

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW TOURIST SPACE IN THE POLISH BORDERLANDS

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The geopolitical and socio-economic changes in East-Central Europe that have been started at the beginning of the 1990s have brought about a radical change in the function of boundaries, the status of border zones and the character of cross-border relationships. One of the most visible kinds of human activity in the borderlands is the appearance of the rapid development of tourism. The main effect of these changes was the increase of tourist flows.

Tourism has become a highly significant growth industry in all border zones in Poland. This sector of the economy is fully involved in the integration with the European economic space. In the first stage, it has become a side effect in the boom of business activities, as the main foreigner arrivals purpose was business and shopping. In the late stages, the variations of flows of visitors and tourists are relevant to the political and legal effects of the European integration. Tourism is fully involved in the integration of Poland into the European space, but in a specific way. Indeed, besides tourists, many more visitors from abroad are persons whose purpose is to do business. The tourist space of Poland is essentially coastal, mountainous, urban and border.

The increase of border movement

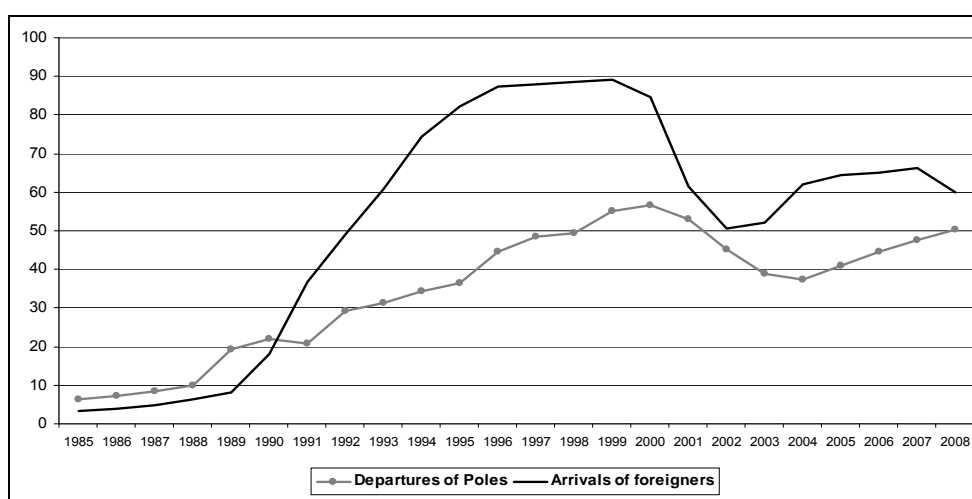
Along with the political, economic and social transition which occurred in Poland after 1989, the mechanisms and patterns of mobility including migration and tourism have radically changed. Border movement plays a very important role for borders areas. The cross-border petty trading and shopping was largely represented in the 90's. At the beginning of the XXI century, the significance of this type of mobility has been reduced. Actually, the two other types of international mobility: international tourism and labour migration play this very important role (*Więckowski, 2008*).

The border region has been characterised by the remarkable dynamics of peoples' mobility in the recent decades. The growth of number of people's crossing all Polish borders between 1990 and 2000 amounts to more than tenfold. After 2000

the number of visitors grew less, and after that the situation has been normalized with a little growth each year. In 2008, more than 110 million people have been crossing the Polish borders in both directions. The number of foreigners coming to Poland was about 60 million in 2008. In the same year, the number of Poles crossing the border increased to 50 million. The large majority of this number is just one-day visitors in the neighboring countries. The number of tourist trips with a minimum one night spent abroad is about 7 million.

Figure 1

The number of Polish border crossings by year, 1985–2008 (million)



Source: Border Guard.

The relationships between borders and tourism

Matznetter (1979) highlighted some of the connections between boundaries and tourism, and suggested a three-fold typology of spatial relationships between the two: where the boundary line is distant from tourist areas, where a tourist zone exists adjacent to the boundary on only one side, and tourist zones that extend across, or meet at the borders (Matznetter, 1979).

