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REGIONAL DIFFERENTIATION OF TOURISM
ASSETS IN POLAND

1. Introduction

Poland is, on the international scale, a potentially attractive country for tourists. It is one of the few European countries that has on its territory almost all of the basic landscape types of the temperate zone: sea coast, lakelands, flat lands, uplands, old mountains of medium height, and young mountains of alpine type. Owing to late economic development and not too advanced urbanization, Poland has preserved quite rich plant and animal communities.

On the other hand, the territory of Poland is poorer as far as man-made artifacts and monuments are concerned. Numerous wars, especially World War II, contributed to the destruction of many towns, buildings, historical monuments, and artwork. Still, Poland from this point of view is also an interesting country worth visiting. An extraordinary achievement, highly valued all over the world, is the reconstruction of the destroyed historical quarters, especially in Warsaw and Gdansk. There is quite a lot of authentic folklore still preserved in Poland, authentic as distinct from the folklore that might have been animated for commercial purposes. Relics of old techniques and methods of production, especially in agriculture, which are elsewhere no longer used, are also noteworthy.

2. Basic notions

Objects and areas that attract tourists' interest are referred to as tourism assets. These assets can be classified into recreational and sightseeing. Those items belonging to the first group upgrade the environment and increase its leisure-wise utility. The second group contains items that constitute goals of tourism as objects worth seeing.

Sightseeing assets can be subdivided further into natural and man-made /anthropogenic/. Natural assets arise from the landscape shape, geological structure, water and wind activity, and from the appearance of rare or more pronounced plants and animals. This group encompasses promatories with panoramic views, rocks and rocky precipices, gullies, valleys and river gorges, waterfalls and sources, caves, great stones, and strata of geological layers or moving sand dunes. Within the domain of living nature, sightseeing assets are constituted by, e.g., monumental trees, unique plants or plant associations /in most cases preserved in national parks or nature reservers/, rare animals, historical parks, nature museums, botanical and zoological gardens, and palm houses and alpine gardens.

Tourists, however, more often frequent places with anthropogenic assets, located mainly in towns or known spots. It is primarily historical architectural and construction objects, as well as museums and art collections, that constitute man-made assets. Many museums are devoted to outstanding people, definite regions, or types of activity, e.g., branches of industry /say, in the adapted old industrial plants/. One should consider separately

historical and military objects, connected with important battles, or places of martyrology, devoted to the victims of the Nazi terror, as well as locations of special religious devotion. Mass tourist movements are also directed towards places of art shows and performances, folklore happenings, sports events, fairs, and religious occasions.

While the sightseeing assets are spatially confined to single points or relatively limited spatial complexes, distributed all over the country, the recreational assets usually form zones having significant territorial dimensions, resulting from the landscape shape and its geological past. In Poland those assets are constituted primarily by the sea, the lakes and lake districts, mountains, and forests. Rivers are not valued highly because of their quite common pollution with municipal and/or industrial wastes.

3. Geography of tourism assets in Poland

Sea, lakes, and mountains form in Poland quite distinct parallel zones located latitudinally, those zones being the most important recreation regions of Poland. From the point of view of capacity, calculated in number of beds, the single most important region is the sea coast, where as much as 40 % of all the beds available in Poland in holiday and recreation centers are located. The overall share of this region in the total number of people using these facilities is, however, lower since a vast majority of bungalows, holiday centers, etc. at the sea coast are working only through the summer season; while those located in the mountains and in other inland regions are often active throughout

the whole year. The sea coast facilities accommodate up to 1/3 of all the holiday stays which, in view of very limited geographical space, means extremely high spatial concentration of recreation. This concentration is further aggravated by the spatially uneven development of the recreational infrastructure. Most of the holiday-makers tend to concentrate on these segments of the coast, where chains of resort spots have been created; while outside and between these segments there are as yet completely undeveloped segments of the sea coast.

The Polish coast of the Baltic Sea, from the point of view of land relief and sea bottom type, is almost ideally suited for recreation, a rare case in Europe. Along the coast, on almost all of its length, there are wide sandy beaches, the sea bottom descends gradually, and from the land side beaches are accompanied by sand dunes and most often also by a forest belt. Less advantageous than in Southern Europe, though, are climatic conditions: the bathing season lasts only 3-4 months and is often intertwined with bad weather periods. Water temperature rarely exceeds 20 °C.

