

# PRESENT CONSEQUENCES OF THE POST-WAR MIGRATION IN THE CZECH BORDERLAND FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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**ABSTRACT:** Czechia lost more than 3,000,000 inhabitants as a result of the WW II. Germans displaced from the borderland formed the largest part. The newcomers after 1945 were of a different character – without any relation to their new settlements. This population formed a special social milieu familiar with the socialist way of thinking and that of a suppressed middle class. The consequences of it are seen in demographic, economic, environmental and social areas. After 1989, the factories in the borderland were mostly closed down, armies left the territory, people were not prepared to start their own businesses. Large-scale landscape protection formed a new barrier. Tourism is not able to substitute for the decrease in employment. The hope in cross-border collaboration has been overestimated.

**KEY WORDS:** borderland regions, resettlement, social consequences, Czech Republic

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## Introduction

As it is very well known, most of German population was displaced from the borderland between former Czechoslovak Republic and the former German Empire after the WWII (Fig. 1). It concerns not only the borderland with Saxony and Bavaria but also the borderland with present Austria and the major part of Poland (Lower Silesia, Opole and Silesia regions). The original population was substituted by mostly Slavonic people from the inland and from abroad. The research question is whether, and to what extent some consequences of this substitution are expressed at present.

We do not want to evaluate the political conditions of the population resettlement in the Czech

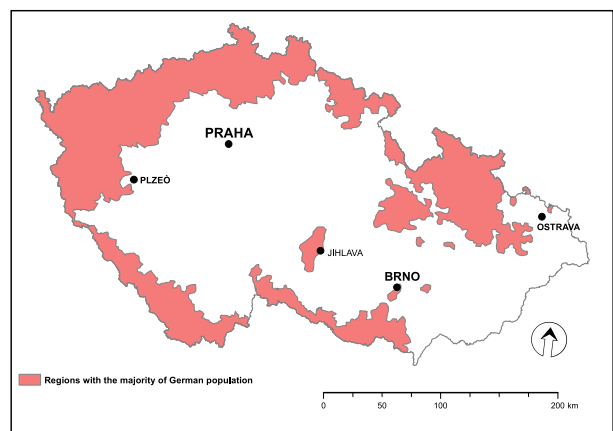


Fig. 1. Czech regions with the majority of German population in 1930.

Source: Population Census 1930. Drawn by P. Dvořák.

borderland after the WWII. On the contrary, we deal mostly with demographic, economic, geographic and social consequences of this situation. The paper aims to focus on the explanation or discussion of the substance of these consequences which have their historical development and present manifestations in different areas.

## Theory

Borderlands are not a new phenomenon, but they are constantly changing and thus being perpetually rediscovered (Pavlovich-Kochi et al. 2004). The authors mention the following compelling factors that underpin borderland dynamics: (1) the importance of geographical factors such as location and region-specific combinations of cultural identities and politics, (2) an increasing impact of global change and the interconnectedness of events occurring at the local level, (3) a growing complexity of decision-making in borderlands as an increasing number of levels of political decision-making, (4) the role of local players within institutional and informal bodies.

Within the Schengen Area, political borders are mostly formal administrative barriers. Laws (and taxes, systems of social insurance, sometimes currencies) applicable in different countries can be slightly different but they are aiming to be unified as well. The borderlands in Europe have become a space of collaboration instead of confrontation. In this sense, the whole of Europe could be considered as a borderland (Balibar 2009). What remains? Maybe some psychological barrier, a historical load, language differences, inertia. The aspects mentioned can be found more in heads of people than in the physical or legislative structures of borders. However, Schengen means probably something more. It is a step towards the creation of a cross-border and in a broader sense, European identity (Zaiotti 2011). Liebenath (2007) speaks about the Europeanisation of the cross-border topic. Thus, many authors point out the cultural aspect of borderland development. Bufon (2007) speaks about the humanisation of the geographical approach to the borderland investigation. Under such conditions, it would be interesting to put a question what sort of population lives in the borderland.

The unification of Europe is not a simple one-sided process (Kaplan; Häkli 2002). There are many nationalist cross-border ambitions and distrust. At present, the Schengen border system is pressed by the consequences of immigration waves from the Middle East, Asia and Africa. The borderland can be also burdened with a historical load – real or apparent – as nationalism resulted in animosities, unfairness and captive transfers of millions of people.

