

CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY OF POLES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY

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Introduction

The liberalisation of the boundary regime, along with the course of the socio-economic processes (improvement of life quality, broadening of individual capacities, more free time), entailed the increase of cross-boundary mobility beyond Polish borders. Depending on the needs and capacities of people, conforming to the exchange and choice theories, there has been an increase in the number of trips and border crossing events. The less wealthy would travel to earn money or to save money by purchasing at lower prices, while the wealthier would travel for consumption purposes (to do shopping and receive services), and also for the purposes of knowledge and leisure. The reasons for travel are diverse, frequently multi-motivational. Tourism as a higher-level good is still in the initial phase (strictly-defined tourist traffic accounts for a couple to a dozen or so per cent of the entire cross-border mobility).

Mobility – Theoretical frameworks

Spatial mobility is not a univocal concept; rather, it has different meanings. It refers in one context to physical movements, and in another, to communicator metaphorical movements, and concerns humans, goods, information, ideas and so on (Urry, 2000; Castells, 1996). Zelinsky argued that mobility increases in the course of development (Zelinsky, 1971). Recently new forms of mobility “have appeared”. They are related to some modernisation processes connected to globalisation, especially transport development. There are at least four situations where these new “forms of mobility” take place:

- the work place and home are far away from each other and it is impossible or at least very difficult to travel between them each day;
- couples who maintain their own households living far away from each other, and spend only weekends and holidays together;
- household with a dual residence (spend workdays in a city, and weekends in their second home);
- household (or individual) practicing short-term tourism.

On the international scale, these kinds of mobility are in the initial phase and concern only some border regions and some specific professions. In the international dimension of mobility it is every cross-border movement, both in the short and in the long distance. Types of cross-border mobility were presented by *Hall* (2000) and divided into four main groups: international tourism, cross-border petty trading and shopping, labour migration, refugee flight.

The notion of cross-border mobility has been introduced, which ought to be understood as every crossing of the border by people irrespective of the destination and objective, as well as distance covered (this notion is, therefore, broader than tourism). Yet the very fact of crossing the border should not always be considered as a kind of tourism. Thus, routine activities, including shopping as well as trade trips, made in order to sell products by the visitors, ought not to be treated as tourism (*Table 1*).

Tourism within the border-adjacent areas may be conceived in a broader sense as encompassing all the forms of tourism which exist within the borderlands, or in a narrower sense as tourism whose purpose is to visit and get to know the area neighbouring upon the state boundary (or the very boundary as well).

Cross-border tourism is already an element of international tourism, and the transboundary tourist space exists on both sides of the border and is accessible to persons coming from the neighbouring country. Transboundary tourism may be understood in the broader perspective, encompassing all forms of tourism, which allow for their use on the territories of at least two neighbouring countries, or it can be seen in a narrower perspective, as a form of tourism associated with specific assets and tourist infrastructure, existing on the transboundary areas, whose purpose is to travel and to cross the borders with the neighbouring countries as the necessary distinguishing element (the primary objective is to visit and explore the area “on the other side” of the border).

Table 1

The main forms of cross-border mobility

Short-term (less than 24 hours)	Medium-term (between 1 and 4 days)	Long-term (more than 4 days)
Aims of trips:		
Commuting	work	tourism
Daily shopping	shopping	work
Petty-trading	recreational trip and tourism	temporal migration
Visits and short recreational trip	healthcare	educational trip (study)
Health care	business travel	
Journey to school (education reason)		
Transit		

Source: Więckowski, 2010.

Increasing of border movement

New opportunities for increasing of the cross-border movements between Poland and her neighbours were to appear with the transformations in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the 1990s, many factors exerted an influence on the policy of opening new border crossings. A positive effect in increasing the number therefore derived from:

- the earlier existence of railway lines and roads coming up to the border,
- the traditional activity and entrepreneurship of the highlanders;
- the willingness to embark upon cross-border cooperation, especially at the local level;
- the signing of an agreement on small-scale border traffic;
- the decision to establish new border crossings for tourists.

