

**THE GREAT
MAZURIAN LAKES
TOURIST DEVELOPMENT**

Translated by Ryszard E. J. Nawrocki
 Edited by Henryk Lesiak
TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

State Office for Sport and Tourism

Instytut Turystyki

THE GREAT MAZURIAN LAKES Tourist Development

Andrzej Jagusiewicz, Ph.D.

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Translated by Ryszard E.L. Nawrocki
Maps by Henryk Leglenis

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TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

The Land of the Great Mazurian Lakes is a picturesque country stretching over vast and varied lake lands of the south Baltic region. It is one of the most attractive tourist areas in Poland, with enormous potential for foreign tourism. Located at the northeastern edge of Poland—within the area known as Poland's "green lungs"—this land is marked by agricultural and forest functions, sparse population, no major industry, a low level of urbanization, and clean air. Its landscape is natural and boasts high natural values. This country has a rarely met wealth of landscape forms, many lakes, and forests which endow it with high recreational and cognitive values.

Forests occupy about 1,300 km². They encompass vast tracts of the Piska and Borecka Wilderness Areas. The forests are primarily populated by old stands of pine trees and are appropriate for recreational purposes.

The entire area is exceptional for its diverse landscapes and significant undulations of terrain. The highest parts are the Pliaki Mountains, where the countryside is almost mountainous with one hundred meter differences in elevation.

The climate of Mazuria, even in its temperate variety in this area, has a relatively short summer and bathing season, few sunny days, and great variability in weather. It is, nevertheless, much warmer and pleasanter than throughout other northern and eastern European lake lands.

This land encompasses 150 large lakes within its borders. They occupy a total area of 640 km². Among them are Poland's two largest lakes: Śniardwy and Mamry. Some of the lakes are interconnected by canals and rivers, thus forming an expansive complex of natural bodies with equalized water levels. Many of these lakes and water courses make up attractive tourist trails which total almost 400 km in length. Just the Great Mazurian Lakes and the Krutynia River, which flows through wilderness areas and lakes engulfed in forests, belongs to one of Poland's most beautiful water trails.

Most of the lakes boast water within sanitary limits set for recreational use. This is seen in its clarity, especially in the northern part of this area.

The large bodies of water are appropriate for many forms of active water recreation in the summer such as swimming, sun bathing, angling, kayaking, rowing, and wind-surfing. They are, however, most attractive for inland recreational and sport sailing. About fifty lakes with a total surface area of 440 km² can be used for this purpose. A part of them make up a long, almost one hundred kilometer, stretch of lakes with the highest sailing value in Poland. They are linked with Warsaw through the Pisa and Narew Rivers.

The land of the Great Mazurian Lakes is famous for its animal life, especially fishes and birds. Large animals include wild boars, stag, elk, roe deer, and wolves. The lakes and their islands are also home to many rare species of birds, including many carnivorous varieties.

These vast resources of fauna favor hunting and angling. The most valuable of hunting grounds are located in the Piska Wilderness Area, there hunts are organized for convertible currency. Most lakes and rivers are open for angling. Some of the existing equestrian clubs promote recreational and cross-country horseback riding.

The variety of terrain coupled with the relatively long periods during which water is frozen and the land is snow covered provide good conditions for such recreational winter sports as cross-country skiing, iceboating, and lake skating in natural surroundings.

The picturesque countryside as well as many natural marvels favor water, foot, and bicycle trips linked with the discovery of the nature and observations of wild animals. Mineral water and climatic resources, for their part, make possible health care and prevention at spas.

The natural values of this area are protected by law. It encompasses the vast Mazurski Landscape Park and twenty nature reserves. The most valuable natural element is the biosphere reserve of lake Łuknajno. A national park is to be created here at some future date; it will include Lake Śniardwy and a portion of the Piska Wilderness Area. The entire area is also going to be protected as a landscape conservation status (Map 1).

