TOURISM AND TRANSITION IN THE MILITARY AREA OF BALTIJSK (PILLAU) AND WISLINSKIJ SPIT (FRISCHE NEHRUNG), KALININGRAD OBLAST (KÖNIGSBERG)

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Abstract
Baltijsk and the Wislinskij Spit as an example, very clearly shows the split into two extreme sides in the entire Kaliningrad region. At the end of the Second World War it appeared as a military pledge of the Soviet Union, dominated by military forces with civil developments only possible around the periphery. With the collapse of the Soviet Union the situation changed most drastically and there was suddenly no longer any security but an area for speculations instead. The civil population was not prepared for this and even after 10 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the collapse phenomena of the planned economy is helpless against this. Ideas for the future are being planned by both the civilian and military elite in this „empty“ space.

KEY WORDS: Baltijsk and the Wislinskij Spit, regional planning, tourism.

Anotacija
Žlugus Tarybų Sąjungai, Kaliningrado srčiai priklausančios Baltijos nerijos dalys buvo uždara karinė zona, tačiau kartu, neatsisaikant karių struktūrų diskloavimo regijoje, siekia jam įrengti šį teritoriją turizmą. Straipsnyje diskutuojama apie Baltijsko ir Baltiško nerijos plėtros planus bei tikslus, iškylančius problemas, apibrėžiamą regione atliktų tyrimų rezultatai, nagrinėjama Lenkijos turizmo verslo atstovų patirtis, plėtojant turizmą Baltiško nerijoje, jos pritaikymo galimybes Rusijos Federacijai priklausančioje teritorijoje.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: Baltijos nerija, regioninė politika, turizmas.

Introduction
Baltijsk and its surrounding area under Soviet Union rule was a place of military presence against the West. On a material level this given territorial function penetrated deep into the physical development of the environment and generated a territorial fixed barrier as „closed town“. On the symbolic level it dominated the identification of the location and, indeed, to the same extent in the outward perception and in a priority orientation of all economic and social relationships towards the organisation of the military forces. (With approx. 200,000 members of the military forces there was a considerable concentration of forces in Kaliningrad (Königsberg) and at the present time there is still about 25,000 (Timmermann, 2001). The estimated reduction and the appropriate budgeting for the military complex means a loss of resources both from the symbolic and material point of view: This is associated with the (threatening) loss of jobs, a reduction in the earlier above average wages, collapse of the social and technical infrastructure and last but not least a clear loss of status.

The aim of the research was to analyse the possibilities for the development of tourism on the Wislinskij Spit. Tasks of the research:
1) historical review of the development of Pillau and Wislinskij Spit;
2) discussion about the future of the Baltijsk region – a competition of images;
3) researching of the image of the Baltijsk region;
4) discussion about the perspectives for the future of the Baltijsk region.

As a consequence the process to determine the military zones is to be explained at first before introducing the competitive image which is to generate new spatial representation. This is to be followed by discussions on the question of the apparent irrationality of the tourist image. Clear separation between the ideas and visions of the representatives of the civil administration authorities and the population has to be established whereby the tourist image is to be used as an instrument of communication between the representatives of the civil administration authorities and the military sector which is being negotiated completely independent of the local population. Incorporated in this analysis are the results of an empirical study of the Institute for Regional Geography in co-operation with the Universities of Hanover and Kaliningrad (Königsberg) (household questionnaire, interviews and mapping) in June 2000.

1. Generation and fixing the military space: on the historical development

The Wislinskij Spit was already a focal point of military interest earlier, because it was possible to control access to the Fresh Lagoon (Frisches Haff) and thus to Königsberg.

Of interest in this connection is that there were different points at which the spit was interrupted in the 15th and 16th century. However, the majority of passages became silted and blocked with sand or were closed, respectively, so that, in the end the present situation came about with access through the spit point near the town of Neutief (Kossa) and opposite the town of Pillau (Baltijsk) in the Fresh Lagoon (Frisches Haff). The military significance of Pillau became more important and the economic role of the town declined drastically with the completion of the Königsberg sea canal in the
year 1901). Many ships unloaded their freight in Königsberg and only fertiliser and coal was discharged in Pillau. The garrison in Pillau became more and more an economic factor for the town (Haberland, 1936).

