

REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS IN POLAND: MODELS OF OPERATION AND COOPERATION WITH THE ENVIRONMENT. RELATION SYSTEMS AND FEATURES

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ABSTRACT | The authors present the results of the identification of features that distinguish regional tourism organizations (RTOs) and confirm their affiliation to an organization system, as well as an assessment of models of RTOs functioning in Poland and their cooperation with the environment, at the background of various concepts of the systems and types of an organization's relations with stakeholders in close and distant environment. The analysis proves that the principles, forms and intensity of RTOs' cooperation with their environment can impact on the operation effectiveness of these organizations.

Introduction

The assessment of the internal and external conditions of regional tourism organizations (RTOs) operation in Poland requires a discussion of definition issues and understanding the objective and subjective scope of the “organization” notion, also as an element of the contemporary tourist economy.

According to an organization and management encyclopaedia (Pasiczny, 1981), an organization is “any entity of human activity, extracted from the environment, with a specific structure aimed at achieving an aim or aims”. The basic properties of any organization include: purposefulness – existence of aim(s) assumed to achieve (RTO statutes); complexity – with specific parts associated with one another and with the whole organization in a purposeful manner (RTO organizational structure and membership); distinctiveness – of aims and structures as related to the environment; at the same time, association with the environment by these aims and structures (structure of entities cooperating with RTOs).

Szacka (2003, p. 206), in her sociological approach to organizations, points at some other features (of an appropriate formal group) of a formal organization (perceived in RTOs in Poland), i.e. appointment planned to achieve the set objectives, in accordance with the rules or procedures; formalized organizational structure; transparent division of labor; clearly identified centers of authority (organizational dependencies); staff exchanges (fluctuations do not influence the nature of the organization); dominant material relations (roles, not people).

In the subject literature, organization is also frequently ascribed to other properties, such as a common aim (of the whole organization and all members); a border (allowing to extract the organization from the environment); management (determining the structural elements and influencing members' behavior); organizational culture (system of values, norms, and principles; regulations for members); organizational structure (the internal arrangement; deployment and interdependence of the organization elements); cooperation (of the structural elements and organization members to achieve the assumed goal) (Korzeniowski, 2005, p. 313).

At the same time, the literature reflects an essential difference in interpreting the very notion of “organization”. Some authors perceive organizations as specific things, having a real existence in space and time (material interpretation) (Kotarbiński, 1975; Koźmiński, 1983). Others treat them as characteristics of complex entities, attributes of things (attribute interpretation) (Zieleniewski, 1976).

The way of classifying organizations in the attribute way, i.e. according to an object, feature, or other significant property, is the most frequent approach to the notion of organization in the everyday life as it allows to value organizations for their aims, arrangement and links to the environment. On this basis, we can speak of a good, average or bad organization, more or less efficient or disabled, with greater or lesser deficiencies.

In the praxeological theory of organization, both concepts – material and attribute ones – are treated as resultant because they arise only as a result of a specific process of creating an organization (Kaczmarek, 2001).

It can be noted that most authors agree, in general, with the definition proposed by Kotarbiński (1975, p. 75), who determines, in the material meaning, that “an organization is a type of a whole, and all its components contribute to the success of the whole”. A similar view is presented by Zieleniewski (1976, p. 50), who assumes the attribute meaning as the basic definition of organization, maintaining that “organization (...) is a particular type of relationship of parts to themselves and to the whole that they create; the relationship consists in that the parts contribute to the success of the whole”. Both definitions point to the need for a positive outcome (success), which may be

a prerequisite (parameter) for assessing the performance effectiveness (also that of an RTO) (Fedyk, Morawski, 2016). It should be emphasized that these approaches to the notion of “organization” complement each other.

Apart from the material and attribute meaning, which together could be called resultant meanings, there is a primary functional meaning (organization as an activity, an activity of organizing – the process of organizing, the constant introduction of a specific order or chaos, the creation or transformation of organized entities) (Kaczmarek, 2001, p. 108).

As a result of the process of organizing (any project), organizations – things (institutions, organizations in the physical dimension, in a given time and space) and organizations – features (organizational structure, procedures, relations) are created.