International boundaries may have significant implications for tourism, especially in terms of planning, promotion, and taxation. The borders influence tourism in many other ways (Timothy, 2002). The flow of tourists, their choice of destinations, the planning and physical development of tourism, and the types and extent of marketing campaigns are all affected by the nature of political boundaries. The

borders delineate an abrupt change in language, religion, political attitudes, cultural traditions and social mores. National holidays on either side of a border are obviously different and business hour may vary. Various scales, or levels, of boundaries exist, and each of them has its own purpose. National boundaries have the most obvious impact on the natural environment, economic operations and patterns of socio-cultural interaction.

Border regions are „areas whose economic and social life is directly and significantly affected by proximity to an international boundary” (*Hansen, 1981*), and have a great potential for development of tourism. According to many studies tourism is very good developing in border areas (e.g. *Matznetter, 1979; Arreola and Curtis, 1989; Essex and Gibb, 1989; Galluser, 1994; Timothy, 2002, Więckowski, 2002, Więckowski, 2007*).

Borders related policies, differences in administrative structures on opposite sides, and the physical barrier created by borders can affect many aspects of tourism, including travel motivations and decision-making, infrastructural development, marketing and promotion as well as place image. One of the most ubiquitous forms of borderlands tourism is cross-border shopping (in Poland especially: grocery, outlet, alimentary products and variety stores).

Tourism space in borderland

Borders have a strong effect on tourism. In many areas we can observe contrasting development on two sides of a border. Borders influence the spatial development of tourism. Additionally, tourism also has strong effects on the border landscape.

First of all, contrasting development on two sides of a border can be created by different histories, different settlement patterns and urban structures, and socio-economic differences. Borders and the socio-political systems they enclose create contrasts in spatial and administrative patterns on opposite sides, differences in tourism patterns and landscapes across boundaries.

Differences in tourism patterns and landscapes across boundaries are often visible. In some places, tourism is heavily developed spatially adjacent to a border on one side but not on the other. The eastern borderlands of Poland and neighbouring countries are characterised by a weak tradition in tourism and a lack of regional „identity” as a tourist destination. The development of the new tourist space and infrastructure is possible thanks to the European funds and is observed mainly on the Polish side. There are many tourist routes – even nowadays – ending at the border, where, therefore, the possibility of getting acquainted with the territory of the neighbouring country terminated.

Tourism infrastructure does not exist on the Russian side. The existence of special permissions in the border zone is one of the most important problems for the

development of tourism. In the Kaliningrad Oblast, there exists a forbidden zone for people. In Vistula Spit, the forbidden zone extends 7 km from the border, while near the Russian-Lithuanian border it extends 13 km.

In the Polish borderland, especially in the eastern and western border zone, the service of border traffic as a primary function in endogenous development encompasses relatively small areas isolated from each other and widely dispersed along the border and in the immediate vicinity of the crossings thereof (see *table 1*). On the Polish-German border, contrasting development on two sides is also visible

Table 1

Opportunities, barriers and threats in tourist infrastructure on the Polish-German borderland

	Opportunities	Barriers and threats
Tourist infrastructure centres and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Developing supply and demand for domestic and foreign tourist services – Outstanding natural and cultural features plus attractive landscape as a foundation for the further development of tourism – Particularly valuable features for waterborne tourism (inland and sea) – Special conditions for health and spa-based tourism – Increased interest in buying land and second homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Low-standard accommodation base and supporting infrastructure – Difficulties with returning to a tradition in tourism and region's lack of "identity" among potential clients – Possible downgrading of some border areas to service transit traffic only – Short season and overburdening of some centres – "Takeover" of potential clients for borderland tourist services by more efficient and better-organised agencies on German side – Competition from alternative tourist areas close to borderland area – Inadequacy of pricing in relation to quality of services offered – Inadequacy of marketing of tourist centers and regions – Poor accessibility

Source: Węclawowicz, G. – Degórski, M. – Komornicki, T. – Korzeń, Ja. – Bański, J. – Korzeń, Ju. – Soja, R. – Śleszyński, P. – Więckowski, M. 2006.