Holiday-making facilities at the sea coast are usually of light construction, they often lack heating, and quite rarely have more than just a ground floor, three-storey buildings being very infrequent. A large number of facilities are light bungalows /camping houses/ dispersed in the greenery. This type of development requires larger surfaces, but is better accepted than high-rise concrete blocks, since a majority of holiday-makers live permanently in just such buildings. From this

point of view, the Polish sea coast differs positively from some segments of the Mediterranean coast, where high-rise constructions of urban character prevail.

Currently, recreation conditions of the seaside are deteriorating because of increasing sea pollution. This applies particularly to Gdansk Bay and its coast, which harbors the greatest Polish maritime agglomeration /900 thousand inhabitants/ and where the greatest Polish river, the Vistula, flows in together with pollutants brought from inland. Simultaneously, it is just here that the greatest recreational demand occurs: areas are necessary for the holiday, weekend, and afterwork recreation of inhabitants of the Gdansk agglomeration, as well as for the people coming from other regions of the country.

The area of Gdansk Bay is transportation-wise the most easily accessible segment of the Polish sea coast. After the railway line between Warsaw and Gdansk had been electrified, the Warsaw-Gdansk trip duration went down to 3 1/2 hours with the quickest train on this line. This area also has the oldest tradition of seaside resorts, one of the causes being the fact that between the two World Wars this area constituted a quasi-totality of the Polish sea coast. The town of Sopot, located between Gdansk and Gdynia, owes its development to its recreational function, and it used to be the most elitist sea resort on the territory of present Poland. Presently undergoing a decline, this town has become a housing satellite of Gdansk and Gdynia.

In view of water pollution in the Gdansk Bay, the mass flow of holiday-makers goes towards the

Hel peninsula, which forms a sandy barrier between Gdansk Bay and the open sea. Though still having clean capacity, this narrow strip of land has been exceeded resulting in severe restrictions with regard to tourist activities being introduced: the number of cars allowed to enter the Hel peninsula is limited.

Another often frequented landscape area of Poland, besides the sea coast, are mountains. They occupy the Southern borderland and form two broad ranges: Sudety on the West, and the Carpathias Mts. on the East, the two being separated by the large lower area of the Moravian Gate. A smaller range of the Holy Cross Mts. is, besides that, located in the upland belt. Mountains take approximately only 9 % of the country's total surface, but as much as 21 % of all the places in holiday and recreational centres are located there and almost all of the tourist hospices as well as the majority of privately offered places can be found there. Use of these facilities is much more intensive than at the seaside or in the lake districts, because of the second --winter-- season and of the all-year mountaineering tourism. Thus, with regard to the numbers of holiday-makers and tourists, mountains are far ahead among the various landscape zones, since they account for approximately 40 % of vacation stays, especially when privately organized stays are accounted for, i.e., the ones organized without the intermediary of tourism offices. When the whole mountainous zone is considered, the average "density" of vacationers and tourists per unit area is much lower than at the seaside in the summer season. Uneven attractiveness of particular mountain subareas, though, and especi-

ally high concentration of resort facilities in the better known localities, cause higher numbers of tourists and vacationers to converge in some regions; while other fragments of the mountain areas, often not less interesting from the nature and sightseeing points of view almost are not frequented.

Such a region subject to maximum concentration of tourist traffic is Podhale, together with the best known tourist center - Zakopane. The magnet attracting there as many as 2-3 million people per year is the only Polish fragment of the alpine type of high mountainous landscape in the Tatra Mts. range. Many people, however, do not go there because of the beauty of the mountain landscape, but simply because of the concentration of recreation and entertainment facilities, shows, performances, folklore, or just because of social motivations. Podhale is an instance of a region whose high recreational assets are depreciated through overly intensive tourist traffic /e.g., concentration of car exhaust gases in the center of Zakopane attains similar levels as in the centers of metropolitan agglomerations/.

The Western parts of the Polish Carpathian Mts. /i.e., Silesian and Zywiec Beskids/ are also more frequented, because of the proximity of the biggest Polish urban and industrial agglomeration, the upper Silesian industrial area, inhabited by some 3 million people. This area is the starting point for the greatest number of tourist outings, both short, for weekends or holidays, and longer, for vacations. It is in this Western part of the Carpathian Mts. that the greatest number of vaca-

tion houses built by particular enterprises, especially by collieries, steelworks, and other big enterprises of heavy industries from Upper-Silesia, have been erected.

The same region has also become the target of expansion of private summer house construction /"second apartments"/. This activity is especially evident here since inhabitants of Upper Silesia spend their everyday life in the most polluted environment and simultaneously their higher incomes allow making investments in the second apartments, in which they spend weekends, for non-working family members, more frequent stays are typical.

