

Geographies of Tourism and Global Change

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Gabriel Gach  
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# Cross-Border Tourism in Protected Areas

Potentials, Pitfalls and Perspectives



 Springer

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ISSN 2366-5610 ISSN 2366-5629 (electronic)  
Geographies of Tourism and Global Change  
ISBN 978-3-030-05960-6 ISBN 978-3-030-05961-3 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-05961-3>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018964694

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# Foreword

The problem of tourism in protected areas in the European Union is very important both for tourists and organizations managing such territories. Unfortunately, their goals are almost totally incompatible. Tourists would like to use protected areas to spend free time or holidays, and parks are trying to preserve the uniqueness of their natural environment for future generations.

There are some places in Europe where protected areas are very close to each other but placed in different countries. Therefore, an interesting question is whether the neighborhood of parks influences the development of cross-border tourism. Such a problem was tackled by the authors of this book which I reviewed. They conducted their research on the example of two National Parks “Unteres Odertal” (Lower Oder Valley) in Germany and “Ujście Warty” (Wartha Mouth) in Poland. Despite the fact that the distance between these two areas is less than 70 km and that their natural characteristics are very similar, the differences in infrastructure and in the number of visitors in both parks are huge. The authors were also interested in the opinions of potential visitors about the possibilities of spending time in parks on the other side of the border. Based on the representative online source market survey carried out, the researchers evaluated factors determining cross-border tourism in Poland and Germany (including stereotypes and prejudices). Due to the use of adequate quantitative analyses, the research is well-founded.

In my opinion, the research presented in this book is very useful not only for the scientific community but also for government institutions, tourist agencies, local entrepreneurs, and park visitors. In addition, this book is also a step forward in the development of the scientific cross-border cooperation between Poland and Germany.

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# Preface and Acknowledgements

This volume is the final report of the Polish-German project “TAPA—Tourist Activities in Protected Areas,” generously funded by the German-Polish Science Foundation and the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation. Polish and German researchers with different scientific backgrounds who participated in the project and conducted the several activities that led to this scientific contribution are responsible for this volume. It presents empirical findings about Polish-German border studies with a special focus on nature-based and cross-border tourism between these two countries.

The authors would like to thank the following people and organizations for making this effort possible:

First, we thank both of the aforementioned funding organizations for supporting the TAPA-project. Were it not for the financial support from the German-Polish Science Foundation and the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation this monograph would not be published.

DEUTSCH  
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NA RZECZ NAUKI



FUNDACJA WSPÓŁPRACY  
POLSKO-NIEMIECKIEJ  
STIFTUNG  
FÜR DEUTSCH-POLNISCHE  
ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Also, we would like to thank Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Steingrube for initiating the project and his continuing support.

We thank both National Parks (Unteres Odertal and Ujście Warty) for showing interest in this project and helping throughout its implementation, especially for organizing the workshops.

We would also like to thank all the participants in the workshops and the final conference, including students as well as stakeholders and, of course, the speakers.

A special thanks go to Prof. Dr. Ulf Liebe and Dr. Jürgen Meyerhoff for their very helpful ideas and comments on our questionnaire and to all respondents in our survey.

Finally, we would like to thank Dipl.-Geogr. Jörg Hartleib for providing our maps, Prof. Dr. Daniel Metzler (†) for his kind help with the data preparation in R, and Dr. Johannes Schamel and Julius Brandt, M.Sc., for their invaluable help in the GIS analyses.

Paul C. Kersey Johnson did an incredible job in very meticulously language editing this book. We are highly indebted to his extraordinary efforts.

Finally, yet importantly, we would like to thank our families for the support during the long process of creating this work.

