

Economic, social and geopolitical conditioning of the border traffic – foundations for modelling and forecasting on the example of Poland (BORDER-TRAF)

Studies of boundaries evolved from those of the boundary courses towards those of their functional transformations and towards the analyses of their influence (political and administrative) on the intensity of spatial interactions. A factor in the intensification of the scientific inquiry was constituted by the downfall of the Iron Curtain and an abrupt liberalisation of the border regimes in Central-Eastern Europe. On the basis of observation of these processes a number of theoretical generalisations have been formulated, in their majority assuming various speeds, but quite consistently a stable (linear) orientation of the ongoing processes. Simultaneously, the studies of interactions and of the so-called border effect indicated that the disappearance of the spatial barriers takes place much slower than the formal opening up of the state boundaries. Besides, the accession of the countries of Central Europe to the European Union entailed a drop in the permeability of their eastern borders. The changes in the cross border traffic could not be any longer explained on the basis of simple linear models. The intensity of the spatial interactions, and hence also of the border traffic, turned out to depend upon numerous factors of political, economic, social and infrastructural nature. A need arose of a more universal interpretation, which would account for the diversification in both the time dimension (relatively long time series) and in geographical space. Such an interpretation can be elaborated only within the interface of the geographical, economic and social sciences. The boundaries of Poland represent an exceptionally good object for empirical studies in this domain in view of the high variability in the respective processes. The project proposed constitutes an attempt of developing a new theoretical approach to the conditioning of the cross border traffic, established on the basis of a rich source material, planned field and social research, as well as modelling proper for economic sciences. The project shall also provide a new methodological proposal in terms of estimation and forecasting of the border traffic under unstable geopolitical and macroeconomic circumstances.

The primary objective of the project is to determine the causes and to provide the model-based generalisation of the long-term variability of the magnitudes and structure of the traffic of persons and vehicles across the boundaries of Poland, depending upon the economic, social, and geopolitical variables, as well as those related to the development of infrastructure. Attainment of this objective shall also allow for the formation of the methodological foundations for the forecasting of changes in cross border traffic. The primary objective shall be attained through realisation of the detailed objectives of the project, which have complementary cognitive, methodological, theoretical, and to an extent also applied character.