

POSSIBILITIES OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ON POLISH EASTERN BORDERLAND: EXPECTATIONS VERSUS POTENTIAL

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Abstract: Eastern border communes of Lublin Province are of clearly peripheral character. Low level of development, represented by employment structure dominated by agriculture, stimulates search for new directions of growth. Surveyed inhabitants of the border region point to tourism as the main future growth direction and income-generator. The aim of the paper is to confront these expectations with potential of growth of tourism in the region, through examination of its present tourist resources and infrastructure and predictions concerning their future use.

Key words: tourism, borderland, development, less-favoured regions

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Introduction

Lublin Province is one of administrative units of the first order in Poland. Its eastern border is a state and European Union border at a time. Relatively low permeability of the border, along with economic peripherisation, weak transportation infrastructure and strictly agricultural character of the region, deprive the region of development possibilities are usually associated with border location. The region is also characterised by the lowest income per capita in Poland, triggering high outmigration.

At least since the economic and political transformation connected with the fall of communism in 1989, the region is searching for its way of development. However, the fate of Lublin, quite successful capital city of the region, is very much different from what may be wished to become the road to success for its eastern fringe. Interestingly, significant part of the interviewed inhabitants of the typically agricultural region, possessing one of the highest coefficients of agricultural productive space in the country, point out to tourism, not agriculture, as one of the main directions of development, expected to bring considerable profits.

The main aim of this paper is to confront possibilities of tourism development in the eastern part of the Lublin Province with the expectations of inhabitants of the region. The latter is supported by the questionnaire survey conducted among the population of selected border communes and interviews with the employees of particular communes' councils, collected during the research project "The influence of the state border on the directions of socio-economic development in the eastern part of Lublin Province"¹.

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Research area

The area of concern comprises all twenty border communes of Lubelskie Province (see fig. 1). There exist three settlements with town status on the area: Hrubieszów, Włodawa and Terespol, although all of relatively small size (19, 14 and 6 thousand inhabitants, respectively). An average village on the area usually has circa 250 inhabitants. Only five of the researched communes witnessed population growth over the period of 1970-2006. Three of them were towns mentioned above, where net growth exceeded 20%, next two were communes neighbouring the towns of Włodawa and Tomaszów Lubelski, the latter falling beyond the scope of the hereby analysis. In 11 out of 15 remaining communes the net population decrease exceeded 20%. Negative tendencies are also clearly visible in rates of natural increase (only five communes with positive values), extremely low and gradually declining fertility (1.3 in 2006), net migration rate (negative in 17 communes), distorted age and sex structure with high shares of the elderly (18% on average in the region, while in some communes even over 25%), and with comparatively high proportion of males (in some communes, including Hanna, Ruda-Huta and Lubycza Królewska, feminisation coefficient falls even below 100). Backwardness of the region is also reflected in its educational structure, with the share of basic education at 44% and tertiary education at merely 4%. Hence, the peripheral character of the whole research area is clearly visible in population characteristics.

In the employment structure of the region absolute domination of agriculture is the most striking feature. It results from three factors. The first one is very good quality of natural conditions for agriculture, with high share of loess-based soils and high solar operation, both reflected in coefficient of agricultural productive space exceeding 90 points (100 is the maximum) in seven communes in the southern end of the research area. The second factor is low average area and high fragmentation of farms in the region – it results in low level of mechanisation, large employment in agriculture, and, consequently, share of farms of high self-subsistence level is serious and production profitability level is low. Traditional farming methods, shortage of capital and low level of farmers' education prevent them from quick improvement of the situation. The last factor is peripheral location of communes that did not attract industrial investment and other enterprises, therefore agriculture remained the main mission of the region. The only exploited mineral resources are construction materials like sand, gravel, clay and loam (Raport..., 2001). The southern communes are situated in the zone of carbon resources of Lublin Coal Basin spreading from Parczew area up to Ukraine, however, coal is not mined here.

