends and tales, a persistent seeker would find mysterious awards in it. But the space of forest can rescue people also in a different way – it provides herbs, medical useful plants which were (and I think that still are) used in natural medicine in many various regions of Poland and in the whole world (Szot-Radziszewska 2005; Umińska 1994).³ The space of forest is also the source of beauty. It is described as harmonious and ordered; none of its elements is accidental. The Wood is a kind of esthetic value. It inspires, arouses deep emotions and encourages to reflection. It refers to the forest as a whole but also to its particular elements (Gwiazdowicz, Wiśniewski 2011).

However, one of the main characteristics of the forest is that, it is not an unequivocal place. It is never a space where people can dominate totally. This is the effect of valuing nature as the opposite to the world of culture. Formerly forest space wasn't known completely and because of technology the use of it was lim-

growth – or transitorily them bereft; Ustawa o lasach (Act about forests), <http://lasypl.w.interia.pl/Ustawa%20o%20lasach.htm>. [accessed: 19.02.2013].

² Very interesting observations about the use of the forest can be found in first chapter of James C. Scott's book *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Scott 1998).

³ Unfortunately in this article I do not have enough places, but I also do not want to touch too many subjects, however I want to note a topic of trees which is not less interesting. It can be even said that it coming back into favour, especially in the face of new ecological movements (see: Grzywacz 2011; Jones, Cloke 2004).

ited. People felt dependent on the forest. They tried to name and describe what was unfamiliar and mysterious in the wood. As a result, many kinds of mythical creatures, which were personification of both good and bad supernatural powers, were situated in forests (Kaczmarek 2006). Because of their ambiguity, the forest and trees started to be perceived as the types of links between the known and the unknown, heaven and earth, safety and danger (Kowalski 1998: 108). Later, the situation was complicated by the development of technology and economy. Around the world industry causes huge changes in the forest spaces: cutting trees, planting new ones, building roads, afforesting former wastelands. The forest can no longer be seen as only the nature's manifestation, now it is both: the product of human kind and the environment. It is impossible to put the forest into the one, clear category – nature or culture, so it strengthens the conviction about the ambivalence of the forest.

Tools of the space anthropology

Anthropology of space experiences a bloom. This branch of our discipline is used not only by ethnologists. We can often encounter members of other humanistic fields who deal with its tools; the Internet is full of information about conferences, articles, research organized by representatives of cultural studies, sociologists and even philologists. Ethnology does not stay behind, I think that nowadays the space anthropology is one of the most popular approaches applied in our discipline. However, in my subjective opinion, this sub-discipline is in some way appropriation by the urban anthropology and projects connected with it. I am convinced that the space anthropology gives also a good opportunity to bring its methods into other areas of ethnology. I can see many possibilities of it.

For me, the books written by Edward T. Hall and Yi-Fu Tuan are the fundamentals (Hall 1978, 2001; Tuan 1987). Of course, they are not the only ones that I use, but in my case they are the key positions which allow me to move in the space anthropology; they are a starting point.

Space is an integral part of human life. It is so obvious that we even do not think about it and do not perceive it as a kind of need. Using it is as natural as breathing or eating (biological examples are not accidental). Meanwhile, the way in which people use and understand space is the effect of culture. For ethnologists this statement could be evidence, something which does not need special reminders. In accordance with our theories everything is a cultural construct, for example, time, gender, memory, style in which we understand and create history and finally the place. But it is not this ascertainment that is a “power” and “strength” of the space anthropology.⁴ The essence of this theory lies in the multiplicity of its applications and also in that it could explain a behaviour, motivations and causes

⁴ But it has to be mentioned that at the beginnings of the space anthropology it was a crucial conclusion.

of conflicts. What is more, it could predict and prevent potential conflicts, about which Hall has already written (1978: 29–30).

As I wrote before, the space anthropology is a big and good source of theories and inspiration to research. I decided to present a few assumptions, tools, which are interesting for me or which I have used during my research and analysis. I hope that the reader will find them noteworthy. The first statements and those of the greatest importance, from which Hall began his considerations about a proxemics, talk that the culture (and space as its element) is a communication (Hall 1978: 23–30). Spaces and places are information, which conveys meanings. They can be analyzed as the examples of nonverbal language. This message could be available for only special groups, which know the code, but it could be also unaware, charged automatically (as a result of the process of enculturation). Coming back to the code, sending a message we have to establish that a recipient knows the code and can read intention of the sender – it is the sense of a sign's idea (and a whole communication as well). Profiting from that, space can be connected with particular users who use and mark it accordingly to their goals (Hall 2001: 104–107). It starts dividing itself; in a place of one space, appears many of them – for each user a space can mean different things and values, so in effect in every case it is a different place.