At the end of the 19th century Pillau and the Wislinskij Spit (Frische Nehrung) were discovered as excursion resort. It was the people from Königsberg, in particular who went to Pillau at the weekend and hiking along the Wislinskij Spit (Frische Nehrung) became increasingly popular (Schlicht, 1922). A tourist association and beauty spot society organised „Pillau weeks“, improved the infrastructure and advertised for guests (cf. Königsberger Hartungsche Zeitung 19/01/1913). This was successful in the period between the wars although the available accommodation was sometimes not adequate to satisfy all needs. Appropriate to the increasing demand there were four guesthouses on the spit and extensive hikes towards Poland and West Prussia were possible on the well built spit road (Guttzeit, 1960).

The exposed position of the Wislinskij Spit (Frische Nehrung) led to the so-called air base of the German transport flying school being set up in the town of Neutief at the end of 1933. It served for fuelling seaplanes that had started off from other places. The comparatively modest base at that time was completely rebuilt in 1937. The fishing village Neutief had to give way to new buildings and the fishermen were moved to Pillau, Kamstigall or Kaddighaken. As a result Neutief was only used for military purposes. The families of the people employed on the base lived in the new redeveloped estate (map from the Military Historical Archive Freyburg). Large hangars with the appropriate servicing and fuelling facilities were built as well as barracks and a runway. As a result military use became more than obvious.

At the end of the Second World War the Wislinskij Spit (Frische Nehrung) was extended to the earlier frontier between East and West Prussia and the Soviet Union and the Red Army took over the military facilities in both Kossa (Neutief) and in Baltijsk (Pillau). As a result the military forces dominated again and was the largest and most important employer in the region. The town had a special status and was hermetically sealed off from the outside world. As compensation for the disadvantages given by this the members of the military forces and even those working in civilian professions were paid better than those in the other Kaliningrad (Königsberg) area and, what was more their supply system was not so marked by bottlenecks as was generally the case in the Soviet Union. On the other hand, such sources of work such as fishing, fish processing and tourism, of course, were sacrificed for military affairs.

The developments which followed after the collapse of the Soviet Union led to a clear reduction in the military units stationed in the Kaliningrad region and as far as this is concerned, so were the garrisons on the Wislinskij Spit. This fact, which should have been looked upon as good, had fatal consequences for the approx. 200 inhabitants of the village of Kossa (Neutief) and almost all jobs were lost. Over and above this, the Army which was earlier held in high esteem, lost prestige and was not able to either look after the members of its forces for lack of financial means or maintain and repair its facilities. The great role that the members of the military forces played at that time is reflected in the fact that the first town council elected in 1947 comprised 80 members and 63 of them were military persons. Of course, they did not only have control in the military area but also very strong influence on the development of the town (Gostjuchin et al. 2000). The military units stationed in Baltijsk ranked high in the overall Soviet military system and the officers had the appropriate significance and influence. The loss of the significance of the fleet after the collapse of the Soviet Union had wide reaching effects for the military elite. They interpreted their present position by saying that the appropriate material and social recognition has not been forthcoming despite their great sacrifices and service both during the Second World War and in the difficult post war period but also for their service in Chechenia.

As a consequence it is not surprising that many former members of the military forces and even civilians mourn the earlier, material-safeguarded times and are supporting the endeavours towards rearmament. In the central administration these thoughts are still predominant. This becomes clear in the typographies of the towns and communities in the oblast where the function of Baltijsk and Kossa is explained to be „industry and defence“ (Pustowgarow, 2001).

2. The future of the Baltijsk region – a competition of images

The long military tradition of the region around Baltijsk has, as a logical consequence, led to the fact that the Soviet administration authorities of the area directly identify themselves with this tradition and, as a result, with the military infrastructure created by the Germans. As Naval Base for the Baltic fleet this significance was increased and manifested. The picture of the heroic conqueror of the city in the year 1945 is kept alive by the annual Sea Fleet Day. It should not be left unmentioned that only on these days it is possible to enter the city without special permission. The presence of the military forces is interpreted to be essential and the Moscow Central Administration expressly supports this way of thinking.