In eight selected communes of the research area detailed survey was conducted at the turn of 2007/2008 and opinions of 835 interviewees were collected. The questionnaire was run in cooperation with primary and lower-secondary schools, which resulted from technical reasons – the pace of receiving feedback and credibility of the obtained responses were to be guaranteed by cooperation with the head teachers of the above mentioned schools. As a result, the majority of respondents were parents of the schools' students, so the most numerous representation was people aged 36-45 (44% of the surveyed) and as much as 66.3% of respondents were women. Over 40% of the questioned were people of a secondary school background and 21% of an academic background, which in relation to the average in rural areas is a very high value. The reason lies in the fact that the questionnaire was carried out in the communes central sites, where the share of relatively well-educated people is higher than on average. The largest vocational group was made up hired workers with a relatively good background (33.3% of the surveyed), while the group of farmers with low level of education was almost as numerous (28.5%).

Attitudes of borderland inhabitants towards border location and border checkpoints' functions were of main concern of the survey, although future development chances of communes constituted an important part of the whole construction. Three of

the communes Terespol, Ruda-Huta and Dorohusk) are located in the vicinity of border checkpoints, therefore possessing relatively high development potential thanks to main transportation routes crossing their area. Remaining five communes (Sławatycze, Hanna, Mircze, Dołhobyczów, Ułhówek) are of peripheral location and low growth potential, consequently.

Tourism development expectations

Among the survey questions one of the most important from the perspective of the future of the communes were those concerning chances and barriers to commune development. The surveyed were asked to point out to not more than three possibilities. Clean environment occurred to be perceived as the most promising chance with over 61.7% of votes, followed by borderland location (43.5%) and tourist attractions (42.4%). Aside from the third one, also the first of said choices may be interpreted as referring to tourism. The only option that might be associated with the presently most important economic sector of the region gained fifth position with 36% of votes.

Answers to the question concerning barriers for development showed, that shortage of investments, results in maintaining the region's mono-functional character and agricultural economy, is definitely the most severe for the surveyed, with as much as 71.5% answers. Next answers were low level of social and technical infrastructure provision (44.1%) and agricultural character of the commune (31.3%). Hence, almost one third of the surveyed indirectly identifies activities connected with agriculture, being the most natural and obvious part of the region economy, with barriers, not with chances.

A reasonable supplement to chances and barriers debate outlined above appeared in a form of answers to the question concerning future directions of development for the communes. Tourism and recreation occupied the first place with 55% of answers, while agriculture with 49.1% was the second, followed by trade and services (43%), industry (30.7%) and forestry (9.2%). When examined on the level of particular communes, only in two strictly agricultural ones located in the southern edge of the studied area (Mircze and Ułhówek) tourism is not the first expectation – it is replaced by agriculture.

The said questionnaire was supplemented by interviews with representatives of local administration and self-government to ensure mutual credibility and comparability of inhabitants' and authorities' opinions. According to interviewed local officials, the studied communes are mainly of agricultural character and no significant changes are expected in the near future in this respect. However, it is hoped that tourist function will gradually increase and that it will be based mostly on agro-tourist services and second houses development. The interviewees point to the fact, that second houses, belonging mostly to the inhabitants from Warsaw, Lublin and Chelm, have already started appearing in attractive tourist areas such as the valley of the Bug River, border river with Ukraine and Belarus.

It seems clear, that main development expectations and activities perceived attractive for the studied communes do not fit their present economic situation. Such an economic transformation from one sector to another, although theoretically possible and observed in some cases² (see for instance Warszńska, Jackowski 1979), needs particular circumstances and first of all requires possessing important tourist attractions. If they are intended and expected to seriously stimulate region's growth, they should be able to induce mass tourist inflow. Otherwise such expectations may be described as wishful thinking. The next chapter will present main tourist attractions of the borderland and try to evaluate their attraction potential.

² The authors describe transformation of the Hawaii Islands from pineapple and sugar cane farming to main tourist destination in the region. In 1950 tourism yielded 19% of sugar cane revenue, while 10 years later already 103%.