Space can be also seen as privilege, a sort of award. Open space is the equivalent of freedom (Tuan 1987: 72). It allows one to think clearly, feel comfortable, get strength for activities. Crowd and narrowness are natural, binary oppositions of that. Their connotation is most often negative, they remind of poorness or, on the other hand, a danger. What is a biological need for animals, for human is also a psychological and social requirement (Tuan 1987: 80). “I need a space” or “You are limiting my life space” are well known statements which often do not raise our surprise or reflection. What limits our space is to the same degree a cultural construct and a space. One person who stands too close to us could be perceived as a crush (Hall 1978: 156–158). There are also people who do not feel uncomfortable in the forest, because trees cover up the horizon; in the same place other people can feel free (Tuan 1987: 77–78). However, not less interesting is a case how people cope with the problem of the lack of space and how it manifests itself (Hall 1978: 178–200). In other contexts, space is information about a place in a hierarchy. A preferment is most of the time connected with moving out to a bigger office; higher floors are perceived as more exclusive; the right side is better than left; being in the centre means having power.⁵

The space anthropology gives a great opportunity to contribution to the topic of senses. Places can “taste”, “smell”, be “audible or dumb”, “colourful or dark”. It is remembered by experiences which are conditioned by senses. By using their senses, people can get to know an area, can recognize it as their own (Tuan 1978: 19–31). Senses let us memorize the world, after this activity it is possible to add values to it. Not every place is the same for us – some are well remembered, even

⁵ More about it in a great chapter: “The body, human relationships and spatial values” (Tuan 1987: 51–70).

after years we can describe them in detail, memories or parts of them can be like “*punctum*” in Barthes’s theory of photography – they bring strong emotions, commemorate personal experiences. A space is memory, individual and collective. We often start protecting it only when it is in a danger.

At the end of this chapter I want to mention the approaches which are not clear parts of the space anthropology, but in my opinion they are very useful and show the possibilities for research in this sub-discipline. The first conception concentrates on distinction between a sacred and a secular space. The sacred space is marked by presence of God or gods. It is the place of a hierophany, and because of that it creates the new order of things. Defining and naming these places let people organize the world around them. The world starts to have a centre without which an existence would not be possible. However, the space is not homogeneous, it has tears and cracks. Next to the sacred there is a secular space, their mutual penetration destroys an order. The world has to be recreated all the time, otherwise a chaos will prevail (Eliade 1974: 53–88). The second approach is deeply connected with the forest and, as a matter of fact, it is an introduction to the next chapter of this paper. In accordance with that approach, the forest space is described through the prism of its elements and changes, an evolution of its potential. It shows what a strong meaning can be assigned to the specific space (Gwiazdowicz, Wiśniewski 2011: 82–343).

The Tuchola Forest

1. Specificity of the region

Bory Tucholskie (Eng. the Tuchola Forest) is the biggest forest complex in Poland. It is situated in the northern part of the country in the Pomerania Region. It is worth mentioning that it is also one of the biggest forest complexes in the Central Europe. The woods cover the area of about 3 thousand square kilometres. Today in the Tuchola region we deal with a monoculture of pine trees – this species occupy more or less 95% of the total forest area. That is why the Tuchola Forest is also known as the Tuchola Pinewoods. However, it is not a simple result of the nature. Before the time of intensive wood industry, in the region there were often lindens, beech trees, oaks, hornbeams and aspens (Boiński 1985: 15–19). Today, the region is the place of ecological projects and actions, understood in a broad sense, created most often by local foresters and naturalists. The most recognizable are: the Promotional Forest Complex “the Tuchola Forest” which was set up in 1994 and the Bory Tucholskie National Park created in 1996.

There is a problem, which I always emphasize, connected with the research in the mentioned region, namely the issue of naming. “The Tuchola Forest” is a designation used in many publications and by many various researchers both in science and humanities. It must be highlighted that it most often refers to some-

what different parts of the Pomerania. It means something different for botanists, geomorphologists, foresters, archaeologists and finally for ethnologists. I based my work on the schematic map, proposed by Bernard Sychta (1998: 22) in one of few ethnographic books about this region.