The value of this country is further enhanced by its historical and cultural heritage in the form of five hundred various monuments. The most interesting of these are the works of ecclesiastical, residential, and defensive architecture such as the palatio-park complexes of Sztywnort and Sorkwity, the castles of the Knights of the Teutonic Order in Ryn and Węgorzewo, the Prussian fortress in Giżycko, and several late-Gothic churches. Museums and regional regional expositions are also worth noting. They are in possession of collections tied to the past and culture of these lands. Particularly attractive are the remnants of the mighty German fortifications and the main wartime headquarters of Hitler and other dignitaries of the Third Reich in the vicinity of Kętrzyn. It should also be stressed that this entire area is exceptionally attractive for Germans for historical and ethnic reasons.

The Land of the Great Mazurian Lakes can be subdivided into 150 regions with recreational potential. Very attractive lakeside areas occupy an 220 km². They are located along side large, wooded lakes amidst hilly countryside (Map 2).

The tourist capacity of these areas amounts to 80,000 persons simultaneously taking part in various forms of rest and recreation. The bodies of water fit for sailing have a capacity estimated at six to seven thousand vessels.

TOURIST APPLICATION

The beginnings of tourism among the Great Mazurian Lakes reaches back into the last century. The existing state of tourist development, however, dates from more recent times. The basic tourist base presently amounts to about 21,000 beds for accommodations. Various hotel facilities, private summer homes, and camping grounds. There are also relatively many bivouac sites throughout the forests as well as other supplementary facilities (Map 3).

The existing accommodations are very dispersed. They are dominated by seasonal and social facilities of generally low utilitarian and technical standard. Small vacation lodges and primitive tourist camping sites have a major share of accommodations; the supply of hotels and pensions, as well as camping grounds and private boarding houses is small. Luxury facilities, appropriate for foreign tourists, are absent.

The dispersal of facilities throughout rural areas is characteristic. Accommodations are spread through 130 localities. Isolated, single facilities far from any permanent settlement within forests and along lakesides is common. Main centers are Giżycko, Ruciana-Nida, Mikołajki, and Węgorzewo. They have one to three thousand beds each.

Many tourist localities suffer an obvious dearth of attractive services, especially in the field of restaurants, culture, and sport and recreation. There is also a lack of technical infrastructure, particularly sewage treatment plants.

Available facilities for water tourism are limited to bivouac sites, waterside hostels, and several yacht and kayak marinas and jetties. The main bodies of water offer passenger services for tourists.

Estimates of tourists in this area quote a figure of about half a million each year. About fifty thousand tourists travel along the water courses; sailors make up the majority. The relatively short, but extremely intense seasonal attendance, especially by youth, is a unique quality.

Many foreign tourists also visit Mazuria. Most are from Western Europe, primarily from Germany and Sweden. Observations seem to point that many foreigners are extremely interested in this area and express a desire to visit it again.

DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES

The future tourist development of the Great Mazurian Lakes should take into consideration three primary targets:

- Protection of the natural and cultural environment as well as its recovery;
- The rational use of the diverse tourist values for the needs of domestic and foreign tourism; and
- The guarantying of economic gain for the local population.

Various forms of recreational and cognitive tourism should be developed throughout the area. Such recreational sports and specialized interests in the natural countryside such as yachting and iceboating, kayaking, angling, hunting, horse-back riding, water and cross-country snow skiing, ice skating, hiking, cycling, and nature study should all be engendered. Health spa functions also have great potential for development, both curative and preventive care.

This land is clearly differentiated in terms of development conditions and the potential for improvements. The permanent or temporary restriction of intense development of tourism is fully justified in certain areas. This is mainly due to ecological and social reasons. Permanent restriction pertains only to protected nature zones which encompass the national park together with Lake Śniardwy, the Piska Wilderness Area, and other reserves. Temporary limitations are, on the other hand, the result of local environmental degradation and the need for ecological renewal. Thus, moderate intensification of tourist functions would be advantageous in the areas northern and eastern parts, as well as potentially in its central portion.