Multicultural past of the region and its implications

The present Polish-Ukrainian borderland used to numerously change its political affiliation over centuries. In the early stages of Polish statehood it belonged either to Poland or to its southeastern neighbour – Ruthenia, prevailingly to the latter. Also in 12th and 13th century, during the period of fragmentation of Poland into several duchies, the research area did not form a part of any of them. Only in the second half of the 14th century, at the dusk of Piast dynasty, southern part of present borderland became Polish again, while the northern belonged to the Great Duchy of Lithuania. Such a situation, with minor changes, lasted until the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569, when all the present Polish-Ukrainian borderland became part of the confederal state, however, still maintaining the division between the Crown (Poland) and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Partition time in the late 18th century brought about a series of changes. Almost the whole region became part of Habsburg Empire, then co-formed the Duchy of Warsaw in the Napoleonic period, later on the Congress Kingdom of Poland, dependant on tsarist empire. All that time it was of border character, neighbouring areas subdued directly by Russia. Since Poland gained independence after World War I, the whole research area became part of Poland. Significant shifts of state borders that took place after World War II did not directly affect the region, it remained Polish. However, its border location returned (Atlas... 1996).

As outlined above, over the span of history the research area belonged mostly to Poland. Despite that fact, in ethnic or religious terms it was not homogenous at all. Poles, Lithuanians and Ruthenians together formed the ethnic structure of the region, additionally enriched by less numerous Belarusians, Jews, Tatars and Germans. Since mid-11th century the area was inhabited by followers of the Orthodox denomination. 16th century was the peak of religious freedom in Poland, supporting large number of European Jews. In 1596 the Brest Union finally succeeded to subordinate a significant part of the Orthodox Church in Poland to the Catholic Church. Hence, Uniates along with Roman Catholics, Orthodox Church and Jews constituted the religious structure of the inhabitants, locally supplemented by Protestants. Partition time witnessed significant revival of the Orthodox Church in Poland. The Uniate Church was incorporated into the Orthodox Church, which was dependent on the Patriarch of Moscow (Czerwonka 2007). It was clearly one of the elements of Russification policy, as the Orthodox Church and Russian state have always supported one another.

The 20th century was the time of important changes of both ethnic and religious structures of the region. Also material culture of most of these groups, that were present at the present borderland of Poland for many ages, drastically diminished. The Orthodox Church was always perceived in Poland as an inner threat, because it had strong relations with the Russian Orthodox Church (Przybył, 2000, Czerwonka 2007). Interwar Poland observed a composition of activities aiming at decline of the Orthodox Church position, including a state-driven action of demolition and burning of churches in these villages, where Orthodox followers did not decide to change denomination to either Catholic or neo-Uniate (Kuprianowicz 2008). The total number of destroyed Orthodox churches in the research area was 114, while next about 500 were seized by Catholic Church, and only 10 Orthodox churches survived until the outbreak of World War II (Wesołowska 2007).

During the World War II most of the Jew population was exterminated. Post-war border shifts and displacement of almost half a million Ukrainians to the Soviet Union and the remaining ones to the Western Territories, enabled transformation of Poland into nation-state (Barwiński 2006). At a time, vast majority of Orthodox and Uniate followers left the region, so the religious structure also headed for homogeneity. Most neo-Uniate parishes were closed down and their churches were converted into either Roman Catholic

or Orthodox churches. At present, only a few hundred people declare Ukrainian or Belarusian nationality in the region and number of non-Roman Catholic followers is also insignificant³. There is no clear correlation between denomination and national belonging, especially in the northern part of the borderland, where most non-Roman Catholics are Polish (Czerwonka 2007).

Tourist resources of the research area

On the Polish-Ukrainian borderland, both natural and non-natural tourist resources can be distinguished. The first of these two main groups encompasses attractive landscapes of river valley and forest areas, there is also a number of small lakes, although the area is deprived of typical mass-tourism pull factors like seashore or alpine-type mountains. Instead, a remarkable part of the borderland area provides space for slowly developing agritourism and also for qualified tourism, mainly for hiking, horse-riding, bike-riding or fishing. Non-natural resources of the research area, evidently attracting more tourists than the natural ones, consist of religious objects, representing by far the largest group, and also fortifications, palaces, manor-houses, and museums.

One of the main tourist attractions of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland is its multicultural past. Today, it is gradually rebuild and rediscovered. The most notable signs of the material culture are temples of various denominations, who used to have an identifying function for respective minorities (Wesołowska 2007). As many as 146 temples were identified on the area of border communes by Osmólska (2005). Over 76% of them belong to the Roman Catholic Church and the most notable church is the sanctuary located in Kodeń. The church was built there in the 17th century, originally as an Orthodox one. Then it changed several times the denomination it served, and now it is the main pilgrimage centre of Roman Catholics in the eastern part of Poland.