Greifswald, Germany  
Szczecin, Poland  
Poznań, Poland  
Pulheim, Germany  
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# About This Book

Since the Schengen Treaty came into full effect in Poland in December 2007, national borders should no longer restrict cross-border travel between Poland and Germany, so one might expect that the separating effects of the border on recreational activities would be strongly diminished. However, recent studies show that very little international tourism actually occurs in the protected areas along this border, even though some of them are located on or near this division and close to the agglomeration areas of Szczecin, Poland, and Berlin, Germany. Thus, it seems obvious that it still functions as a mental and cultural barrier, though this phenomenon has not yet been examined adequately. For this reason, we analyze the barriers to cross-border tourism for the case of protected areas along the Polish-German border by evaluating various influencing factors (including level of information, prejudices, perceptions of the border, spatial and cultural distance, country images, and sociodemographic variables like income, level of education, and travel experience), whose relative importance it was urgent to identify. These protected areas constitute an ideal case because the landscapes on both sides are quite similar and could easily be overlooked as factors that mediate travel decisions.

The book focuses conceptually, and from an interdisciplinary perspective, on three central topics: tourism and borders, the geography of prejudices and stereotypes, and tourism in protected areas. While several publications stress the importance of the field of tourism and border research and underscore the progress that has been made within it, our review suggests that tourism does not play a prominent role in the field of border studies in general. In contrast to that field, the geography of prejudices and stereotypes is an emerging area that could contribute to improving our understanding of the mental barrier effect of borders. However, few contributions to this field have addressed tourism and recreation issues in a quantitative matter. Therefore, our aim was to bring this research topic together with the more highly developed research on tourism and borders in order to strengthen the social and political geography of tourism. Unlike the geography of prejudice, tourism in protected areas is already an important topic in discourses on sustainable tourism. Cross-border tourism in protected areas, however, is an issue that to date has been addressed only scantily and mostly for the special case of transboundary

protected areas. Our extended literature review reveals that our core research question has not yet been covered; namely, in what way do borders and related barriers influence visitation to protected areas situated along, or near, borders? Also, because most studies on tourism in protected areas are destination-based, representative surveys in source areas are rare and seldom comprehensive.

In general, then, this book seeks to fill in gaps that have been identified in related research. Additional aims are to advance the study of the broader relationship between borders and tourism while stressing the exemplary case of tourism in protected areas. This characterizes our approach to the analysis of the influences of perceived versus spatial versus cultural/emotional distances on the tendency to pursue recreational activities in a neighboring country. Our expectation is to make progress in conceptualizing tourism and borders and cross-border tourism in protected areas by, first, proposing a new analytical framework for understanding travel barriers that exist—even in contexts of open borders (like those between Schengen countries)—and, second, testing this approach empirically. Our survey design could easily be transferred to, and applied in, different border situations or other destination types, allowing comparability of results over various contexts.

The survey area of this study is the Polish-German border region. About 6.5 million people live in this sparsely populated and structurally weak area, which is attractive for tourism and recreation from a landscape perspective. Directly adjacent to the border, there are the two quite similar national parks: Lower Oder Valley (Germany) and Ujście Warty (Poland). As noted earlier, the tourism potential of these parks is not fully realized because the nearest source markets (spatial distance) on the other side of the border do not generate the visitor flows that would be expected given the spatial proximity.

In the context of these preconditions, we analyzed the barrier effect of the border between the two countries in a joint Polish-German survey. The detailed research questions were as follows:

- How do respondents perceive the Polish-German border from their distinct perspectives?
- How often, and for what reasons, do respondents cross the border to the other country, and what role do recreation, leisure, and tourism play in this context?
- What cognitive, emotional, and intentional country images do respondents attribute to the neighboring country (also in a tourism context)?
- What prejudices and attitudinal barriers exist on both sides of the border that might impede the intensification of visitor flows?
- Does the contact hypothesis hold true for respondents in the Polish and German border area?
- How interested are residents of the Polish-German border area in recreation in protected areas?
- How well known are the protected areas of different categories on both sides of the border?
- How often do the Polish and German respondents visit domestic protected areas and parks in the neighboring country?

- Do respondents who visit protected areas in the other nations differ in their personal characteristics and attitudes?
- What are the tourism potentials of the two National Parks studied: Lower Oder Valley (NPLOV) and Ujście Warty (NPUW)?
- What is the overall barrier effect of the Polish-German border on tourism and recreation as exemplified by the case of protected areas?