The entire area should be developed extensively. It should be restricted to simple facilities for hikers and specialized tourism throughout protected and forest lands. More intense development will encompass only certain enclaves of dense, recreational and service facilities, mainly in towns or in their direct vicinity (Map 4).

The best development potential is seen in already formed or emerging accommodation centers. The small towns of Mikołajki, Orzysz, Ruciane-Nida, Ryn, Pisz, and Węgorzewo are earmarked for further development by the year 2000. Local accommodation and service centers with a rich and varied multi-functional program should coalesce in these localities or their satellite villages. The main regional administrative and service center for this entire region will remain the town of Giżycko; it is also a national accommodation center and inland yachting training and technical center (Map 5).

Environmental and economic postulates suggest a moderate concentration of the accommodation base in the selected centers. These localities should be the venue for large and concentrated complexes or entire recreational districts which should not, however, exceed five thousand beds. The primary factor permitting development projects should be the documented lack of ecological counter indications as well as complete technical and sanitary amenities safeguarding the environment against the negative impact of tourist use.

The emergence of a new and varied tourist infrastructure is assumed by the end of the century. Its capacity should not exceed thirty thousand beds for environmental reasons, *i.e.* 40% of the area's total tourist capacity. These resources envisage far reaching structural and ownership transformations: an increase in the year round and private base and the raising of the utility and technical standard. Facilities with a total capacity of between nine and ten thousand beds are now awaiting rebuilding and refurbishment.

The further development of available accommodations should create about ten thousand new places in hotels and on tourist camping sites. The following facilities are proposed: hotels, pensions, yachting villages, waterside hostels, marinas, camping sites, waterside bivouac sites, as well as recreational centers and sanatoriums. The majority of hotels will represent an average European standard (Map 6).

Table No. 1. Proposed tourist accommodation facilities.