In 2005 there existed 18 Orthodox churches in the borderland. However, new temples are build in the region, some funded by the co-worshippers from abroad, like in Kodeń in 2007 (Matreńczyk 2007). They replace so called houses of prayer – private houses that used to serve as places of Sunday service and prayer in the absence of a church. Other churches, taken over by the Catholic Church shortly after World War II, are gradually taken back by the Orthodox Church. They have been in quite pitiful condition, although they are consistently rebuilt (Czerwonka 2007). The most important site of the Orthodox rite is a monastery rebuild in the 19th century in Jabłeczna, with 12th-century icons. After the Brest Union the importance of Jabłeczna markedly increased, because the monastery was one of few sacred places that did not join the Union. Since 1974 it hosts an Orthodox Church Seminary and now it is one of the most important pilgrimage centres in the eastern Poland.

There exist 6 Uniate churches in the southern part of the borderland, that used to belong to Habsburg Empire during partition period. They were saved because of rather good situation of the Uniates under the Austrian rule. The Habsburgs saw the Union as a natural obstacle for Russian influences on their borderland and let or even helped Uniates develop (Lewandowski 1996). Since World War II, part of these churches have been transformed either into Catholic or Orthodox churches, and most of the remaining ones were dismantled or demolished. To date, two churches are used by the Uniates and Catholics, simultaneously. In the northern part of the borderland there exists the only one in Poland neo-Uniate church, located in Kostomłoty, built from wood in the 17th century. The church itself, because of its uniqueness, attracts tourists from all over the country. Their number is estimated at around 60-70 thousand yearly.

³ Only 389 people declared Ukrainian nationality and 137 Belarusian nationality in the whole of Lubelskie Province during the 2002 census (Central... 2003)