Much less frequented is the Eastern Polish Carpathian area, lying to the East of Krynica. The environment there is relatively little transformed, and there even are instances of an expansion of primitive nature on the territories, which had previously been utilized for agricultural, but were abandoned as a result of the civil war of 1945-47. Tourism infrastructure there is very weak and is primarily limited to "self-service" camping sites. This area is best suited for mountain hiking of more experienced tourists.

At the other extreme, there is the Sudety mountain range, strongly urbanized and industrialized, with tourist developments going back to the 19th century. The transport network there is the densest, there is a large number of tourist hospices, and the greatest number of all-accessible vacation houses belonging to the central all-trade-union specialized organization called Employee Vacation Func /Polish abbreviation: FWP/. These facilities are all-accessible in distinction

to those houses, usually built later, that belong to individual enterprises, branches of industry, or other units.

Tourism activities in the Sudety also are not uniformly distributed. They concentrate in 2 subareas: in the Jelenia Góra Basin together with the Karkonosze Range and in the Klodzko Basin together with the surrounding mountains. These two regions encompass the highest, best developed and best known parts of the Sudety Mts. Their popularity is to a large extent based upon good skiing conditions there. It is in the Eastern Sudety, at the foot of Snieznik mountain, that, according to designs, should be built a new important winter sports center /the so called "second Zakopane"/.

The third landscape zone best suited for recreation are the lake regions. This zone is much larger than the two other ones previously described and it covers approximately 1/3 of the total area of Poland, stretching from the sea coast southward down to the southern boundary of the Baltic glaciation. Lakes in Poland are almost entirely of glacial origin. There is only one lake district, located in Eastern Poland within the region of Lublin Polesie, that has a different nature. Also the chain of large coastal lakes /Lebsko, Gardno, Bukowo, Jamno, and others/, did not originate with glaciations: these lakes are previous sea harbors / lagoons / cut off from the open sea by sand-bars created by the coastal current /long shore drift/.

Altogether, there are in Poland about 9000 lakes whose surface area exceeds 1 hectare. Only the USSR, Finland, and Sweden of the European countries are richer in lakes than Poland. This asset is very

valuable, and as yet relatively under utilized for recreation, its value being heightened because water in a majority of the lakes is still cleaner than in the rivers and in the sea. Advancing construction of new holiday-making facilities over the lakes, without parallel construction of water treatment /purification/ plants, poses a threat, though, of destroying this asset.

The Lakeland zone is very large, but not all equally attractive. Tourists are first of all attracted by the lakes surrounded by forests, having larger surfaces /which is of importance for yachting/, and/or connected with other lakes so as to form longer chains /which is advantageous for boating tourism/. That is why tourist traffic in the area is very unevenly distributed: on some lakes there are no vacationers at all; while on others there are too many, leading to recreation quality decline, higher danger of water pollution, and a possibility of devastation of the shoreline.

A particularly high concentration of tourist activity occurs on the Great Mazurian Lakes, of which two, Sniardwy and Mamry, have more than 100 sq. kms of surface area. These lakes are connected by channels and constitute a very favourable area for yachting, rowing, boating, windsurfing, and other water sports. The main towns on these lakes are also connected by a small passenger ship line.

Another frequented lake district, Kashubian, is located in the vicinity of the Gdansk agglomeration mentioned previously, so that an important share of holiday-makers is constituted by the weekend visitors from Gdansk and Gdynia. Lakes are smaller here, but the landscape is generally

more interesting due to the moraine hills, which are the highest in Northern Poland.

Tourist traffic converges also on some other regions within the lake zone, namely: the Drawsko Lake District in Western Pomerania; Brodnica Lake District in Torun voivodship; Olsztyn Lake District around the town of Olsztyn and neighbouring the latter-Mragowo Lake District; and finally Suwalki Lake District in the North-Eastern corner of Poland. Besides that, there occasionally occurs a high density of recreation facilities within the smaller lake regions in the Southern part of the lakeland zone, that is, where forest cover is scarcer and lakes are smaller, but where there is recreational demand originating from bigger towns located already beyond the lakeland zone. Instances of such intensively used small clusters of lakes are Leszno Lake District in southern Great Poland, Gostynin Lake District, which is the closest to Warsaw and Łódz, and Leczna-Włodawa Lake District located in the Eastern, lakeless part of the country North-East of Lublin.

The fourth type of recreational assets, after the sea, mountains, and lakes, is the forests. These assets are spatially dispersed and do not create a compact zone. Forests, in fact, appear over greater areas in the mountainous and lakeland zones, thus increasing the attractiveness of these zones. About 40 % of the overall forest area in Poland is located within the lakeland zone, where forests occupy, in some regions, more than half the total surface and where the biggest forests can be found /e.g., Tuchola Woods, Pisz, Augustów, Drawsko, and Notec Forests - each of them occupying

approximately 1000 sq. kms/.