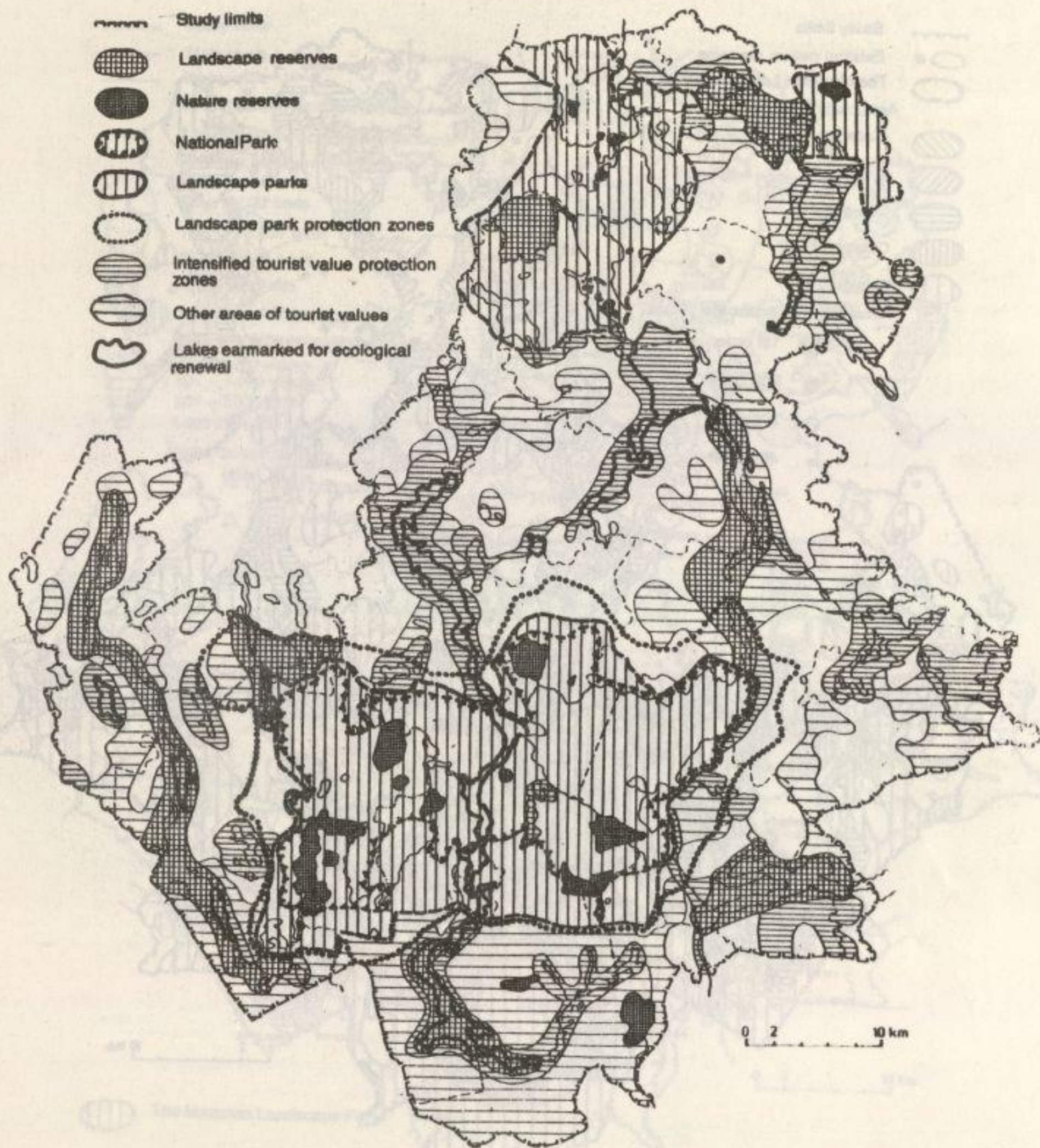
Facility	Number of beds
Hotels	1,500
Pensions	500
Yachting villages and waterside hostels	2,500
Camping grounds and waterside bivouac sites	3,000
Recreational centers and sanatoriums	3,000

The planned construction of luxury facilities encompasses several recreational hotel complexes and vacation villages together with a rich supplemental program. Similar plans exist for the system of marinas with their central facility in Giżycko and several satellite facilities. A total of about two thousand beds are planned for the proposed four and five star hotels.

The expansion and modernization of technical facilities is also planned. This includes all facilities necessary for proper and safe sailing throughout all bodies of water appropriate for this purpose, especially the larger lakes, Śniardwy and Mamry. The new accommodation base will be a totally programmed network of waterside mini-camping sites, waterside hostels, yachting villages and water centers, and well as ancillary service facilities. The execution of these new facilities should be accompanied by the development and technical improvement of existing marinas and jetties, as well as the creation of a permanent rescue service. (Map 7).

Of the other major investment projects, worth mentioning is the construction of a health spa district in Mikołajki, and the equipping of the main tourist accommodation centers in attractive restaurants, stores and cultural facilities. All investment projects should be strictly coupled with the ordering of the whole of the tourist development. Necessary renewal actions should aim at the elimination of minimization of existing spatial aberrations. Of particular importance is the provision of all facilities and localities with highly efficient technical infrastructure and environmental protection equipment.