An interesting position is presented by Argyris (1965, p. 198), who defines an organization as “a multiplicity of parts, each pursuing a specific objective, which are maintained through interconnection, while adapting to the external environment and thus preserving the state of the interconnection of the parts”. This definition of “organization” largely reflects the process of evolution and development, as well as the nature of contemporary structures of RTO operating in Poland (Fedyk, Morawski, 2016).

It should be noted that in the literature there is a common understanding of the concept of “organization” as a wider system. In the organization model according to Bielski (1996), the following are included: the management subsystem in the center and the psychosocial subsystem, subsystem of objectives and values, subsystem of structure, and technical subsystem in its environment.

Leavitt (1965) formulated a four-part organization model, which is also called the “Leavitt’s diamond”, as the basis for thinking of an organization as a multifactorial system. The model assumes that an organization is a complex structured system built of four elements: objectives (implemented by the organization and resulting in specific tasks); material, technical and technological equipment (along with people’s skills in using them); structure (the adopted principles of division of tasks and responsibility for their performance, the principles of division of power and accompanying responsibility, principles of information flow); and people (along with their individual and collective aspirations and patterns of behavior). These elements can also be grouped according to their social and technical dimensions. There are mutual relations between these factors. They are all interconnected and interact with one another. A change in one of the system elements leads to a modification in the other three. A consequence of this understanding of an organization is the need to consider the impact of the planned change on each of these four elements.

The mentioned model is contemporarily accused of a serious flaw, i.e. omitting the managerial (controlling) segment of the organization, which is attributed to it in all interpretations of the organization notion (Bielski, 1996; Bolesta-Kukułka, 1993; Krzyżanowski, 1994).

Particularly characteristic and at the same time precise, as Koźmiński states (1983, p. 76), is the indication by Ackoff (1973), who recognizes that an organization is

a system behaving deliberately, containing at least two deliberately behaving components, having a common intention, in view of which there is a functional division of labour in the system; its functionally separate components may respond to one another’s behaviour in the

form of observation or communication, and at least one subset fulfils the control and management function.

On the basis of the above considerations, we tried to indicate the fundamental properties of an organization as an institution (entity) operating in a specific socio-economic system (tab. 1). These properties are also observed in RTOs operating in Poland.

Table 1. Properties of an organization in a socio-economic system

Properties of an organization as a system
1. Organizations are artificial and natural systems at the same time (they are consciously constructed by people for specific purposes and missions, and are composed of natural, individual participants aiming to satisfy their own needs and achieve their own objectives)
2. Organizations are open systems (on the one hand, they are influenced by the environment, and on the other, they are able to shape the environment freely to a certain extent)
3. Organizations are structured socio-technical systems (consisting of subsystems, which differ mainly in their ability to predict behavior and reactions to various impacts)
4. Organizations are constructed hierarchically
5. Organizations are able to improve (they can increase their efficiency, degree of structuring; introduce technical, organizational, economic, and social innovations)
6. Two trends always clash in organizations: the innovative one (change to adapt the organization to environmental modifications) and the conservative one (maintaining the status quo)
7. Organizations are characterized by equifinality (the ability to achieve certain results in different ways, through different processes and structures; the principle that it is possible to achieve the same results from different sources and that there is no best way of organizing for a task to be carried out)
8. Organizations are characterized by high variability in time and the ability to achieve relatively stable states of dynamic equilibrium (the system receives information from the environment about its own actions, and information from inside about changes that occur in itself)
9. Organizations present a synergy effect (which is associated with the occurrence of completely new, specific properties in the system as a whole, which are qualitatively different from the sum of characteristics of its component parts)

Source: own elaboration based on Peszko (2002), pp. 25–26; Pasieczny (1981).

In the presented approach, RTO features can be perceived, especially when we accept the view by Koźmiński (1983, p. 76) that “systems behaving intentionally are those that not only select means needed to achieve the goals, but also are able to set the objectives that they pursue”. Further, the author observes that “the common intention of two or more systems behaving intentionally is the area of compatibility of their objectives; this does not mean that, apart from this, they may not have different or even conflicting objectives”. What is also significant and emphasized in the literature, is the feature of an organization as an open system consisting of conscious aims and the interdependence in view of these aims (Kozuch, 2007). This points to the need to identify common or divergent RTOs objectives that affect their relationship with the environment (see Fedyk, 2018a, 2019; Fedyk, Morawski, 2014, 2016).