Mountain forests account for some 13 % of the Polish forested area, and mountains, like lake districts, are more than averagely forested. The rest of the country, mainly lowlands and uplands that constitute a majority of the country's surface, accounts for only about 47 % of the forest area. Again, forests are very unevenly distributed over these regions. They take up significant areas in the North-East /Bialowieza Forest and Knyszyn Forest/, South-East /Sandomierz Forest and Solska Forest/, as well as West /Lower Silesian Woods/, while the country's center is left almost forestless. Simultaneously, the population distribution is just opposite, since it is in the very center that the two greatest towns of Poland, Warsaw and Łódź, are located, and, lacking other recreational assets, a more significant forested surface would be very welcome.

Forests take up on average 27,5 % of the total surface of Poland. This statistical indicator, however, accounts for the whole "formally" forested area, i.e., together with the felled clearings, newly seeded surfaces, etc. Recreational purposes require older forests, especially coniferous and mixed ones. Forests with trees over 40 years of age take only 54 % of all the forest area, that is, some 15 % of the country's total surface. Forests are the most easily accessible and most frequented recreational asset in Poland, with additional attractiveness generated by the possibility of forest fruits and mushroom gathering.

The wide belt of lowlands and uplands offers in terms of natural conditions advantages

for recreation little more than forests, mentioned before. Rivers flowing there are to a large degree polluted with wastewaters and only very few of them can serve recreational purposes. Tourist attractiveness is often enhanced artificially through human activity, for instance through reforestation and construction of water reservoirs. Reforestation has been applied to less fertile soils, especially around larger urban centers mostly around Warsaw and in Upper Silesia.

Artificial water reservoirs were built by damming up a number of rivers, the biggest reservoirs being constructed near Zegrze, at the confluence of the Narew and Bug, on the Vistula above Wloclawek, on the Brda near to Koronowo, on the Pilica near to Sulejów, on the Upper Vistula in Goczalkowice, on the Sola downstream from Zywiec, on the San in Solina, and on the Nysa Klodzka near to Nysa. Among the older reservoirs there are also some that are quite frequented, such as the one in Turawa on the Mala Panew, in Otmuchów on the Nysa Klodzka and in Roznów on the Dunajec. Water reservoirs have been created around the Upper Silesian Industrial Region in the abandoned old sand-pits. On lakeless areas, artificial water reservoirs are centers of the greatest concentration of tourist activities.

Another tourist attraction, though having less importance for recreation, is in the uplands zone constituted by rocky hills, isolated rocks, and caves. Defensible castles were often located on such hills. Altogether, however, the uplands zone enjoys less popularity among vacationers and tourists because of water shortages and relatively scarce forest cover.

Speaking most generally, the geographical distribution of recreational assets in Poland is a negative reflection of the geographical distribution of population and productive sectors of the economy. The spatial structure of Poland is characterized by the existence of the "central triangle", occupying approximately half of the country's territory, but accounting for as much as 70 % of the population and 82 % of the jobs in industry. Vertices /extreme points/ of this triangle are located in: Gdynia, Bogatynia /township in the South-Western corner of Poland/, and in Przemysl, so that the Western edge of the triangle is the line Gdynia-Bydgoszcz-Poznan-Bogatynia, the Southern edge is constituted by the Polish-Czechoslovak state boundary from Bogatynia to Cieszyn and from there Eastwards by the Northern borderline of Carpathian Mts., and finally the Eastern edge is formed by the Przemysl-Lublin-Minsk Mazowiecki-Gdynia line.

Outside of this triangle there are less populated and economically less developed North-Western, North-Eastern, and Carpathian voivodships. From among 39 towns with population above 100 thousand as of 1984, only 6 were located outside the triangle depicted. The greatest among these 6 was Szczecin.

On the other hand, locations of recreational assets are distributed inversely. Outside of the "central triangle" there is the whole sea coast, except for the worst polluted segment within the Gdansk agglomeration area, most of the lakeland zone with the most attractive lakes, and the whole of Polish Carpathian Mts. Similarly, a majority of

forest areas, approximately 61 %, is outside of the triangle mentioned.

Thus, then, the quite centralized geographical distribution of population and industries is contrasted with the peripheral location of the most valuable recreational regions. This results in the centrifugal character of holiday- and even partly weekend-trips: from the center towards the country's peripheries. Significant distances between the larger urban areas and recreational regions result in greater time losses and in higher travel costs of vacation trips.