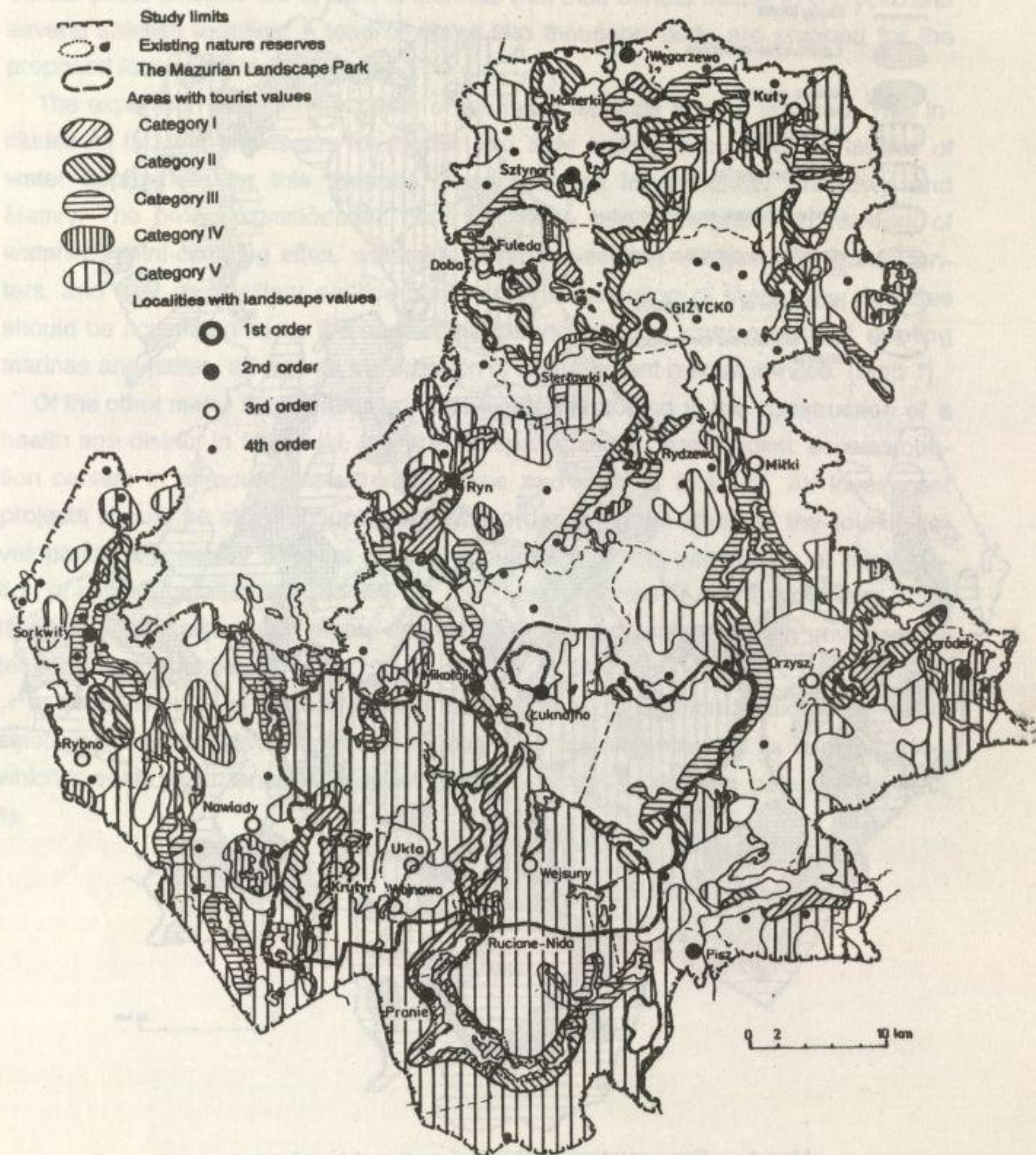
In conclusion, it is worth stressing that the local population is extremely interested in the further development of tourism and the expansion of its material base which is seen as an enormous development opportunity with the potential for profits.