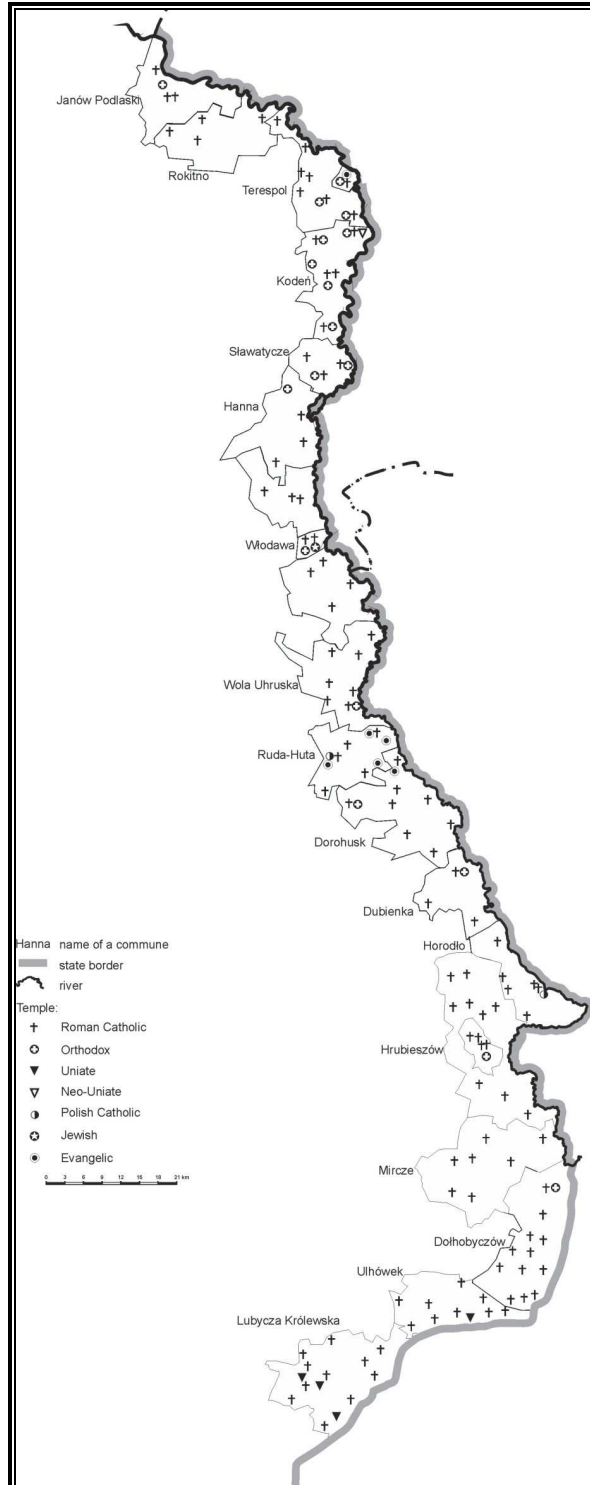


Figure 1. Distribution of temples in border communes of Lubelskie Province

Source: Wesolowska M. 2007, Temples – Witnesses of Multiconfessionalism of Eastern Communes in Lublin Voivodship. In: European multiculturalism as a challenge – policies, successes and failures. Ed. W.Janicki, Lublin, p.281-292

Most of the temples are accompanied by cemeteries. However, the most attractive cemetery, mostly because of its uniqueness, is a Muslim cemetery in Lebedziew. It is one of sparse remnants of Muslim settlement in Polesie region, where in late 14th century, and more importantly, after Polish-Turkish wars of late 17th century, a few thousand of Tatars moved to (Janicki 1999). The cemetery is neglected, raw-stone tombstones, some with rich oriental ornaments and Cyrillic inscriptions, become overgrown with grass and bush. The oldest tombstone is dated at 1704, and since before World War I the cemetery has not been in use any more (Rąkowski 1996).

Apart from Roman Catholic, Uniate and Orthodox churches, Wesołowska (2007) describes also seven Protestant churches, two Polish Catholic ones, and two former synagogues, presently hosting a local museum in Włodawa.

Temples, monasteries and sanctuaries play a significant role in the region as tourist attractions. Especially many people regularly visit these places, which acquired status of pilgrimage centres, mostly thanks to miraculous paintings. They include Kodeń, Kostomłoty and Jabłeczna, each of national importance. Even some of the temples that were partly destroyed, attract tourist because of sentimental reasons. Others were transformed into objects serving different purposes, among them both Jewish synagogues in Włodawa, hosting the Museum of Łęczyńsko-Włodawskie Lakeland and therefore attracting tourists. Some of these temples are on the track of probably the most fascinating hiking trail in the borderland: *The Trail of Friendship on the Bug River*. It crosses the region longitudinally and exposes multiconfessionality of the region. There have been created several projects of new trails, most of which step by at least some of the region's sacred buildings. The most promising are *Spiritual Journey on the Bug River*, *The Trail of Churches on the Bug River*, *The Trail of Temples on the Bug River*, *The Trail of Chapels and Wayside Statues on the Bug River* (Wesołowska 2007).



Figure 2. Memorial located in Kostomłoty, on neo-Uniate church grounds: 400 years of the Brest Union, 1596 – 1996 (photograph by the author)

The temples themselves and their surroundings may also serve as proofs of rich and tough history of the region, and on that account they might constitute basis for

historical tourism. Co-existence between followers of various denominations has never been straightforward, and also now it is not free from mutual distrust. Relations are especially tense between Orthodox followers and Uniates, the latter often being perceived by the former as splitters and traitors. As Czerwonka puts it, “(...) *the mutual relations are hostile*” (2007, p. 277). Two monuments memorising the same event, already mentioned Union of Brest, are located less than 30 kilometres by car from each other and they memorise it in quite a different manner (see fig.2 and fig.3). Despite far from mutual understanding and cooperation, this may be perceived as local attraction, being a testimony to the past so difficult for both cultures.



Figure 3. Memorial located in Jableczna, on Orthodox monastery grounds:
*To the memory of the Orthodox Church members,
victims of tragic for Christianity Union of Brest* (photograph by the author)

Not only rivalry of different denominations left its traces in the region. In Sobibór, in the close vicinity of Włodawa, there existed Nazi extermination camp in 1942-1943. About 250 thousand people, almost exclusively local Jews, were murdered there by gasification and buried in trenches. The only goal of the camp, unlike concentration camps that exploited their prisoners also as gratuitous labour force before extermination, was to annihilate Jewish population. Presently, the former camp area is overgrown by pine forest and virtually no indication of Nazi activity is visible here. The only signs of the presence of the camp is the museum with saved documents, two statues, and remembrance lane commemorating the murdered. It is of doubtful value as tourist “attraction”, however people from all over the world visit this place, although in low numbers.