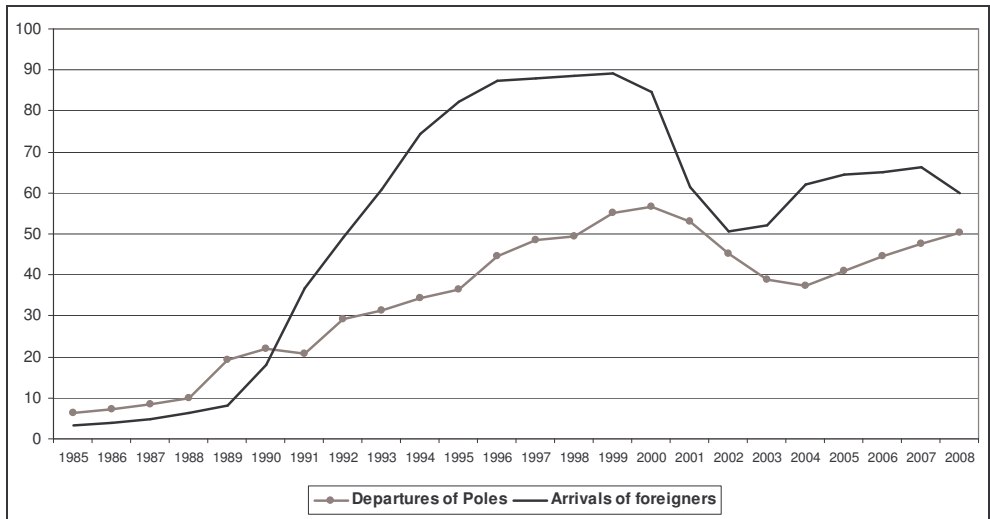
Along with the political, economic and social transition which occurred in Poland after 1989, the mechanisms and patterns of mobility have radically changed. The border regions have been characterised by the remarkable dynamics of personal mobility in the recent decades. Growth in the number of people's crossing all Polish borders between 1990 and 2000 was more than tenfold. After 2000 the number of visitors grew less and after that the situation has normalised with a little growth each year. Border movement plays a very important role for borders areas. Cross-border petty trading and shopping was largely represented in 90's. At the beginning of 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). In 2008 more than 110 million people have crossed Polish borders in both directions. The number of foreigners coming to Poland was about 60 million in 2008. At the same year the number of Poles crossing the border increased to 50 million (*Figure 1*). The large majority of this number is just one-day visitors in the neighbouring countries. The number of tourist trips with a minimum of one night spent abroad is about 7 million.

The analysis of traffic across the border indicates that:

- in the years 1980–2000 there had been a dynamic increase of all flows across the boundaries, including the increase of the number of single-day visitors, as well as tourists coming to and from Poland; after the year 2000 there has been initially a significant drop during the first 2–3 years, and the stabilisation of the numbers of tourists and visitors afterwards;
- there is a very high share of single-day visitors going to the neighbouring countries in the total number of Poles going abroad (87,5% – *Figure 2*).

Figure 1

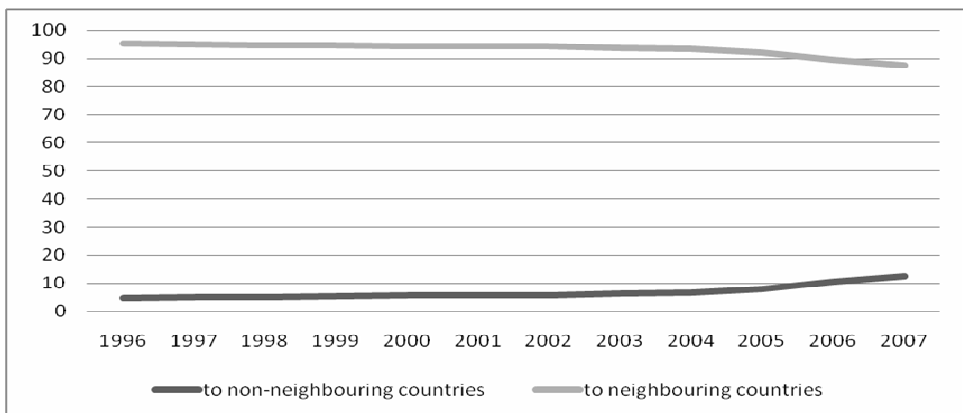
The number of Polish border crossings by year in 1985–2008 (in million)



Source: Border Guard.