Material and methods

An extremely important condition for the functioning of contemporary organizations (also in relation to RTOs) is their environment. Environmental impact hinders the intensive activities of an organization (so-called environmental turbulence: “turbulent environment immediately requires a certain anticipation of the organization response; in particular, participants must act on the basis

of a fast cycle of knowledge creation or by creating new knowledge” (Perechuda, Sobińska, 2008)), causes an unpredictability requiring a quick diagnosis (Nalepka, Bak, 2012) and reaction, as well as evokes the phenomenon of the expected “organization flexibility” (Chajęcki, Krzakiewicz, Chajęcki, 2012; Flaszewska, Zakrzewska-Bielawska, 2013; Krupski, 2006, 2008).

In this context, it is significant for the functioning of an organization, including a tourism organization, to adapt to the local or regional conditions of the socio-economic environment in which it operates, as well as to modify it and create new directions of development. In practical terms, this corresponds to the indicated postulates of changing the principles of RTO operation, including the usage of the model of a networking organization, a product consortium, a tourist cluster, or a destination management company/organization, i.e., organizations based on knowledge and managed by knowledge (Fedyk, 2018b; Fedyk, Kachniewska, 2016; Fedyk, Meyer, Potocki, 2017; Fedyk, Morawski, Morawska-Bąkowska, Langer, Jandova, 2018).

The aim of writing the paper was to identify the features that distinguish RTOs and confirm their affiliation to an organization system, as well as to assess models of RTOs functioning in Poland and their cooperation with the environment, at the background of various concepts of the systems and types of an organization's relations with stakeholders in the close and distant environment.

The research material and, at the same time, the basic research entity consisted of RTOs in Poland. On the basis of the features of their functioning, both in terms of the internal organizational structures and the absorption of and impact on the external environment, an attempt was made to determine their organizational and functional cohesion.

In the recognition of modern organizational forms in terms of the scope of cooperation with the environment, which can also relate to the expected characteristics of RTO operation, standard diagnostic methods were applied in the form of desk research analysis and observation (being a component of survey and practical experience).

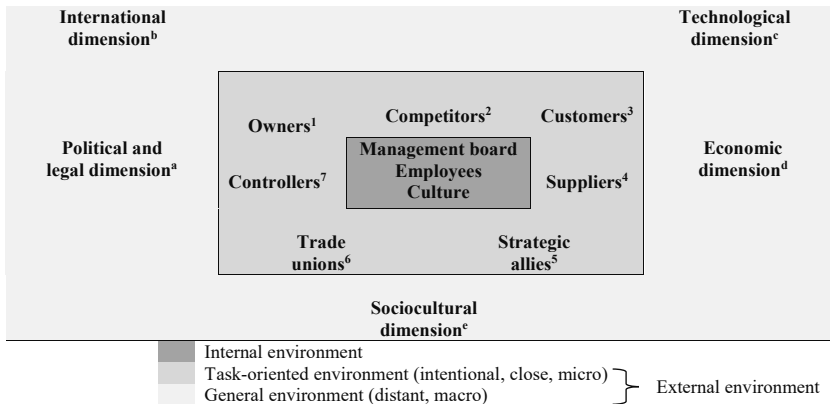
Regional tourism organizations environment

The division of the environment into close environment (intentional, direct; elements that influence the organization, but at the same time are subject to its impact) and distant environment (general, indirect; conditions in which the organization operates) is common in the subject literature (Pasieczny, 1981).

Griffin (2004) enumerates several ways in which organizations react to their environment; these constitute the so-called gradual “uncertainty of an organization”, also characterizing RTOs: e.g. mechanism of obtaining financial resources (uncertainty of receiving membership fees and of membership permanence); principles of appointing management boards (uncertainty of the time of holding a position); and non-substantive mechanisms of appointing chairpersons (Fedyk, 2015; Fedyk, Morawski, 2016).

In this context, the model by Griffin (2004) is interesting from the point of view of assessing the operation of RTOs in their environment. It indicates, among others, the role of the management board and employees (office) of the organization (so-called internal environment) and the

importance of the intentional (task-oriented) environment, whose elements can be identified with the typology of regular members, stakeholders, and RTO partners, as well as the entities of the tourism organization system in Poland (fig. 1) (Fedyk, Morawski, 2014).