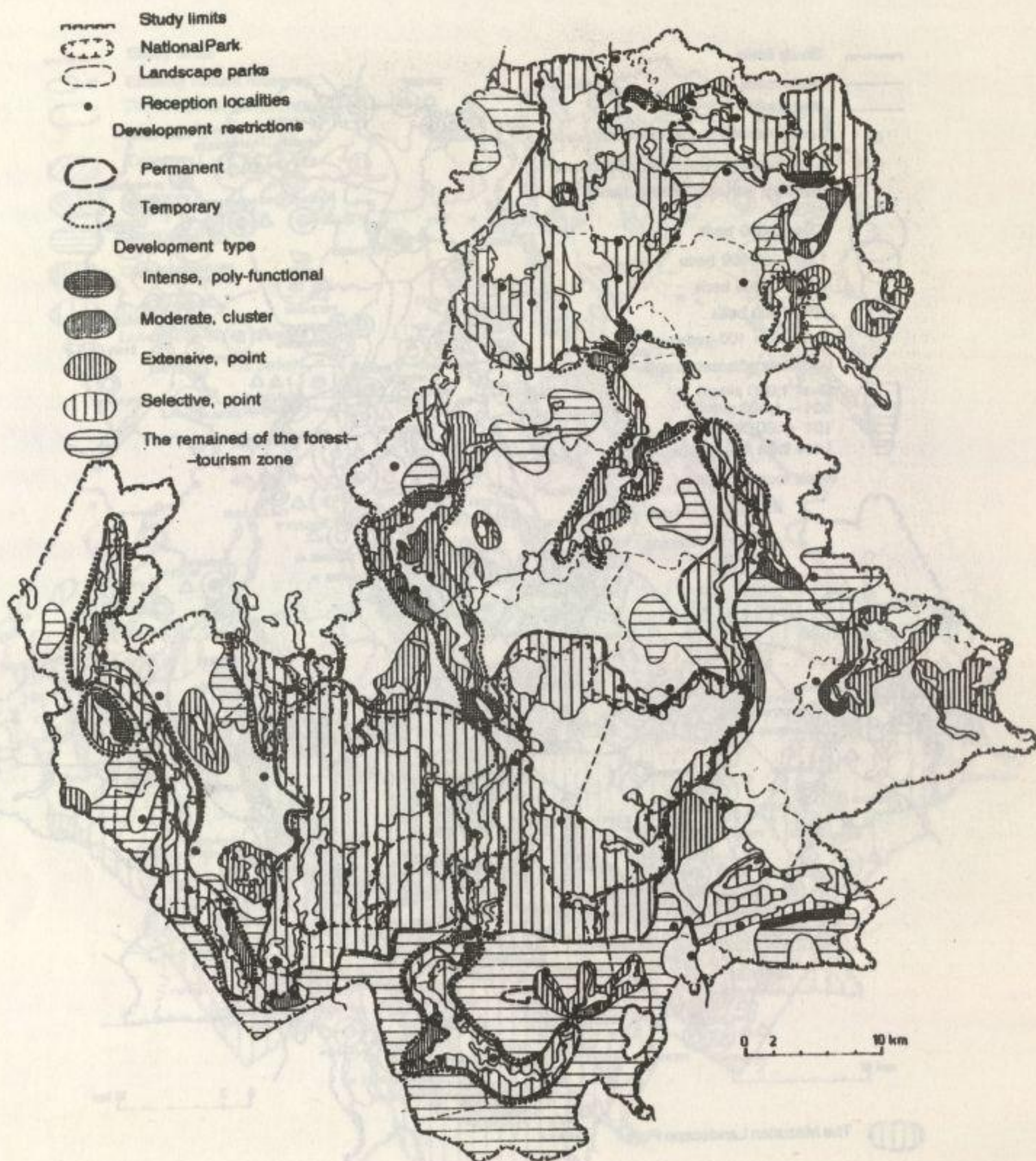
Map 1. Conservation of the Recreational Landscape