Czech borderlands (apart from the Slovakia section) present a case where the ethnically based population exchange took place after the WWII. It created a special situation, the consequences of which have been visible to the present day. The fact is so obvious that the borderland is considered not as the territory connected to the border but as the territory where the population exchange took place. Similarly, Kind-Kovács (2014) argues that the awareness of the troubled history of Czech-German relations is stronger in this territory than that of the Iron Curtain.

Mainly Czech geographers pay attention to the problem of the borderlands with the former German Empire (Jeřábek et al. 2004). Concerning the consequences of the post-war ethnic exchange, “physical” impacts are mostly mentioned as the reasons for the extinction of former settlements. However, the question how the new created population structure influences the social and economic development of the borderland has been mostly ignored in the Czech literature (with some exceptions) until now. Nevertheless, some foreign authors who are interested in it can be found (e.g. Gerlach 2010). Glassheim (2014) defines the Czech borderland in ecological terms, stressing the inter-relationship of mental, social, and physical geographies.

Although (or just because) the events described happened in not so distant past, historical awareness is only casual and affected by different ideological biases, economic interests and ungrounded fears. Historians often pick some crucial points or events but the everyday life of the borderland lies at the periphery of their interest. That is why the mapping of the background of the population exchange is so important to understand the present borderland.

In contemporary capitalism, disparities between developed and developing countries and regions are deepening. In post-communist

countries, problems, embedded in the past, have not occurred until today, when the compensatory measures ceased to operate. The borderland is often considered to be peripheral – partly due to the borders which form a socio-political barrier (including the Iron Curtain in our case), partly due to natural barriers (mountain ranges, big rivers, protected landscape areas). What happened after the borders were opened and many countries joined the European Union and the Schengen Area? What are the main problems of regional planning and regional development in the borderlands?

Regional planning represents spatial planning at the regional level (Adams et al. 2016). What does regional mean from our point of view? Due to the geographical position of territories where the population changed, regional means micro-regional in our research. In this study, micro-regions are functional regions (integrated mainly by daily commuting) or so-called districts of municipal offices with extended authority. Of course, these territorial units are not isolated but more and more open to the globalisation process.

Regional development is perceived in different ways. A quantitative increase is one of them. However, it faces more barriers – economic, environmental, psychological. A practical approach is focused on the mitigation of disparities. This policy is of course defensive and passive. Regional development could be also perceived as a path to well-being (Perrons 2011). In this case, qualitative criteria are taken into account.

In this context, human and social capital are important. Human capital can be expressed as a sum of qualifications of local people. It consists of education, professional experience, motivations of people to work for their locality or region. As a consequence of data availability it is measured most often as the share of educated people. Social capital can be defined as a sum of usable social contacts which could be used to the benefit of localities or regions.

## Methodology

The analysis of historical literature and archives, the evaluation of statistical data and field research in case study areas were the main methods used. Many sources are kept in Russian or

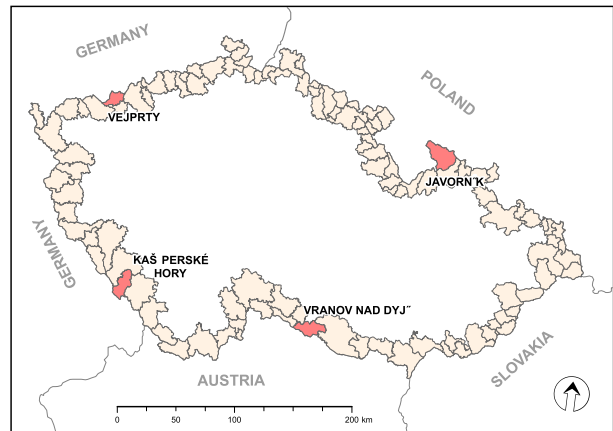


Fig. 2 Location of micro-regions under the study.

other foreign archives, which made the work much more difficult.

Statistical data testify the changes in population, its educational, economic, social and ethnic structures. They mostly rely on population censuses (1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1991, 2001, 2011). The results of the demographic analysis can be found in Vaishar et al. (2008).

The problem is that the hard data characterise the consequences of the population exchange only indirectly. That is why it was necessary to carry out field studies in rural border areas in individual sections – Saxonian, Bavarian, Austrian, and Polish ones (Fig. 2). The authors chose the most problematic micro-regions to analyse the issue closely.