Figure 4. Remembrance lane on the area of former Sobibór extermination camp. Each of the stones is a symbolic grave of one or more people (photograph by the author)

Aside of sacred buildings having witnessed multiconfessional past of the region, also many non-religious objects are located in the region. The most important are with no doubt palaces and manor-houses representing various styles and epochs, and also small forts. They are usually surrounded by parks, some of them still retaining original, old style. The most impressing examples may be found in Terespol and its vicinity (huge Brest fortress: 31-elements-network of stone-made fortifications built in 19th century), Dorohusk (18th century baroque residence with a park, formerly a castle), Kodeń (remnants of 16th century castle), Romanów (19th century manor-house, presently a museum of J.I.Kraszewski, Polish writer), Strzyżów (18th century palace), Hrubieszów (18th century manor-house), Dolhobyczów (19th century palace), Neple (remnants of mid-19th century classicistic palace), Koroszczyn (19th century manor-house), Adampol (hunting-palace) and Kryłów (pre-16th century castle). In the region the deep past also left its signs. Remnants of pre-Piast, Ruthenian fortifications and also grave-mounds belonging to even older, neolithic cultures are widely distributed, to mention only Kolonia Kryłów with its 20-metres-diameter large grave-mound. In Masłomęcz there is an interesting archeological site with 2nd century A.D. settlement and cemetery of the Goths, while in Gródek and Horodło there are worthwhile mounds with castle remnants dated back at 8th-10th century A.D. (Rąkowski 1996). Among other important tourist attractions of the borderland, a world-famous stud-farm in Wygoda (close to Janów Podlaski) should be mentioned.

The border region has step-by-step become famous for organisation of cultural events connected with its flourishing, multicultural past. Among them *Transborder Days of Good Neighbourhood*, intended to bring closer the Catholics with the Orthodox, and also Poles with Ukrainians, are worth notice. The festival is organised on the very borderline, in the vicinity of Hrubieszów and Tomaszów Lubelski, partly to omit visa regulations in case of Ukrainians. The events usually consist of music concerts, masses celebrated in both rites, bazaars with local specialties and various exhibitions (Dni... 2008). The festival in last years, gathered from about 8 to 20 thousand Poles and Ukrainians, having come mostly from the borderland areas (Zamość... 2009, Arseniy... 2009).

Another interesting event is *The Festival of Three Cultures* organised yearly in Włodawa, which is a town of outstandingly rich history. In the 13th century, at the time of its settlement, Włodawa was inhabited by the population of Polish, Russian and Jewish origin. In the 16th century Protestants enriched the ethnic mosaic. Only World War II destroyed ethnic and religious heterogeneity of the town, but remnants of multicultural past are still visible. Apart from Roman Catholic late-Baroque Paulinite monastery complex, there exist post-Uniate 19th-century Orthodox church and the synagogue complex of a former Jewish commune. The town itself gained an attractive name of *the town of three cultures*. The said festival's aim is to present all the three cultures present in the region within three days, devoted one day to each of them. The event comprises concerts, exhibitions, lectures, theatre performances, workshops and souvenir bazaar.

Probably the most effective, in terms of number of tourists attracted to the region, is the easternmost part of Łęczyńsko-Włodawskie Plain (known as Łęczyńsko-Włodawskie Lakeland) with a small group of lakes. The most attractive is Białe Lake, the only one with clean, highly transparent water (other lakes are usually hardly accessible, surrounded by swamps), pulling a few dozen thousand tourists yearly, mostly in summer season. The remaining tourist-drawing lakes of the lakeland are located beyond the limits of the research area.

Another factor that may be suspected to become a more significant magnet for tourists in the future is the unique nature of the valley of Bug River. It is one of few wild, not regulated rivers in Poland, freely meandering and slowly transforming its banks with erosion processes. Meander lakes are common, small islands covered by willows are abundant in the course of the river, high banks of the river are covered with deep forest with trees reaching even 350 years of age. Over 150 species of birds were identified in the course of the river, especially many on peat bogs commonly accompanying the river, there are also over 800 butterfly species. Low urbanisation level and low road density result in relatively low human pressure to the environment. It is commonly believed, that the nature retained its natural equilibrium in the borderland, the air quality is high, and picturesque post-glacial, karst and loess upland landscapes are common. The nature of significant part of the borderland is protected under the law and is comprised by five landscape parks, several protected landscape areas and nature reserves, some belonging to European Ecological Network *Natura 2000*. Many of them protect endangered species, like gophers in Chochłów (Dołhobyczów commune).