Map 2. Tourist Values

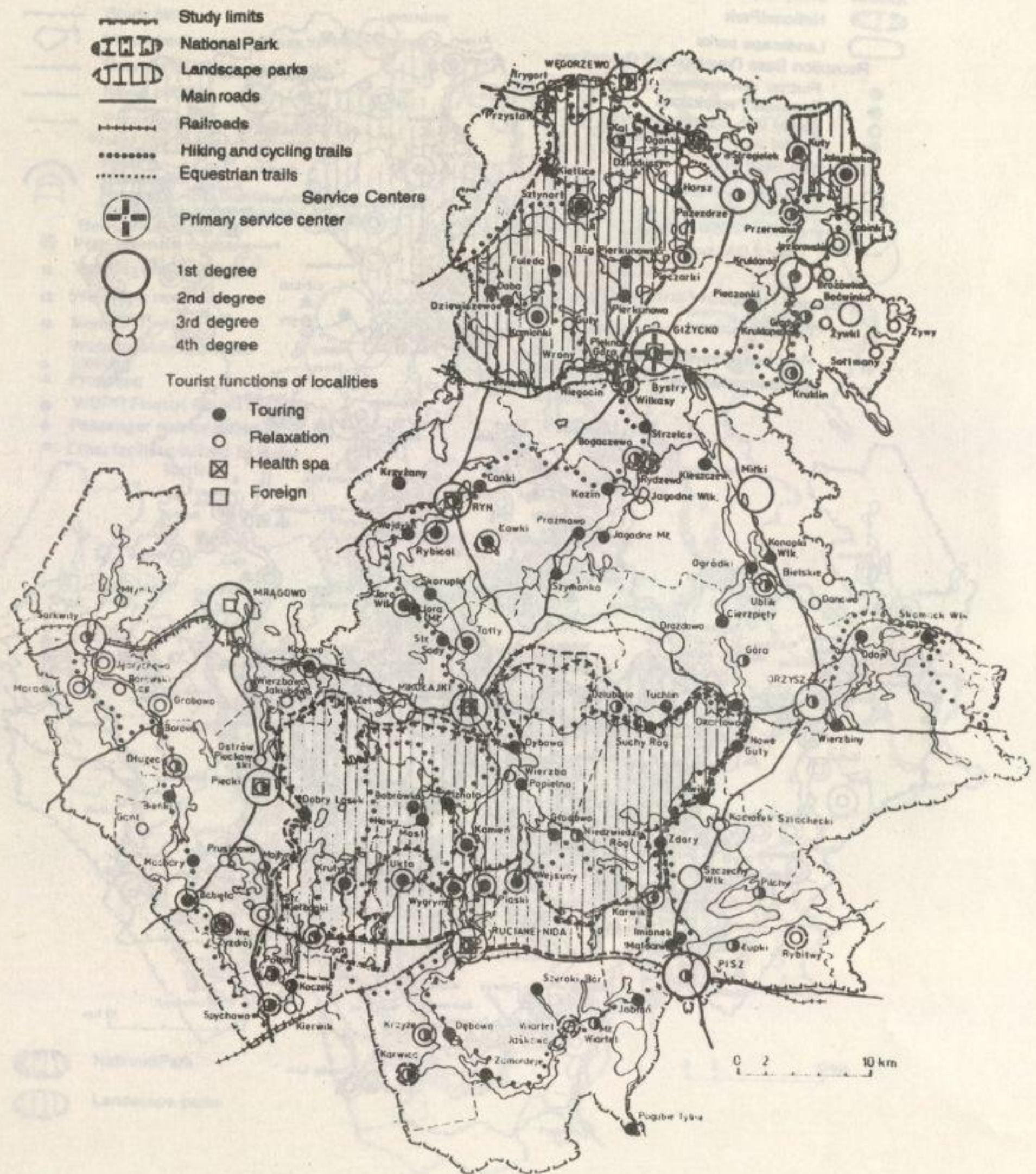
Map 3. Tourist Development



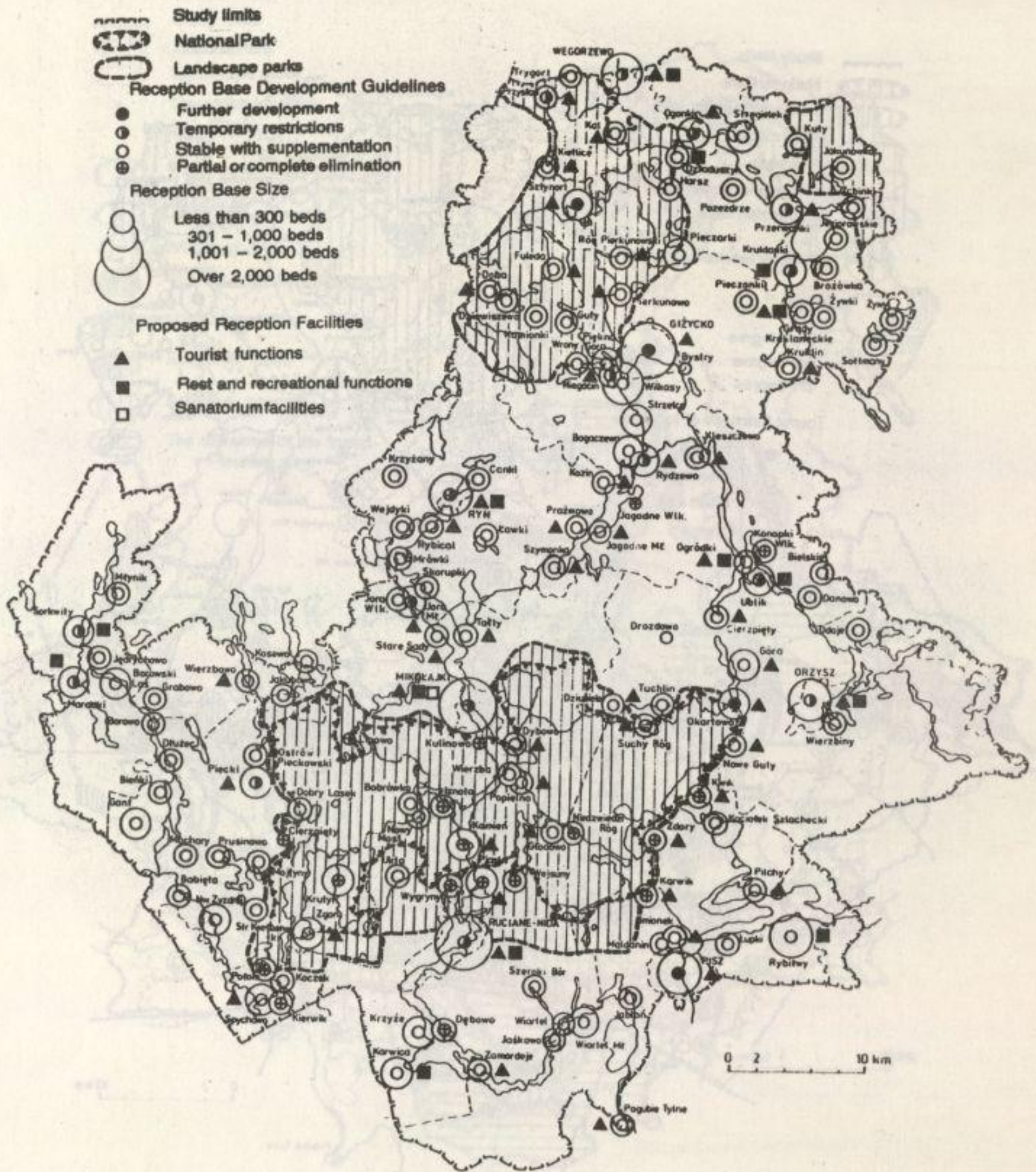
Map 2. Tourist Values



Map 4. Land Development Proposals



Map 5. Service Centers



Map 6. Program Designations