To answer these research questions, we conducted a representative online survey in the Polish voivodeships of Zachodniopomorskie and Lubuskie and in eleven German counties (including Berlin) located close to the border. A total of 1312 respondents were asked about their knowledge on, and interest in, protected areas in both countries, their travel behavior (in relation to the neighboring country), their perception of the border, their emotional, cognitive, and intentional image attributes of the neighboring country, and their degree of agreement with pointed statements about it. We measured prejudices using cognitive context framing to reduce the social desirability bias. In addition, we conducted a simple choice task in which the respondents had to select two protected areas that they could, hypothetically, visit on a day trip or weekend trip. In this way, we tested how the distance to their residence, the protected area category, and the image of this area influences destination choice, and whether or not the location in Poland or Germany (and potentially existing prejudices) is decisive.

The mostly quantitative results of the survey shed light on the role of the broad spectrum of potential influencing factors on the preferences to pursue recreational activities in protected areas of the neighboring country mentioned above. Therefore, we contrast the effects of prejudices, spatial and cultural distance, country image, personal travel experience, varying price levels, and information level, among other key factors.

The book, which is based on the project “Tourist Activities in Protected Areas” (TAPA), funded by the German-Polish Science Foundation and the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation, presents and discusses the results of this comprehensive and representative survey about cross-border tourism between Poland and Germany. Finally, it draws conclusions for the theoretical and conceptual background and gives practical implications for tourism and protected area management.

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# Abbreviations

AGEG/AEBR	Arbeitsgemeinschaft Europäischer Grenzregionen/Association of European Border Regions
ANOVA	Analysis of variances
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BR	Biosphere Reserve
CF	Cohesion Fund
Chap.	Chapter
DE	Deutschland/Germany
df	Degrees of freedom
DVS	Deutsche Vernetzungsstelle Ländlicher Räume
e.g.	Exempli gratia
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
ECOWAS	West African Economic Community
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
ENVIREG	Regional Action Programme on the Initiative of the Commission Concerning the Environment
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EU	European Union
Fig.	Figure
GDP	Gross domestic product
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GER	Germany
GIS	Geoinformation System
GoP	Germans on Poland
GUS	Central Statistical Office of Poland
i.e.	Id est
IAPA	Internationally adjacent protected areas

ISP	Polish-German Barometer
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
km	Kilometer
LEADER	Liaison entre des actions de développement de l'économie rurale/connection among rural development actions
LP	Landscape Park (Poland)
MD	Mean difference
MDJEV	Ministerium der Justiz und für Europa und Verbraucherschutz Brandenburg
MV	Mean value
n	Size of statistical sample
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreements
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization(s)
NLP	National Park
NLPUO	Nationalpark Unteres Odertal, Germany
no.	Number
NP	Nature Park (Germany)
NPLOV	Lower Oder Valley National Park
NPUW	National Park Ujście Warty, Poland
NUTS	Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques
p	p value or probability value or asymptotic significance
PA	Protected area(s)
PL	Poland
PLN	Polish Złoty New
PoG	Poles on Germany
RDOS	Regionalna Dyrekcja Ochrony Środowiska w Szczecinie
R <sub>p</sub>	Pearson's rho
R <sub>s</sub>	Spearman's rho
SD	Standard deviation
Sig.	Significance
Std. Error	Standard error
Tab.	Table
TBPA	Transboundary protected area
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
USD	US dollar
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VAT	Value-added tax
VIF	Variance inflation factor
vs.	Versus
WUTZ	International Tourism Utilities Index