KEY:

¹ Entities or persons having the status of a regular member of an RTO (paying a membership fee, having the passive and active voting right at general meetings of regular members, deciding on the substantive and financial plans in the voting mode)

² Local tourism organizations (LTO), local action groups, product consortia, tourism clusters (carrying out activities identical to those of RTO or competing for the same subsidies in the same sources)

³ Regular RTO members, local government units, donors, sponsors, business partners, Polish Tourism Organization (PTO), other RTOs within the services provided by the given RTO

⁴ Entrepreneurs or natural persons in the sector of, among others, advertising, media, transport, accommodation, providing services to an RTO within the framework of activities and substantive tasks carried out by the RTO

⁵ PTO, Ministry of Sport and Tourism, other RTOs within the RTO Forum, province governments (as key financial donors)

⁶ No such types of entities are recorded in the environment with a direct impact on RTOs

⁷ Ministry of Sport and Tourism legally authorized to control RTOs and regulating the possibility of receiving financial support for RTO projects; PTO, influencing RTOs as part of promotional projects (e.g. imposed rules for fairs organization); regional interest groups influencing RTOs tasks

^a The legal form of RTO activity regulation in the Act on the Polish Tourism Organization (limitation of the list of objectives, tasks, forms of operation), legal regulations governing the possibility to conduct business activity by RTOs (including restrictions on RTO management board members from local government units), legal norms regulating the acquisition of subsidies by RTOs from budgetary sources and EU funds, non-substantive political influence on the mechanisms of appointing RTO management boards, tourism policy of state administration bodies towards the POT-RTO-LTO system, degree of interference of political factors in RTO activities by (e.g. the Province Parliament and province self-government through financial grants)

^b Scope and type of support through Polish Tourist Information Centres (PTO posts) in RTOs activities on foreign markets, projects carried out with foreign partners from own funds and EU grants, the importance of RTOs in promoting the tourist potential of the country and region abroad (increase in tourist traffic, building a brand and tourist image internationally)

^c Techniques and technologies for promoting the tourist potential of a region available to an RTO (e.g. Internet portals, tourist information systems, social media, etc.), opportunities to implement innovative promotional projects using information and communications technology (existence of relevant companies in the region), use of modern knowledge and scientific research in tourism promotion

^d Financial condition of regional tourist economy entities as an element supporting or limiting RTO activities, the scope of tourist demand and supply in a region, affecting RTO objectives and tasks

^e Customs, habits, and dominant values in tourist economy in RTO environment, services and standards in relations with tourism industry entities influencing RTO behaviours, customs and traditions, expectations towards RTO behaviours from the local society (including members, stakeholders, partners)

Figure 1. RTO environment interpretation in the concept by Griffin

Source: own elaboration based on Griffin (2004), p. 103.

In the modernist approach (Puchalski, 2008, p. 28), an organization is treated as an open system, in which “each system has its own subsystems and is also a subsystem of a larger system (organization: system; environment: supersystem)”. Assuming, after Krzyżanowski (1999) and Bielski (1996), the concept of an organization operating in a structure of five interacting subsystems, we can present a model of RTOs operation as a socio-technical system undergoing environmental influences (fig. 3).