In the comparison of the two sides of borderlands, the Polish side will be characterised by:

- low standard of accommodation base and support infrastructure and its strong concentration

- inadequacy of pricing in relation to the quality of services offered
- inadequacy of marketing of tourist centres and regions

On the German side, the tourism space can be characterised by:

- high standard of accommodation base, high prices and relatively regular spatial distribution of tourist infrastructure
- higher level of investments in the tourism sector
- more efficient and better-organized tourist agencies
- very good accessibility

Borders and the spatial development of tourism

Borders determine the nature of the tourist landscape and its elements that will develop in frontier regions. Borders can be viewed as: barriers, destinations and transit zones. Borders have a strong effect on tourism. Tourism can in many instances, help to create and alter the border landscape.

International boundaries can be viewed as barriers to travel from at least two perspectives: real and perceived. Many governments have established travel restrictions on their own citizens for a variety of reasons.

Border-related policies, differences in administrative structures on opposite sides, and the physical barriers created by borders can affect many aspects of tourism, including:

- travel motivations and decision making,
- infrastructure development,
- marketing and promotion,
- place image.

Borders are spatial barriers before the development of the transport network. Their impact as barriers to transport depends on the degree of formalisation and permeability. The action of boundary as a spatial barrier is most often expressed through institutions. The gradual reduction of frontier as a spatial barriers is envisaged, progressing along with spatial integration processes.

The type of border has an important influence on the development of tourism. The external borders of the EU with Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine appear as barriers to free travel. The Polish borders with Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Lithuania after Poland's accession to the European Union and to the Schengen Zone are changing their status, and come into existence as the fully open border. The frontiers of national parks appear as unique barriers to travel freely in borderlands.

Border crossing points are magnets for the development of tourism, especially in the border towns. One of the most ubiquitous forms of borderlands tourism is cross-border shopping.

The Polish-German border is simultaneously the zone of destination (especially for Germans) and the transit zone for others.

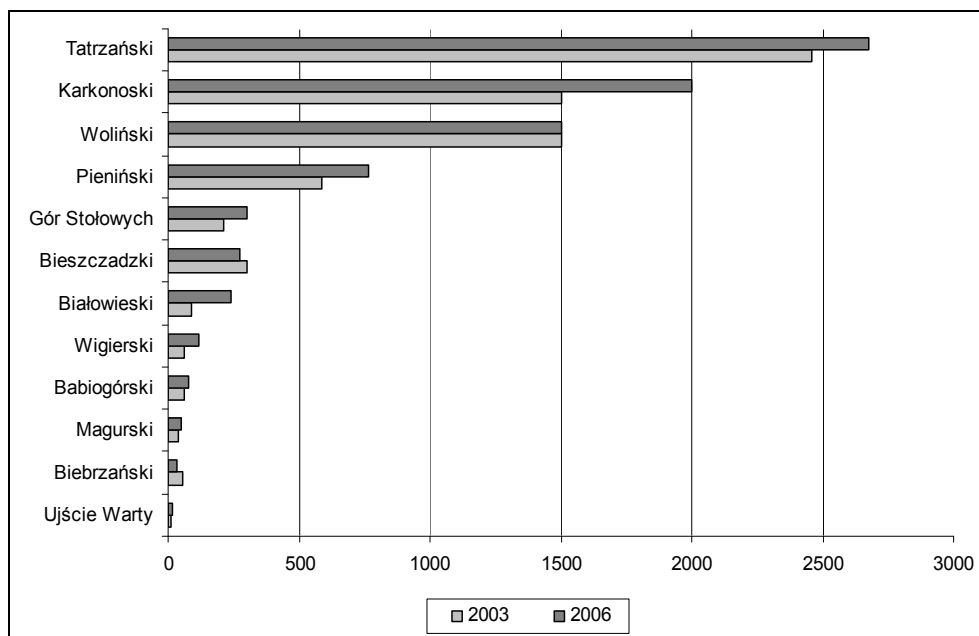
The Carpathian Mts., both in Poland and in Slovakia, constitute one of the most important tourist regions of the two countries. Over the decades the Polish and Slovak parts were being developed and used separately. There are many tourist routes – even nowadays – ending at the border, where, therefore, the possibility of getting acquainted with the territory of the neighbouring country terminates (The same situation exists on Polish–Czech borderlands). Tourist attractions on the border e.g. Dunajec Gorge and mountain ranges can better prosper thanks to the synergy effect.

