



## DR ROBERT WILUŚ (1962–2020)



Robert Maciej Wiluś was born on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1962, in Wieluń where he attended Elementary School no. 4 and Tadeusz Kościuszko Liceum. In his home town, he was engaged in scouting and learnt to play different instruments at the community music centre. A passion for music accompanied him throughout his life and he enjoyed playing the accordion or guitar at different events and during trips. While at liceum and later, he developed his interests in geography, travel, tourism and photography. In the early 1980s, he studied geography at the Biology and Earth Sciences Department, University of Łódź and in 1986, he took his Master's degree in geography, specializing in the field of tourism. The MA thesis he defended was entitled *The impact of recreational tourism on the urbanization of Jastrzębia Góra* (supervised by Prof. Liszewski). After graduating, he was employed as an assistant lecturer at the Faculty

of Urban Geography and Tourism. In 1996, he was awarded a PhD degree in Earth Sciences in the field of Geography, for his thesis entitled *The development of the tourist function in the Warta valley between Działoszyn and Uniejów* (supervised by Prof. Liszewski). Following this, he worked as a lecturer and later senior lecturer at the Faculty of Urban Geography and Tourism (in 2007 renamed as the Tourism Geography Section at the Institute of Urban Geography and Tourism). His post-doctoral thesis, *Rivers and their valleys as tourist areas*, remained unfinished.

Even though Dr Robert Wiluś spent most of his adult life in Łódź, he was strongly attached to his 'little homeland' – the Wieluń area – and particularly to his home town of Wieluń. He was engaged in various regional endeavours and projects, such as the Amber Trail. He died on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020, in Łódź.

## RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Dr Robert Wiluś was author or co-author of over 70 academic and popular academic publications. His research interests were focused on a wide range of tourism geography issues covering three main themes: spatial analyses of tourist movements (Wiluś, 1991b, 1995, 2003b, 2003c), tourism space (especially in central Poland) (Dziegieć, Wiluś, 2001; Liszewski, Wiluś, 2010; Wiluś, 1988) and river valleys as tourist activity areas (Wiluś, 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 2007a, 2008, 2009, 2010).

From 1992 to 2018, Dr Robert Wiluś was the academic secretary of the “Field seminar: Tourism Geography Workshops” in Poland. As a result, he became widely recognized and valued among Polish geographers and tourism specialists. In 2000-2018, he was a representative on the Institute of Urban Geography and Tourism of ATLAS (Association for Tourism and Leisure Education and Research) and took part in numerous academic conferences held by this association, e.g. Naples (2004), Barcelona (2005), Viana do Castelo (2007) and Brighton (2008). In 2006, when the annual ATLAS conference was organized in Łódź (“The Transformation of Tourism Space”), he was the Chair of the Organizational Committee, as well as its academic secretary.

## DIDACTIC ACTIVITY

In his 32-year-long teaching career, Dr Wiluś worked not only at the Geographical Sciences Department, University of Łódź (to 2001, the Biology and Earth Sciences Dept.), but also at its branch in Tomaszów Mazowiecki, a satellite university centre in Sieradz, and the Postgraduate Tourism Studies section. In the opinion of his superiors and students, he always conducted classes conscientiously and with passion, which was confirmed by the multiple awards that he received in annual votes for the best academic teacher at the Geographical Sciences Department.

What was very noticeable in Dr Robert Wiluś’ didactic career, was the wide range of subjects he taught. In the beginning, he taught them as part of the tourism and hospitality specialization, and then on the Tourism and Recreation course. The classes concerned cultural tourism, work as a courier and a guide, organizing and providing services during tourist events, customer care, spatial planning and development of recreation areas, quality management in tourism, tourist information and promotion, regional geography of Europe and the world, and the tourism geography of Poland and Croatia.

An important part of his classes with students was field practice. He went on the first trip of this type to Krynica in 1990. Later, he was the supervisor of

specialization practical work in the Silesian Beskids and in central Poland (in 1996 renamed as Łódź region). Every year, he suggested the location, the itinerary and was the “guardian” of the journey with the principal theme being the tourist regions of Europe. Starting in the 1995/1996 academic year, he led students to Austria, Croatia and Hungary several times, as well as Slovenia, Romania, Lithuania, the Netherlands, the north and south of Italy and Prague the capital of the Czech Republic.

From 1989, Robert Wiluś was involved in international education. He organized visits to Łódź for students and academics from the Tbilisi University (Georgia) and oversaw them. He led tours of Łódź for the participants of the International Students’ Congress, took care of students from the University of Westminster, and accompanied students of tourism and recreation on study trips to St Petersburg in Russia. He also took care of Russian students visiting Łódź.