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# Chapter 1

## Barrier Effects of the Polish-German Border on Tourism and Recreation: The Case of Protected Areas. An Introduction



### 1.1 Introduction

Since the Schengen Treaty came into full effect in Poland on December 21, 2007, national borders should no longer restrict cross-border travel between European Union (EU) countries like Poland and Germany (Scott, 2012; Siebold, 2013; Wachowiak, 2014). Therefore, it could be expected that the separating effects of the border on tourism and leisure activities<sup>1</sup> would have diminished clearly since that date (Brähmig, 2014; Wachowiak, 2014; Więckowski & Cerić, 2016). However, while this is reflected to some degree in the growing number of Polish tourists that visit Germany and vice versa (see Sect. 4.4), Rein and Baláš (2015) recently showed that very little cross-border tourism occurs in the protected areas along the Polish-German border. For instance, Germany's Lower Oder Valley National Park (NPLOV) has a proportion of Polish visitors of only 1.5%, even though it is located directly on the border, closer to the Polish agglomeration area of Szczecin (with over 500,000 inhabitants) than to Berlin (Chap. 5). However, this result might be not surprising, given that 66% of German respondents and even 70% of Polish respondents indicated in a recent nation-wide representative survey that they have not visited the neighboring country so far (since 1989) (Körber-Stiftung, Institut für Öffentliche Angelegenheiten, & Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2018). This suggests that the internal border in the heart of the enlarged post-cold war EU, though functionally inexistent in terms of travel constraints, continues to serve as a mental and cultural barrier to tourism (Strüver, 2002, 2004; Timothy, 2006; Timothy & Tosun, 2003). As Strüver points out (2004, p. 628): "Despite the removal of borders it seems that people's perceptions of borders and their contiguous regions impede achieving 'borderlessness'"

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<sup>1</sup>The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (2018) reports that a German municipality on the Austrian border suffers traffic jams caused by border controls that were re-established in the wake of the 2015/16 migration crisis. This case study exemplifies the barrier effect of borders.

and cross-border interaction”. This is not surprising, given the complex history of the Polish-German border, which came into existence in its present form in 1945, has almost always been closed (until 1989), and was not officially recognized by the Federal Republic of Germany until 1989 (though the German Democratic Republic (GDR) accepted it in 1953). Since 1990 it served as external border of the European Union to ‘the east’ until the EU expanded to include countries in Central and Eastern Europe in 2004. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989/90, relations between Poland and Germany have improved considerably with levels of political, social, economic and cultural interaction increasing significantly (Best, 2007, 2012; Krajewski, 2018; Więckowski, 2018, see Sect. 4.2). Thus, their mutual border serves as a typical example of both the ambiguous nature of borders that, in general, function simultaneously as separating and connecting institutions (Anderson & O’Dowd, 1999; Diener & Hagen, 2012; Scott, 2011), and of the, sometimes, rapidly-changing nature and face of borders as man-made—not naturally-determined—constructs (Newman, 2011; Wilson & Donnan, 2012a; von Löwis, 2015; see also Chap. 2).

However, does the fact that Polish tourists represent only a marginal share of visitors to a German national park that borders directly on their country constitute an important problem? The answer is ‘yes and no’, because answers differ depending on one’s perspective. From an ecological view, low visitor frequency might be regarded as positive because it reduces the probability of disturbing effects on wildlife and other negative environmental impacts of nature-based outdoor recreation (Job & Vogt, 2003; Whittaker & Knight, 1998). Fewer visitors also diminish the risk of what some people perceive negatively as crowding (Schamel & Job, 2013). From a national economic perspective, the importance of several thousand “missing” park visitors is negligible given the overall level of international tourism between Poland and Germany (see Sect. 4.4). However, as we argue in this introduction, this view could be shortsighted. Mayer and Woltering (2018), for example, have shown that the spatial demand curves of national park visitors in Germany are often L-shaped, meaning that the highest visitor shares come from the immediate vicinity of the parks in the form of local and day-visitors. As this also holds true for the NPLOV on the German side, it is obvious that this park does not fulfill its total expected visitor potential due to the marked absence of Polish visitors. The nearest source markets (spatially-speaking) on the other side do not generate the visitor flows that would be expected given their proximity. This has consequences for both the recreational ecosystem services offered at the park, which depend largely on the absolute number of visitor days (Mayer & Woltering, 2018), and for the Polish people in the potential hinterland of the park who do not profit from the park’s recreational experiences, even though it may well be closer to their places of residence than any Polish park. Concerning the regional economic impacts of park tourism, which are also heavily-driven by visitation numbers (Woltering, 2012), this national park region does not profit to the extent predicted if penetration from the Polish source market were better. As it is highly likely that this is true for most other protected areas in the border region