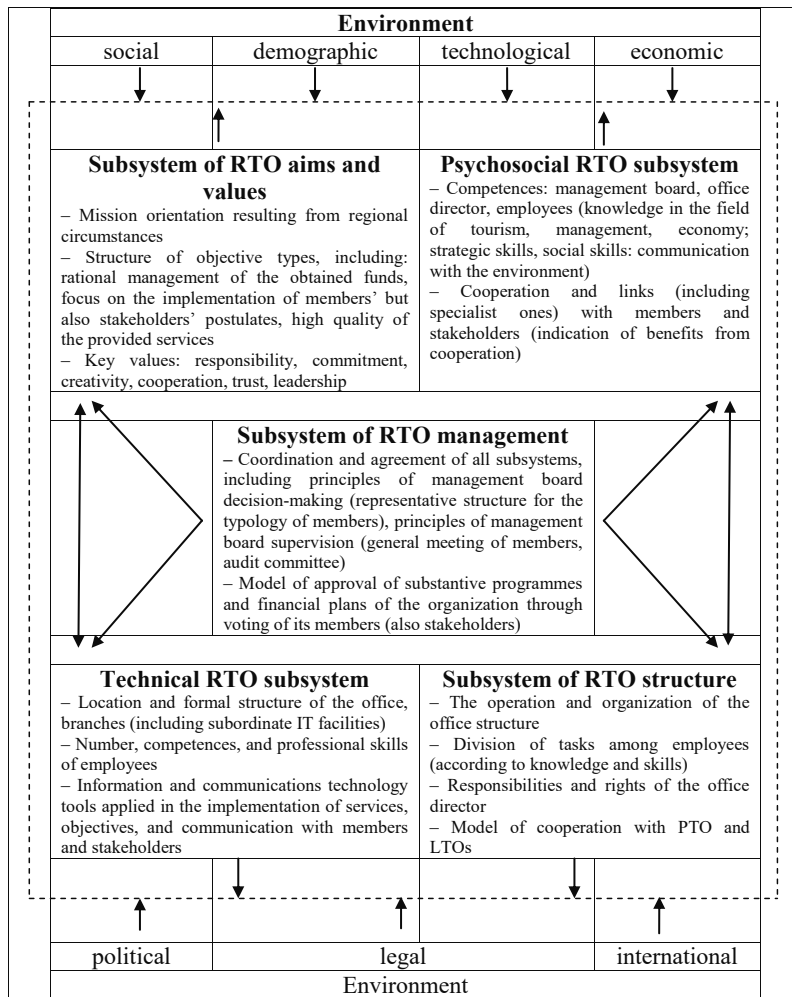


Figure 3. Regional tourist organization as a socio-technical system

Source: own elaboration based on Krzyżanowski (1999), pp. 34–35.

Also in the concept of “organizational excellence” by Waterman and Peters (1986) concerning research on the organization, the importance of relations with the environment, of human resources potential and of the so-called “values” can be seen (Jamka, 2011). The eight characteristics

of excellence identified by the authors could be taken into account when assessing the performance of RTOs, which should naturally aim for this excellence. These features are as follows: obsession with action, direct contact with customers, autonomy and entrepreneurship, performance and efficiency through people, focus on values, acting accordingly to the principle “stick to what you can do best,” small staff with simple structure, coexistence of loose and rigid organizational forms in one structure (Waterman, Peters, 1986).

It can be assumed that RTOs excellence, also in the dimension of performance and, wider, efficiency, should be considered in view of its ability to accumulate (information), initiate, integrate, mediate, support, advise. These seem to be the most significant internal and external processes that RTOs should focus on in their pursuit for higher efficiency (Fedyk, Morawski, 2016).

It is worth mentioning, as emphasized in the subject literature, the particular openness to the environment observed in modern types of organizations, i.e. learning, network, and virtual organizations. They are strongly oriented towards cooperation, including with external entities and other organizations that emphasize effectiveness as a feature of their activities (Jednoralska, 2012, p. 447), but not only in the profit category: also as the achieved added value, e.g. self-enrichment and stakeholder satisfaction (Kaczmarek, 2012, p. 466), ensuring oneself survival (Osbert-Pociecha, 2011, p. 49) and success (Bratnicki, 2006, p. 23), building intellectual capital or ability to cooperate.

On the basis of the views of Czarnecka and Słocińska (2010), we can point to the characteristics of selected modern organizational forms in terms of the scope of cooperation with the environment, which can also be related to the expected features of the RTOs operation (tab. 2).

Table 2. Characteristics of chosen modern organizational forms in terms of the scope of cooperation with the environment from an RTO perspective

Organization type	Characteristics defining an organization for cooperation with the environment from a regional tourist organizations perspective
Process organization	The organization operating boils down to the implementation of processes aimed at satisfying a specific need of the customers
Fractal organization	Holistic understanding of the organization by all its members to facilitate the use of the self-replication matrix, including self-replication of knowledge
Network organization	Mutual coordination of network activities in the field of operating procedures, technologies, infrastructure, etc. Resources are managed on the basis of individual and joint decisions in designated areas of cooperation Voluntary nature of broadly understood inter-organizational exchange Repeatable nature of the exchange, focus on longer cooperation Mutual availability of information on the organizations collaborating in the network Operation based on the synergy potential of the partners
Learning organization	Common vision Team learning

Source: own elaboration based on Czarnecka, Słocińska (2010), pp. 287–296.