There are several reasons why I decided to carry out the research which concerns the issues related to the subject area of the Tuchola Forest. First of all, I am far from being unconcerned with this subject area. I grew up there and I have always treated this place as my little homeland. Another factor which convinced me and made me realize that these issues were worth seeing was the fact that this territory was closely connected with the forest. The Tuchola forest is referred to as *the green lungs of Poland* and, as it was mentioned, it constitutes the biggest woodland in our country. It is hard not to notice how much this area depends on the forest. To my mind, this is a unique feature which we should keep and take care of. Obviously, these areas that have developed and structured based on the woodlands are quite easy to be found on the ethnographic map of Poland (the Kurpie region with the White and Green Wilderness, the Sandomierz Wilderness and its influence on *Lasowiacys* – the ethnographic group of people; the Podlachia region and the Białowieża Forest). However, I believe that the degree to which the Tuchola Forest depends on the forest is exceptional, and without this constituent one would not be able to isolate the area. I used to say that the Tuchola Forest is a “white gap” on the map of ethnological research. For sure it is outshone by the biggest, better known and described neighbours: Kashubia and Kociewie. Thus, it was another reason why I started deepening this subject.

My research began during the summer of 2010 and they have been in progress up till now. I can distinguish three main stages of it: the first one took place in the summer of 2010 (July–September); the second covered the summer of 2011 (July–September) and the time between December 2011 and February 2012; it was connected with collecting materials to my BA thesis. The last one started at the end of November 2012 and is still taking place. This one is connected with my MA thesis and covers the topic of foresters.

2. Economy and ambivalence

I do not have enough place in this paper to present all conclusions from my research (and I think it is neither needed nor necessary). That is why I chose a few problems on which I want to concentrate.

The first of them is the issue of ambiguity and ambivalence of the forest space. In the Tuchola region economy has been deeply connected with woods for ages. As it was accurately written by Sychta: “The abundant tree stands of the Tuchola Forest activated active forest management (...)” (Sychta 1998: 37). By the beginning of the twentieth century, the locals took up gathering, hunting, bee-keeping, fishing, working on lands but did activities mostly associated with forests which included felling and also getting tree resin and bark. Lumbermen who were responsible for

firewood constituted another group. Planting trees was the next category and this process consisted of numerous activities that required a wide variety of skills. In the past *Borowiacy* dabbled in brewing tar and burning charcoal. One should not forget about gathering mushrooms, berries and cranberries which were also undoubtedly very important in the previous century. Moreover, the Tuchola Forest was the area of amber extraction. However, as B. Sychta wrote, this activity was done only till the forties of the twentieth century. The forest was used in other aspects of life as well. Timber not only served as the basic and primary building material but also as the material for making dishes, furniture, tools, kitchen utensils and even footwear (Sychta 1998: 39–45). As far as the results of my research are concerned, also today the forest is one of the most important branches of income. Interlocutors described work in the woods as planting a new forest, lumbering, clearing, older ones remember activities linked with the extraction of a resin. Mushroom picking and gathering berries, cranberries and blueberries are very popular. Unlike the 80s and 90s, today its character is connected with subsistence (previously it was connected with gainful). Because of the specificity of the Tuchola Forest region there is a big number of forest headquarters which employ a considerable group of foresters. They constitute an important part of local society and have a great influence on its character. Another matter associated with a huge quantity of the forest headquarters in the area of the Tuchola Forest is the number of people who do not only look after and plant trees in the forest, but also look for and process timber. Working at ZUL (Zakład Usług Leśnych – Eng. Forest Service Company) constitutes the main source of income for the inhabitants of this region. They are employed by the forest headquarters and their job is to plant and chop down trees. Some of the inhabitants take up only seasonal or temporary jobs. Today, with no doubt, the wood industry companies play very important role in the local economy and their network is spread worldwide. These range from small family businesses which employ just a few people to large companies, which employees need special buses to get to. Wood industry includes sawmills, furniture companies, and also window and door woodwork.