Figure 2

Change in percentage share of Poles visiting going to neighbouring countries in the total number of Poles going abroad in the years 1996–2007 (number of border crossings)



Source: After Więckowski, 2010, on the basis of data from GUS and Border Guards.

- lower shares (especially of tourists) of Poles visiting the neighbouring countries than of foreigners, coming to Poland (35% of Poles going to the Germany) (*Figure 3*);
- low shares of proper tourists in the total numbers of persons crossing the state borders.

Figure 3

Cross-border mobility of Poles between Poland and neighbouring countries in 2007



Source: Author's construction on the basis of data from GUS and the Border Guards.

Border tourist traffic

The majority of transboundary traffic (which can be designated as transboundary mobility) is constituted by trips associated with trade, transit and job-related travel. A vast majority of the cross-border traffic consists of trips which last only a couple of hours (up to a maximum of 24 hours). Yet, compared to other nations, the highest percentage share among the foreigners, who stay in Poland longer than one day, is noted among the citizens of countries bordering upon Poland from the East: Lithuanians, Belarusians, Ukrainians and Russians. This may be due to several

factors – a part of them are persons coming to Poland for trade purposes (and those are not proper tourists) and to work, moving to locations situated farther away from the boundary. For a significant part of this group Poland is a transit country on their way to Western Europe (mainly for Lithuanians).

Imbalances in tourist traffic and in the movement of visitors exist across each of the boundaries and with each of the neighbours; in the majority of cases the traffic towards Poland is bigger than the traffic from Poland (The ratio is the highest in the case of the tourist traffic between Poland and Ukraine – 8.5 times more Ukrainians come to Poland than Poles go to Ukraine – and between Poland and Belarus – 27 times in 2007 and 5.8 times in 2008). The opposite situation is observed only for the southern boundary, with the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

For Poles, trips to the countries of the former Soviet Union are decidedly less attractive. Their trips are mainly undertaken for trade purposes. The share of proper tourist traffic (with duration exceeding 24 hours) is marginal and amounts to between 4.5% in case of trips to Ukraine and 15% for the trips to Lithuania (*Table 2*). These values do not differ from the ones for trips to other neighbouring countries.

Table 2

Comparison of the number of times the border was crossed in outward travelling and the number of tourists in 2007 (in million)

	Number of times the border was crossed	Tourists	
		number	share of tourists in the total number of persons travelling abroad (in %)
Germany	16.8	1.55	9.23
Czechia	12.3	0.40	3.25
Slovakia	5.5	0.45	8.18
Ukraine	5.6	0.25	4.46
Lithuania	1.0	0.15	15.00
Russia	0.7	0.05	7.14
Belarus	0.7	0.05	7.14
Total	47.6	6.90	14.50

Source: Author's construction on the basis of data from GUS, the Border Guards and the Institute of Tourism.

Conclusion

It is very difficult to demonstrate, which of the elements of development of cross-mobility has a decisive significance. There exist, namely, numerous external and internal elements which influence to different degrees the development and functioning of this kind of mobility. These elements include, in particular: the degree of openness of boundaries, relations of prices and currency exchange rates, tourist offers (both tourist attractions and quality of service), fashion trends, preferences, skills in introduction of innovations, and quality of human capital.

The mobility of Poles in terms of international departures which were unimaginable and impossible a generation earlier is still a combination of tourism trips, labour migration and trade. In 2007 the number of all departures increased to 47.6 million. It is a total number of Poles crossing the border, and it boils down to a total number of international mobility of Poles. The large majority of this number is just one-day visitors in the neighbouring countries. The number of tourist trips with a minimum one night spent abroad is 6.9 million (2007).

In analyzing Polish international mobility it is possible to note several essential changes: an increase of international mobility, an increasing complexity of the migration and tourism movement and a change of motives for departures. Generally known reasons of the increasing of Poles' mobility are the opening of the borders and abolition process in visa obtain and the improvement of communication, especially growth of the number of links with other European countries. The economic transition following Poland's entry into the EU in the 2004 had mainly positive consequences for Poles.

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