Tourism in the region develops also in a form of second houses. They slowly become more and more numerous, in most cases, as reported by interviewed local administration officials, they belong to inhabitants from Warsaw, in lower numbers also from Lublin and Chełm. Most of them are located in remote tourist areas such as the valley of the Bug River. Along with second houses, agritourism steadily increases its importance. Nevertheless, acute shortage of capital makes agritourism in the whole region develop in a very low pace, and standard of accommodation in most cases remains low. Many people abuse the name of *agritourism* and relate it to apartments located even in the very centres of towns in order to win financial support for improvement of accommodation standard. It may be believed that with the lapse of time the standard of accommodation will not be an obstacle for tourism advancement any more.

The picture of tourism in the region cannot be complete without information about infrastructure. Transportation network of the borderland is of low density and poor quality. Average paved road density in five districts⁴, where research area is located, is 51.2 km/100 sq. km, while for Lubelskie Province and for Poland they are 59.7 and 66.7, respectively. On the area of these five districts, number of beds in all-year accommodation facilities per 10 thousand inhabitants is almost 57% lower than country average. Even the number of agritourist huts is far lower than it could be, given particular characteristics of the region.

⁴ Data in this paragraph are presented for five border districts where twenty researched communes are located, because of database constraints.

The total number of nights spent in such type of accommodation facilities in five border districts was only 2105 in 2002 (Central... 2007). However, in case of agritourism, reliability of such numbers is not high, because in many cases given services are not reported to respective authorities, although low share of the region in the country speaks for itself.

On one hand, such low numbers may be interpreted as too low supply of tourist infrastructure in the region, therefore new investments could be postulated. However, the same numbers may be reasonably treated as reflecting relatively low tourist attractiveness of the region, in comparison with other part of the province and the country. Also average quality of accommodation in the region is significantly lower than in the country, which reflects low demand for high-quality accommodation, and also shows reception of mostly local tourists, which in turn results in lower incomes and worse development perspectives. This all can be attributed also to higher spatial scale – the whole of Lubelskie Province draws only 2% of tourists in Poland, although its share in total population is almost 6% and in area is almost 4,5% (Central... 2007).

Conclusions

The examined border region belongs to the poorest and least developed in Poland. At present, agriculture is the most significant branch of economy here. However, the surveyed population of the region assigns high importance to tourism, when asked about future directions of development for their region.

Border communes of Lubelskie Province hold a number of tourist attractions, with sacred buildings, reflecting complicated history of the region, being the most abundant. Among other tourist resources, palaces, manor-houses and other historical buildings may be of interest. The most commonly visited natural tourist resource of the borderland is Białe Lake, also peaceful landscapes of Bug River valley, protected under several landscape parks, draw tourists to the region. Swampy valley, however, rather deters than attracts tourists, at least in case of mass tourism. There are bird-watchers and anglers, who are winners here, because ample of birds provided by remote, boggy area, silence and lack of noisy tourists is what they need.

The said monuments of spiritual culture constitute a good foundation for promoting the area, but they cannot generate large tourist inflow to the region. Only in case of sanctuaries, numbers of visitors reach tens of thousands. However, they come mostly once a year in such numbers, and they are mostly of local or regional origin. Similar is the case of the only lake in the region commonly visited by local tourists. Mass tourism needs attractions of different rank, and border communes lack well known tourist sites that would meet the expectations of thousands of visitors. They also lack infrastructure necessary for mass tourists reception. It seems that the borderland will for a long time remain a niche for visitors coming mostly from the region and searching for silence in remote rural areas.

To conclude, the potential for agritourism, historical and cultural tourism development will grow, but it will not become the main source of income for local communities in the incoming decades. In some cases tourism may only supplement incomes from other activities, mainly agriculture. Therefore, the expectations of local population concerning the future role of tourism as main source of income appear to be just wishful thinking.

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