In this description it is visible that the forest in the Tuchola Pinewood was and still is used to meet the needs of locals; it is a base for local economy and industry. However, it does not mean that this space is perceived as disciplined, unequivocal. According to the local legends and tales, pinewoods are the home of mysterious creatures, ghosts and undefined powers (Regliński 2006). My interlocutors, who narrated many stories about strange accidents in the forest, confirmed it. Some of them were frightening for them, they believe that they met devil's power; others are just funny or cannot be explained. Local people do not consider the forest as a place where they can control everything. They described this space as an area where many unexpected things are possible. The forest gives them its resources but it is not a part of a domestic world. At the same time the personification of it takes place. The forest and trees are often presented as living beings, which have the influence on a life of natives. Everything that is unclear, ambivalent and ambiguous arouses anxiety and needs protection.

3. Crosses and shrines as boundaries

The forest in the region of the Tuchola Forest is a very unique kind of boundary – it is allowed to create this region by the isolation of the group in the mid-forest area. In this particular case, the forest (like mountains or lakes in other regions) is a natural environmental barrier which separates the Borowiacy Tucholscy from other groups on the ethnographic map of Poland. However, the wall of the pinewood is the boundary also in another aspect. It divides off two spaces – the one is well known and safe, the other one is strange and dangerous. What is behind this border is mysterious and stimulates imagination. In order to fulfil its role the border has to be apparent and has to transfer clear message. In the region of the Tuchola Forest we can observe that crosses and shrines are seen as determinants of the untamed forests. Most of them are situated in the vicinity of the roads which lead to forests, or are close to them and are just an “entrance” to the forests. The localization of them is never pointless, because they emphasize the presence of sacrum and the spiritual power – it is the place of contact between God and people. Local people, who go to the forest, use those crosses and shrines as “information points” which show that behind them there is an ambivalent space. Furthermore, residents can profit from the protection of this place as a kind of epiphany of God’s power.

But this architecture elements are not sufficient to protect people inside pine-woods. The forest also requires stronger treatments – internal protection. Older interlocutors shared with me a local prayer which sounds: “I am going into the woods, taking the belt of Virgin Mary with me. I will encircle this belt round my waist three times, and this belt will scare away all the bad, cruel people and vermin”⁶. The occurrence and popularity of this prayer was mentioned by B. Sychta seventy years ago (Sychta 1998: 28). He sought the roots of this prayer, which was still full of jargon, in the worship of the forces of nature, which was identified with the aunt of Borowiacy’s. This aunt was, according to the local beliefs, the guardian of the local forests and animals living there. Thanks to her, the Tuchola Forest has beautiful, evergreen forests and tress which are rigid and unshakeable now. She was also believed to protect people from witches, suffering souls and hobby lanterns living in the woods, and even from the pestilent air that came out of the forest (Puchowski, Ragin-Szczęśna 2012: 26–31). On the basis of these examples, we can see that the ambivalence is still prevalent in the perception of forest. However, it transforms together with the local society.

⁶ Unfortunately a translation „kills” the whole melodiousness. In Polish it sounds: *Idę ja w las, biorę Najświętszej Maryi pas. I tym pasem trzy razy wokół pasa się opaszę, i wszystkich złych ludzi i całe robactwo od siebie odstraszę.*

4. Saint Hubertus Cult

In the Tuchola Forest neither crosses nor shrines were erected in the middle of the forests. It was relatively not so long ago when this practice was given up and I believe that it is connected with the cult of Saint Hubertus.

The worship of Saint Hubertus had not existed in Poland for a relatively long time. It came along with the Saxon dynasty and the king Augustus II the Strong (but some of the researchers claim that it was known yet during the Jagiellonian time; Mielnikiewicz 2008: 29). At that time, the consolidation of this particular worship was associated with the tradition of hunting. The most important moments and events in a hunting year were church fairs (known as “Hubertus” or “Hubertiwina”), which took place on the occasion of celebrating the memoirs of Saint Hubertus and were celebrated on the 3rd of November, according to the liturgical calendar of the Roman Catholic Church. They were fancily and luxuriantly organized (which was typical of the Saxon times in Poland). Hunters gathered for a morning *hubertowska mass* and then went hunting, which was followed by a lavish and sumptuous regale (Adamczewski 2011: 4).