Conclusions

In the presented approaches to the concept of “organization,” one can observe a connection with the contemporary highly differentiated typological structure of stakeholders and RTO members and their binding relations with the environment.

On the basis of theoretical indications and the practice of RTO operation in Poland, one can recognize and present a fraction of features that distinguish them and confirm their belonging to the system of organizations (see tab. 1).

The properties of RTO as a system of organizations are the following:

1. RTOs were established on the basis of imposed legal norms (Act on the Polish Tourism Organization) but were formally founded as a result of several years of evolution and regional and grassroots initiatives of their members from the tourist economy environment.
2. RTO membership is voluntary and may include different types of legal entities and natural persons who, by declaring membership (including contributions), can freely join the organization and influence it by approving substantive and financial plans (general meeting, management board).
3. RTOs operate within a nationwide 3-stage management system for tourism promotion in Poland, integrating social activities in the sector of tourist economy with the use of available techniques and technologies, but also acting differently in particular regions.
4. Internal RTO structures (hierarchy) are similar in all organizations owing to the similarity of norms contained in the statutes of the organization and the use of the legal form of an association (general meeting of members, management board, office).
5. In the course of 18 years of evolution, RTOs show improvement of structures and functioning through, among others, acquiring new types of stakeholders (including those from the non-tourist sector) or diversification of income sources (including resources from projects subsidized from EU funds), as well as the development of human resources (increasing the number and competence of office employees).
6. The innovative tendency in RTOs is manifested by, among others, launching business activity, using EU funds and new technologies in the implementation of statutory objectives (especially tourist promotion of the region). A manifestation of conservatism in RTO operation are, among others, maintaining the principle of entrusting RTO management to persons indicated by a given province self-government, sealing the PTO-RTO-LTO system through unification of objectives, statutes, board structures management.
7. The basic model of RTOs activity in individual regions is similar (despite differences in the time of their creation) and it is commonly assumed in the literature that RTOs are currently a proven tool for effective tourism promotion of a region and the implementation of individually selected objectives, operating in the most advantageous legal formula of an association.
8. RTO rankings are used in the positive and negative lobbying of both regular members (including through general assemblies of members) and entities or stakeholders from the environment.
9. Noticeable are views on the need to transform RTOs into other forms of cooperation with the environment, i.e. networking organizations, product consortia or tourist clusters, or possibly with the use of the destination management company model, which would allow the system to obtain new values and greater efficiency.

It is impossible, in the context of the above considerations and findings, not to indicate that in the research on the systems and processes of contemporary organizations management (also as enterprises), the importance of the institutional environment is becoming more and more pronounced as an essential factor for any economic and social analyses relating to the contemporary world.

Williamson's concept (the creator of the "new institutional economics" term) points out that the effectiveness of entities (the position of companies on the market) depends on the degree of understanding their environment and increases as the organization (company) acquires the ability to impact on the subsequent levels of the institutional environment (Rosińska, 2008, p. 257). It can be observed that RTOs also evolve in this direction of influencing their own environment.

It is worth noting that the common feature of many representatives of the new institutional economy is the conviction that it is impossible to analyze contemporary economic, business-related, political, or social phenomena without considering the aspect of their institutional environment. This points to the need to assess the effectiveness of the system of RTOs operation against the background of and in relation to their institutional (regional or local) environment, but also within the PTO-RTO-LTO structure.

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MODELE FUNKCJONOWANIA REGIONALNYCH ORGANIZACJI TURYSTYCZNYCH W POLSCE I ICH WSPÓŁPRACY Z OTOCZENIEM. SYSTEMY I CECHY RELACJI

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

system organizacji, regionalne organizacje turystyczne, otoczenie organizacji turystycznych

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule zaprezentowano wyniki identyfikacji cech wyróżniających regionalnych organizacji turystycznych (ROT) i potwierdzających ich przynależność do systemu organizacji oraz oceny modeli funkcjonowania i współpracy ROT-ów w Polsce z ich otoczeniem na tle różnych koncepcji systemów i typów relacji organizacji z interesariuszami w otoczeniu bliższym i dalszym. Dokonana analiza wskazuje, że zasady, formy i stopień nasilenia współpracy ROT-ów z ich otoczeniem mogą mieć wpływ na skuteczność działania tych organizacji.