Although many inhabitants of Baltijsk and Kossa had hoped that their standard of living would be improved by the reorganisation of the military unit stationed here,
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some of the local elite on the other hand, are rather more sceptical and are looking for new solutions. In this respect tourism has been given a significant role. It is interesting to see that there are plans for tourist exploitation of the Baltijsk region both on a local level as well as by the region administration authorities. The latter are approaching the task very systematically, for instance, and a concept has been developed which provides for different tourist zones in the Kaliningrad area. Baltijsk and the Wislinskij Spit are classified as regions with high tourist potential and are indicated as suitable for both water sport, congress and conference tourism as well as for ecological tourism (Kropinowa, 2001). The images developed from this indicate a hierarchic approach, which means to say planning from the top to the bottom. The question of the compatibility of military and tourist utilisation or solving the problem of the conflict between military restricted areas and the development of tourism is also not being considered to any great extent.

Another image is being created by the local municipal authorities who likewise see tourism to be a factor to overcome the existing crisis. The Baltijsk city administration authorities are intentionally associating themselves with the tourist activities of the pre-war years and sees in this the justification for Baltijsk and the Wislinskij Spit to be established as a profitable high quality centre of „manager tourism“. They are hoping for help from foreign and even Russian investors which according to a statement made by the city administration authorities will not finance small modest projects but are only interested in lucrative large-scale projects (Koschelew, 2001). Even as far as these project ideas are concerned the local population has nothing to say, is ill-informed or not at all and are waiting patiently for instructions from above. Of course, under such a constellation developing of local activities by the population itself is most difficult. Even the position of those in favour of breaking with the military tradition can also be said to be difficult. This problem is also made worse because, although the local players such as the employees of the Baltijsk city administration authorities indeed have plans for utilising the Wislinskij Spit for tourism, only a small group for people are aware of these plans. It was alleged by the people in Baltijsk that a broad section of the population were unfamiliar with the plans for development along the lines of the neighbouring Polish recreation area of Krynica Morska and also have their own representatives (Königsberg Express, 1/2002).

As far as the leading members of the armed forces are concerned their greatest concern is that after winning the war they are now looked upon as being losers. As a consequence they are endeavouring to at least defend the ranks which they still have. To the mind of the military forces the „untouchability“ of the Wislinskij Spit (Frische Nehrung) is part of their philosophy. They have been opposing (and up to now successfully) the possibility of unrestricted access to the Wislinskij Spit and the city of Baltijsk under the motto „foreigners on the Wislinskij Spit endanger the safety of the Baltic fleet“. As a consequence one promising part of the local tourism concept is made questionable. Firstly, this would mean free access from the sea, which, in turn, would create a need for a frontier clearance post in the port and, secondly, the possibility of crossing the Polish and Russian border on the Wislinskij Spit. The last mentioned variant would be very attractive more especially for day trippers. Speaking against this is that there is no frontier transit post on the spit at the present point in time and the military unit, which is still stationed in the forest around the spit, is still a hermetically sealed off zone and, as a result, crossing the spit is not possible.

Even if the extremely bad economic situation is apparent to the inhabitants of Kossa and to an ever increasingly extent to the people of Baltijsk this will not bring down the representatives of the military system from their high roost. It would appear that this conflict can only be overcome by an order from Moscow but it also has to be assumed that opening up the area will have but few supporters. Indicative of this is more especially the indecisive attitude of the government towards the „free economic zone“ of Kaliningrad. Privileges are granted and withdrawn with clockwork regularity. The result of all this is only making possible investors uncertain and this concept is bound to fail.