Borders have a stronger effect on tourism, tourism can, and does in many instances, help to create and alter the border landscape. Borders determine the nature of the tourist landscape and its elements that will develop in frontier regions.

The main tourist destinations in the borderlands are border national parks. In many regions, tourists and hosts are often concentrated in areas commonly known as tourist districts, where the infrastructure, services, and other physical characteristics have developed largely as a result of tourism. The borderland areas present an ideal location for protected areas and tourism development. In most cases the border national parks constitute very important tourist regions. In Central and Eastern Europe many of the national parks are in a privileged situation near the state borders (*Denisiuk et al, 1997*). Nine from all 23 Polish national parks are adjacent to the state border. Three additional ones are situated near the border. Five parks from this number constitute international parks situated on both sides of the border (Karkonoski NP, Tatra NP, Bieszczadki NP, Pieniński NP, Białowiecki NP). In Poland more than 8 million people visit nine national parks adjacent to international borders each year (70% of the tourist flow in all national parks in the country). Poland's number one natural attraction – the Tatra National Park – receives around 3 million visitors a year. The National Park in the Karkonosze Mts. receives 2 million visitors a year. The Pieniny National Park make a destination for 800 thousand tourists (*Wieckowski, 2008*).

Figure 2

Number of tourists in national parks in Polish borderlands (thousand)



Source: Data from Ochrona Środowiska 2007

What future for tourism development in Polish border regions?

For the development of tourism in borderlands, the most important factors are:

- border crossings, (especially out of the Schengen Zone)
- tourist routes reaching the border crossings,
- tourist routes along the border, accessible for tourists from both countries,
- the appropriately adapted and located accommodation facilities,
- the consistent transport system, including coach and railway lines,
- common, mutually agreed tourist information and promotion
- the joint tourist offer for the development of international tourism.

In the next years, the type of border will have an important influence on the tourist development. The Polish borders with Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Lithuania after Poland's accession to the European Union and to the Schengen Zone change their status, and come to existence as fully open borders.

The prospect of Poland joining the Schengen Agreement determines the potential spatial effects of the changes in the magnitude of movement on the border inside of the European Union. Joining the agreement will signify that all border checkpoints are closed down, as well as allowing for the possibility of crossing the border in any place. On borders, many old check-points exist, most of them useless. Only some of them have been turned into tourist centres or information points, retail outlets trading with regional products or restaurants, especially in the national parks.

The increase in movement may require the further development of trans-boundary transport infrastructure (also for pedestrians and cyclists). The cessation of passport control will have specific effects on the labour market, parallel to those generated by the removal of customs clearance in 2004. This may lead to growth in economic activity in the areas immediately adjacent to the border as a result of the disappearance of restrictions as well as psychological barriers.

The external borders of the European Union with the Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine appear as barriers to free travel and the development of tourism purposes. These borders will probably remain a marginal tourist destination, excepting some cases.

Summary

The paper presents selected problems of the development of tourist space in Polish borderlands. International boundaries may have significant implications for tourism, especially in terms of planning, promotion, and taxation. The borders influence tourism in many more ways. The flow of tourists, their choice of destinations, planning and physical development of tourism, and the types and extent of marketing campaigns are all affected by the nature of political boundaries.

First of all the borders constitute spatial barriers for tourism development. Their impact as barriers for tourism depends on the degree of formalisation and permeability. The action of boundary as a spatial barrier is most often expressed through institutions. The gradual reduction of the frontier as a spatial barrier is envisaged, progressing along with spatial integration processes.

Borders can be main tourist destinations, thanks to cross-border shopping, specialised services, welcome centres, health tourism and transit zones. The borderland areas are ideal locations for tourism development. In most cases the borderlands constitute very important tourist regions. They are attractive areas in terms of nature, landscape and tourism, owing to which anthropogenic pressure is amplified along with the tourist traffic, while on the other hand, there exists a strongly developed need for the protection of these areas. As a matter of fact, nine of Poland's national parks are situated along national boundaries. Two additional parks are

adjacent to the sea frontier, and three are situated near the border. To demonstrate the scale of tourism in national parks in borderlands, this article shows and explains the number of visitors in these areas. More than 8 million people visit twelve national parks adjacent to the international borders each year (70% of the tourist flow in all national parks in Poland).

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