Sightseeing assets, mentioned at the beginning, are, however, geographically distributed differently. These assets attract tourists, especially those participating in group sightseeing excursions. Assets of this type concentrate to a higher degree in towns, i.e., more in the central parts of the country; their distribution is positively correlated with the geographical distribution of population.

The manual on "Tourism Geography of Poland" lists 676 objects, constituting goals of sightseeing excursions. The locations of these objects were analysed. More than half of them /353 out of 676/ are located in just 10 voivodships /out of the total of 49/, these voivodships having the highest numbers of sightseeing assets. Among these 10 voivodships, there are 6 with large urban agglomerations /Cracow, Warsaw, Gdansk, Poznan, Szczecin, Katowice/, which have played an important role in Polish history; then there are 3 voivodships located in the mountains /Nowy Sacz, Walbrzych, Jelenia Góra/; and one in the uplands /Kielce/. The first position in this ranking is occupied by the Nowy Sacz voivodship,

the only one with high mountainous landscape /64 objects out of 676, i.e., 9.5 %/.

On the other hand, a contrasting picture is provided by 10 voivodship with the lowest sight-seeing assets ranking, since all these voivodships are less economically developed, and there is no town of more than 100 thousand inhabitants within any of these 10 voivodships. Most of these voivodships are located in the eastern half of the country.

Table 1 presents numbers of beds in tourist, vacation, and recreation facilities; numbers of persons spending at least one night in these facilities; and numbers of overnight stays, for the 21 voivodships accomodating significant tourist traffic. Tourist facilities accounted for in these statistics encompass all accessible hotels, motels, pensions, tourist hospices, excursion houses, permanent camping facilities, and privately offered rooms. The other category, vacation and holiday-making facilities, includes: vacation houses belonging to FWP; to individual enterprises; and to trade unions and other organizations, i.e., those facilities whose purpose is to host people coming for a longer vacation stay.

The 21 voivodships listed in the table account for altogether 75 % of all places available in Poland for overnight stay and tourist stop within the tourist-type facilities. When, however, vacation-type facilities are considered, these voivodships account for as much as 84 % of places, with the actual number of vacationers up to 86 % and the actual number of overnight stays at 88 % of the respective Polish totals. This is evidence of the

high degree of spatial concentration of tourist traffic, and-- even more so-- of vacation stays in the most landscape-wise attractive regions of Poland.

Table 1
 Voivodships with the most important tourist traffic
 /data as of 1984/

Voivodship	Beds in 1000s ^a in facilities		Persons, in 1000s, spending nights in facilities ^b		Actual nights spent in 1000s in facilities ^b		
	tourism- oriented	vacation- oriented	tourism- oriented	vacation- oriented	tourism- oriented	vacation- oriented	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Seaside							
Elbląg	6.7	20.3	2.2	141	115	683	1603
Gdańsk	17.1	47.6	4.8	470	292	1751	3675
Koszalin	10.3	63.6	2.3	181	379	903	5251
Ślupsk	8.8	27.4	1.0	120	152	540	2093
Szczecin	14.4	69.0	0.5	302	388	1179	5300
Mountainous							
Bielsko-Biala	8.6	22.5	16.9	437	282	1079	2810
Jelenia Góra	11.0	16.0	14.5	289	189	1095	2058
Krosno	9.9	5.5	2.1	233	50	618	459
Nowy sacz	23.5	40.6	30.7	565	448	2143	5392
Wałbrzych	8.9	13.0	10.8	244	146	650	1700

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<u>Lake-districts</u>							
Bydgoszcz	13.5	11.9	1.5	252	61	1049	715
Gorzów	6.4	5.4	1.0	143	34	486	441
Olsztyn	17.1	15.0	1.4	296	81	1344	1004
Pila	5.7	4.0	0.4	72	25	494	230
Suwałki	21.1	17.8	3.3	306	107	1326	1243
Torun	5.6	4.3	0.4	140	19	415	265
Zielona Góra	6.7	6.7	0.5	177	50	664	457
<u>Urban</u>							
Cracow	13.4	1.0	0.4	556	12	2019	78
Poznan	22.7	5.1	0.9	462	35	2017	366
Warsaw	19.2	5.1	2.3	851	67	2161	501
Wroclaw	7.6	2.2	0.1	300	20	1081	122
Poland, totals	343.9	481.8	108.6	8935	3422	31236	40801

^a as of July 31st

^b from January till September

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Voivodships /in Polish/, Warsaw 1985.