The outcome of the visions, the realisation of which is questionable in each case, is that the civil administration authorities are tending to bring the tourist image to the foreground although:

a) this competes with the military utilisation of the land to such an extent that the territory (with reference to the land, lagoon and open sea) is only accessible to a restricted extent (prohibitive area, 5 km frontier zone, special approval) and, is extremely well-regulated and, on a symbolic level would be in collision with military secrecy and cut off the military infrastructure and
b) the infrastructural conditions are not given [at the present point in time only one hotel without any comfort is to be found in Baltijsk but just very few guesthouses, and there is no possibility of finding accommodation around the Wislinskij Spit itself and only one coffee bar in one of the two small shops. There is also the additional hazard to be faced as a result of the extensive old pollution caused by the German, Soviet and Russian military forces.

This image is to be seen as irrational in the light of an external and putative objective assessment because

- there is no consolidated market economy with the appropriate facilities (for example, banks for credit allocation);
- organisational structures to which tourist companies could link are only available at the most at a very basic level;
- the people have hardly any financial and other forms of capital at their disposal and
the municipal authorities to only but a minimal extent for general and more specifically invested in the tourist infrastructure.

3. Apparent irrationality of a „tourist image“

Nevertheless, the Department Manager for International Relationships of the Baltijsk authorities on the Wislinskij Spit, Viktor Koshelev, is sticking to his vision: Baltijsk, this „perhaps still the most inaccessible town in Europe“ (Kaufmann, 2001) is to become a holiday town after the military forces have been withdrawn to the greatest extent and the Wislinskij Spit (Frische Nehrung) is to become a holiday area with Kossa settlement to attract international visitors in the future. The emphatic search for alternative and appropriate civil job opportunities would appear less irrational than the fact to rely on the development of tourism – not only in view of the devastated landscape.

The problem open to discussion in this case arises through the discrepancy between the attempt to formulate an official, coherent development plan by the local elite on the one hand, and the lack of acceptance routines and possibilities of activities by the local population on the other hand. The elite as part of the military or civil administrative authorities and accompanying private sector, respectively, have the economic and more especially the social capital available to be able to realise to some extent their own interests by means of the different civil and military powers who are competing with each other, and to be able to generate new and possibly profitable significance and value assignment for the region by means of images, development plans and similar instruments which will lead to improvement.

Two observations are particularly surprising in this respect:

Particularly the improbability of establishing the Wislinskij Spit as a tourist market area [the persistent presence of the military forces despite reduction to some extent, the high burden given through construction work and other old contamination as well as the symbolic significance which this location had as base of the Soviet or Russian army, respectively, all spread against this] and, on the other hand, the emphasis with which this image is being supported by the civil administration gives way to the assumption that

1. New significance and new definitions as to this location are to be generated by the elite and organisations.
2. The function of a tourist image (which is to be basis of the newly defined area) is used as an (investment-controlling) instrument for strengthening civil administrative power unlike the previously dominant groups.

Despite the objectively poor or non-existent material, infrastructural and organisational conditions, the vision of a „tourist development“ often appears to be a realistic or even real option (for the local population).

It can be assumed that the reasons behind this are to be found on the one hand in the tradition of the Soviet plan economy and in the expectation of programs formulated by the authorities and targets no matter how realistic these may be. On the other hand, the involvement of a very large part of the population in the military hierarchy may well be contributing to the rather more passive, expectant and waiting attitude.

The historical constitution of the Wislinskij Spit as military base is not only reflected in the infrastructure and the one-sided economic concentration as well as in the burden on the environment but also leads to an attitude of expectations for the spit to be given a new purpose and new significance instead of the old purpose stipulated „from above“.

The discrepancy given between the military and administrative system organisations and elite and the other inhabitants which is more than obvious when reviewing the envisaged target of a tourist image can be explained to some extent by the „tradition of this governmental or authoritarian definition“. Image visions such as the „future tourist development“ are conclusive in at least two ways: on the one hand they anticipatively contain ideas on a desired societal reconstruction. On the other hand, they are fictive spatial representations, which make co-ordination of communication and action possible in that they offer a type of anchoring point to which interests can be related. This anchoring point also serves for testing consensus and creating structures. As a result it is not a surprise that during the discussions with representatives of local administration authorities and with the student work groups the idea crops up over and over again for tourism which exploits the previous military use to make the tourist object more attractive – for example, visiting relics or „subsequent use“ of the military facilities. In the extreme case a type of „Disneylandisation“, a theme park covering own (or foreign) military past through which a tourist landscape could be developed in which the borders between heritage and just „quoting“ the past could float by as part of a tourist exploitation strategy. The possible consumable cultural landscape particulars are regarded as medium of the symbolisation of the „uniqueness“ of a location („unique selling points“) and the significance of European integration (Kummer, Reicher and Giesebrecht, 1997) etc. and they are given priority even for the economic reconstruction. This is reflected also inter alia in the work for the municipal building reconstruction of the Baltijsk old town (Lubocka-Hoffmann and Szmygin, 2000; Rozanski, 2000).