The worship of Saint Hubertus in the Tuchola Forests is still a recent phenomenon. The isolation of the area, connected with very specific environmental conditions, caused a delayed increase in this saint's popularity. Sychta, in his thoroughgoing analysis in the forties of the twentieth century, did not even mention his presence in this area. All the objects in memorial of Saint Hubertus have not existed for more than several dozen years. Huntsmen are considered to have been the main proponents of this worship. However, in my opinion, the fact that the local foresters took over this worship and used as their own enabled faster and more intense reception in the Tuchola Forest. The specification of the Tuchola Forest determines the extensive forest administration. A huge majority of foresters are hunters as well. In this way, it was quite easy to take over the patronage of Saint Hubertus also by the representatives of this profession. Hunters and foresters, just like other inhabitants, felt and still feel this certain need to protect their work and activities that take place in the forests. When a hunter/forester goes to work, he enters the forest and, regardless of the situation, is exposed to its impact and influence in the same way. He looks for help and intercession of the patron who is the closest to him, the one who is associated with the forest. Foresters and hunters are connected and associated with the forest, they enter it every day and deal with its forces. They use it far more often, and in a different way than the locals who live in the outskirts of the forest or in the countryside. For them the natural border of the tame area ends with the border of the forest. This is where the border is, and it should be protected with the crosses and shrines. On the other hand, for those who are associated with the forest, such as hunters and foresters, this area is connected with the inner side of the forest. It can be noticed that in the Tuchola Forest, the hunters and foresters are the ones who started erecting small objects of religious architecture in the middle of the forests. These shrines are erected in honour of Saint Hubertus. Moreover, the hunters and foresters are the ones who

contributed to the reorganization of the forest. The shrines of Saint Hubertus' are situated in the places which are important for them, at intersections, and along the paths in the forests. They may constitute a votive feature, they may be a memorial of re-establishing one's health, saving during the hunt, thanking for the long-term care and prosperity, or a commemoration of the workplace and the service in the forest. They also constitute the function of landmarks in the area. Here, the approach of the space anthropology makes possible the interpretation of actual changes in a society.

Foresters and forestry

Research which I have been carrying out now is still connected with the Tuchola Forest but they are more based on the particular group – the foresters. They give me a lot of opportunities for using tools of the space anthropology. I want to check how members of this profession value and give a meaning to the space of their work. I am also very interested in this subject because of global changes in the perception of the environment and nature. There is a big development of ecological movements, which has a great influence on our perception of the Earth. We are witnesses to a new kind of education where we are informed that all people in the whole world are responsible for the condition of the environment. Because of the Internet we can protest against cutting rainforest or poisoning rivers in West Canada. I would like to have a reflection about the issue of place of forestry today. According to the “Agenda 21” from “The Earth Summit”, the target of forestry is a balanced forestry economy now, instead of wood industry (Pajek 1998: 132).

The subject of nature and forest gives also a good opportunity for the international research and cooperation. In countries like Finland and Canada there are interesting projects implemented with the contribution of ethnologists. They do not focus only on the meaning and valuating the nature (the forest, rivers) but also see current changes which are good starting points to analyze. Especially noteworthy research is led in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Alberta in Edmonton (for example by: Mark Nuttall, Jodie Asselin, Michelle Borowitz, Nora Pedersen).

Conclusion

In this short paper I tried to show that the forest and also other aspect of nature can be successfully analyzed by ethnologists nowadays. On the basis of my research in the Tuchola Forest area I showed that cultural and social meaning of the forest is always the construct of local society. There is nothing like one constant figure of wood or nature; it always changes together with the community. An-

thropologists can study these changes in many aspects of culture: beliefs, religion, economy and history. In case of my research, it is well visible in the examples of wood industries, ambivalence, crosses and shrines. However, as I tried to show on the basis of the Tuchola region, the forest can be the determinant of region and a key to understand local residents. The forest surrounds its residents, touches every aspect of their life. It is both known and unknown space, which is connected with a deep ambivalence of feeling.

I think that a great opportunity for this kind of research are tools of the space anthropology. The use of them can open new spaces for looking for answers to harassing problems and questions. The utility of it is well visible on the basis of Saint Hubert cult in the described research. Only a perception that space is used and valued in different ways by different users could bring a new phenomenon to understanding.

I am deeply convinced that there is a lot of place and possibilities for human-nature research, both in Poland and also around the world. Huge transformations in the issue of understanding the environment and their analyses could give us an answer about a general condition of the world's society and globalization.

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