In 2004, under the Erasmus program, he visited the University of Eastern Finland, in Savonlinna, where he conducted classes with students. In Poland, he taught different subjects in English to Socrates and Erasmus students. With foreign students studying in Łódź in mind, he wrote *The Natural history of Poland*, a chapter of the course book entitled *Poland: History, culture and society* (Wiluś, 2003a, 2007b, 2015).

Dr Robert Wiluś supervised the writing of 129 BA and 26 MA theses. He performed different didactic functions at the University of Łódź, such as examiner at the entrance exams, syllabus council secretary and extramural MA studies coordinator.

## AN ORGANIZER AND A POPULARIZER

Next to research and academic teaching, Dr Robert Wiluś was a keen organizer as well. We should mention here his participation in the work of many national and international organizations. He was particularly strongly attached to the Polish Geographical Association of which he was a member from 1986; he held the position of the Łódź division secretary (1993–1995 and 2005–2017), as well as being a member of the Audit Committee (2017–2020). He was also engaged in the work of the Tourism Geography Commission where he was secretary (1996–2016).

Robert Wiluś actively co-operated with international organizations, e.g. with the abovementioned ATLAS association and the European Leisure and Recreation Association (ELRA). He frequently led tours of Łódź and Poland for foreign guests who were visiting the university for conferences, seminars or congresses. During the Regional Congress of the International Geographical Union held in Kraków in 2014, he was

the organizer and co-author of a presentation entitled *The study of tourism space in Poland: the example of Central Poland* (Krakowiak, Latosińska, Liszewski, Makowska-Iskierka, Wiluś, Wojciechowska, Włodarczyk, 2014) and prepared a field trip for the conference participants.

As regards Dr Wiluś' organizational activity, it is worth noting that for several years, he held the position of chair of the examination board for tourism couriers at the Łódź Province Marshall's Office. To perform his duties well, he used his profound geographical knowledge, professional experience and broad contacts with representatives of the tourism business. One of the outcomes of that activity was a publication entitled *Tour Guiding*, prepared together with Andrzej Stasiak which included tests and examination questions (Stasiak, Wiluś, 2004, 2007) and was used by candidates for couriers in the whole country.

He frequently took part in the meetings of the Tour Guiding Forum (*Forum Pilotażu i Przewodnictwa*) integrating couriers, tourist guides, representatives of travel agencies, tourism organizations and employees of Marshall's Offices, and participated enthusiastically in discussions about the Polish system of educating tourist guides and couriers, and their examining procedures and licensing, contributing his valuable opinions (Stasiak, Wiluś, 2010).

Privately, Robert Wiluś loved walking in mountains both high (the Himalayas, the Andes) and lower (the Carpathians, the Sudetens). He took part in several large geographical expeditions, e.g. to Nepal (2000), Ecuador and Peru (2001), as well as Chile and Argentina (2009), and was the author of photographic exhibitions presenting the places he had visited. As a keen traveller, he liked attending events devoted to expeditions to remote parts of the world and listening to accounts of journeys and stories told by other 'globetrotters'. Several times, he visited the 'Explorers Festival' of travel, adventure and extreme sports, held in Łódź. He gave presentations and lectures about icebergs in Patagonia as a part of the 'Grand Geography Lesson' (an event accompanying the festival organized for older secondary school students). His interest in mountains and his urge to spend his free time in an active way materialized in the form of frequent trips with students and members of Tourism Geography Students' Study Group, "Vagabonds". It was with them that he walked on mountain trails in the Beskids and Sudetens, sometimes several times a year, shared his geographical knowledge, provoking their curiosity of the world, and singing and playing the guitar making their stays at hostels even more pleasant. Evenings spent together in front of the fire or by a bonfire, strengthened the bonds between the teacher and his students.

In recognition of his research, didactic, organizational and popularizing activity, Dr Robert Wiluś was awarded the Gold Medal for Long Service, the Medal of

the National Education Commission, the 'Gold Badge' of the University of Łódź, and the 'Gold Badge' and Jubilee Medal of the Polish Geographical Association.

We have lost a friend, co-worker, teacher and colleague, a researcher and a good and open-hearted person. Dr Robert Wiluś was a true friend to young people, and his passion for teaching and organizing student trips will long be remembered by many graduates.

*Friends and Colleagues*

*From the Institute of Urban Geography, Tourism  
and Geoinformation  
Geographical Sciences Department, University of Łódź*

## THE MOST IMPORTANT PUBLICATIONS BY DR ROBERT WILUŚ

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