Figure. 1 makes clear graphically a) the relationships between identified groups of actors and organisations as well as b) the spectrum of the groups interviewed by us.
4. Kossa and Baltijsk: Living on an existence minimum and waiting for better times

Life in Kossa is mainly a matter of living on existence minimum – that is the most significant outcome of the interviews with a total of approx. 250 persons in 70 households. Non-military or civilian jobs are almost non-existent; all that exists is a children's nursery, two shops, the ferry, which maintains the life essential connection to the mainland and serves to extensively supply of the oceanographic station. A bread factory, which was responsible for supplying the military facilities to the greatest extent was closed in 1995 and in the meantime has become a complete ruin. Of the two existing small shops just one is supplied but irregularly according to information provided by one native inhabitant, the second is located more favourably immediately alongside the ferry dock and serves as a small café at the same time. In early summer 2000 smaller constructional extensions could be seen but these are relatively low level projects. The population depends last but not least on the cultivation of gardens to safeguard their income. Discovered quite recently as a supplementary source of income is more especially the evaluation of military goods, more especially the recovery of non-ferrous metal (copper) from cables which lead to the old strongholds and the lines of bunkers. All this indicates that the capital reserves in the private households do not exist or only to a small extent.
The average income of the families (after comparison with the official statistics) is as follows: 36% said that they have under 1500 Rubel available, 77% under 3000 Rubel. The average income in Baltijsk was slightly higher: approx. 50% of the households had an income of 1500 Rubel and as a result are within or above average 1672 Rubel (2000) for the oblast. Nevertheless, one fifth of the households even had more than 4500 Rubel. This does not simply say that this is their entire income and is no indication of the sources from which this income comes. The significance of the military forces in the economical sense for the different households is made clear in Table 1, which covers the main occupations of all persons of working age or pension age. The estimation of the living conditions is heterogeneous – even if one can certainly not base this solely on financial status this must also be related to the size of families: Although in Baltijsk there is a dominant ambivalent estimation given (approx. half of the persons interviewed judged their earnings to be „moderate“; approx. one quarter as „good“ and one quarter „bad“) the people interviewed in Kossa assessed their situation to be rather „worse“.

The classification of the groups by vocation revealed clearly that there is no alternative to employment with the military forces at the present point in time (cf. Table 1; housewives, pensioners, unemployed persons as a percentage): 64% (i.e. 42) of the 70 persons interviewed are either employed by the military forces or have a husband or father working for the military forces. The origin of the families is very heterogeneous, as is the case in the entire oblast: 25% of the people interviewed said that they originated from the Ukraine. approx. 15% came from Belorussia and 17% were born there or came from the Kaliningrad oblast; only four families came as new settlers after 1945; 13% of the people interviewed were already born here. Half of the persons interviewed came to Baltijsk or Kossa, respectively, for vocational reasons; i.e. as staff members of the military interviewed, came to Baltijsk or Kossa, respectively, for vocational reasons; i.e. as staff members of the military forces; to some extent some have been stationed here for three years and if they had travelled then it was to visit families to 34%. The most important destinations are in the oblast and in Belorussia, the spread indicates mainly the region of origin.

5. The Wislinskij Spit in European context: (no) polities of place

The local civil administration authority operates with a diffuse but always an emphasised option for intermeshing with the European Union and communicates as a result future plans. This classifies itself into a number of scenarios which try to estimate the future development of the oblast and can be instrumentalised if necessary even for political purposes (cf. inter alia Timmermann 2001). In these scenarios a decisive role plays the relationship structure between the European Union which fears the double peripherisation (as enclave with growing decline of prosperity in the European Union and as „forgotten area on the edge of Russia“ [ibid.] and the possible social, economic and political destabilisation of the Kaliningrad area, and the Russian Government tending towards decentralisation. Meanwhile, the present day strategic significance of the Kaliningrad oblast is based less on the stationing of the Baltic fleet in Baltijsk – and as a consequence also less on a isolationistic and militaristic option – but rather on the position for the European Union and the NATO countries (Knapp, 2004). However, the election of ex-Admiral Jegorov, as Governor of the oblast in November 2000, who is considered to be a political pragmatist emphasised the existing presence of former members of the military forces even in the civil administration authorities.

The complexity of the political relationships between the European Union and Russia on the one hand and the social and ecological potential hazards on the other hand which are increasingly seen by the European side as a medium-term and long-term threat of own interests will lead to a highly contradictive situation: on the one hand this allows a large number of problems to be relatively clearly outlined, and to be emphasised in particular in our case study are the rapid economic collapse, environmental contamination and lack of attractiveness for foreign investors. On the other hand the options given in the sense of potential leeway for activities on analytical level could be clearly seen in the meantime – also against a backcloth failure to some extent of any attempt of political intervention by the European Union (cf. Timmermann, 2001). However, in the meantime there appears to be hardly any agreement on this up to now.

Conclusions

1. The local municipal authorities see tourism to be a factor to overcome the existing crisis. Baltijsk and the Wislinskij Spit are classified as regions with high tourist potential and are indicated as suitable for both water sport, congress and
conference tourism as well as for ecological tourism.

2. The military or civil administrative authorities and accompanying private sector, respectively, have the economic and more especially the social capital available to be able to realise to some extent their own interests by means of the different civil and military powers who are competing with each other, and to be able to generate new and possibly profitable significance and value assignment for the region by means of images, development plans and similar instruments which will lead to improvement.

3. Different work groups the idea crops up over and over again for tourism which exploits the previous military use to make the tourist object more attractive – for example, visiting relics or „subsequent use“ of the military facilities.

4. The complexity of the political relationships between the European Union and Russia on the one hand and the social and ecological potential hazards on the other hand which are increasingly seen by the European side as a medium-term and long-term threat of own interests will lead to a highly contradictory situation: on the one hand this allows a large number of problems to be relatively clearly outlined, and to be emphasised in particular in our case study are the rapid economic collapse, environmental contamination and lack of attractiveness for foreign investors.

Gauta 2004 10 15
Pasirasyta spaudai 2004 12 20
Spausdinti rekomendavo: doc. dr. V. Juščius,

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The European Commission PHARE-CREDO Programme.


TURIZMO PLĖTOJIMO GALIMYBĖS KALININGRADO SRITIES BALTIJSKO KARINĖJE ZONOJE IR VISLOS NERIJOJE

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Santrauka


Galimybės pradėti ir plėtoti turizmą Baltijos nerijos regione priklauso nuo civilinių ir karinių vadininkų sprendimų. Šis klausimas aktualus tiek Baltijsko vietos administracijai, tiek regiono vadovams. Diskusijų kyla dėl karinių dalinių užimamų plotų, į kuriuos nebūtų įleidžiami civiliniai. Svarstomi karinių zonų mažinimo variantai.

Baltiškas ir Baltijos nerija įvardijami kaip galimybinių plėtroturizmo regionas, kurį galima gauti be karo. Diskusijų kyla dėl karinių dalinių užimamų plotų, į kuriuos nebūtų įleidžiami civiliniai. Svarstomi karinių zonų mažinimo variantai.


Baltijos nerijos regionas, esantis tarp Europos Sąjungos ir Rusijos, turi nemažą ekologinį ir socialinį potencialą. Kita vertus, Europos Sąjunga gali įžvelgti gręsmę dėl ekonominės krizės regione, kuri galėtų dar ir šios teritorijos ekologinę padėtį. Regionas nėra labai patrauklus užsienio investicijoms.