## Background

### Historical background

More than three million of Germans<sup>1</sup> lived in former Czechoslovakia before the WWII. As a consequence of the war, about 2.2 million of them were transferred to the US and Soviet occupation zones in Germany. Additionally, about 300,000 – 500,000 were killed in the front line of the war, about 300,000 escaped Hitler's command, about 200,000 remained missing and between 19,000

<sup>1</sup> According to the population census of 1930 (the last before the WWII), 3,149,820 Germans lived on the Czech territory. It amounted to 29.5 % of total population. Also 31 % of (religious) Jews declared German ethnicity (established on the basis of the mother tongue).

– 30,000 died or were killed during a wild transfer before the official transfer was organised<sup>2</sup>. About 160,000 Germans stayed – mostly mixed marriages or experts important for the Czech economy. The majority of them were assimilated in the second or third generation. In this way, Czechia lost about 3.3 – 3.5 million of inhabitants as a result of the WWII. Approximately 350,000 of them were the Czech victims of the war, the rest were transferred Germans and also Jews and Gypsies who became victims of the genocide. Czechia also lost two different cultures – German and Jewish. The historical and political circumstances of such a development are not the subject of this paper. We are aware that the political situation was controversial and can be evaluated in various ways (Chitnis 2012).

### Geographical background

The German population was originally located in large cities, in some enclaves in the Bohemian and Moravian inland area and – first of all – in the borderland. The Germans even formed a majority in some borderland districts. Remote, hard to reach peripheral territories and villages (mostly depopulated from the beginning of the 20th century) were found almost empty after the displacement. This sparsely populated belt originated along big rural areas on the borderline with Germany, Austria and a part of Poland and not in the urbanised parts of the borderland. Some smaller villages situated in less accessible places did not survive and perished.

On the other side, cities and towns compensated for the population losses relatively quickly. Especially urban settlements situated in mining basins registered mass immigration to mining activities and connected industries, spas, centres of administrative districts and/or light industries mostly gained population similarly like settlements with convenient transport connections. The higher parts of the borderland were sometimes almost vacated.

The resettlement of the Germans went very quickly in the period of 1945-1946. The new

settlement was more complicated. The original population was substituted not only by immigrants from the Czechoslovak inland area but also by the Czech and Slovak population from abroad. Romanies (mostly from Eastern Slovakia) formed a part of immigrants as well. Some new settlers were transferred to the borderland as a punishment. Greek refugees from the civil war in Greece (often of Macedonian origin) came a little bit later.

In this way, a completely new population structure was established in the territory. It was ethnically almost homogenous (formed by Slavonic people) but culturally very heterogeneous because new settlers came from very different countries and milieus. The conditions of new settlers were difficult. The unfavourable natural environment for agriculture, the fact that the traditional ways of life disappeared with the original population and the absence of social cohesion led to economic and social problems. Many new settlers were leaving the borderland again. Stabilisation of the borderland population has been a challenge until the present times.

### Case studies

Four case studies were analysed in the project (Fig. 2). They are described in detail in Vaishar et al. (2011).

The Vejprty micro-region is a territory that is separated from the Czech interior by the main ridge of the Krušné hory (Ore Mts.). After the demise of the national border as a barrier, the micro-region tends to be more attracted by Saxon centres. The past importance of Vejprty is demonstrated by a large, partly dismantled railway station or by a splendid forest cemetery. The exchange of the population together with the construction of the Přísečnice water reservoir led to a substantial reduction in the density of the population after the Second World War and to the demise or devaluation of formerly significant settlements (Fig. 3).

In 2011, the micro-region had only 9.8% inhabitants as compared with the year 1930. The liquidation of a military garrison, the failed privatisation of most of the industrial enterprises and the liquidation of a hospital have been the illustration of development for the last twenty years. Human capital, measured by the proportion of the population with post-secondary education,

<sup>2</sup> The total amount is higher than the number of Germans in 1930. It is necessary to take into account many German refugees who came to Czechia from the territories occupied by the Red Army before the end of the war.



Fig. 3. Měděnec – originally a settlement of copper miners. The village lost 95% of its population since 1930. Photo by A. Vaishar.

is extremely low. A certain hope is associated with the development of cross-border tourism. If the Pulava valley is renewed as a micro-region, Vejprty would be likely to become its centre regardless of its division by the state border.

Also the Kašperské Hory micro-region has lost its economic importance by the depletion of local raw materials, by the transfer of the German population, by the multiple transformation of the economy, by being located on the border with two Bohemian counties, by the elimination of military garrisons and by the establishment of the Šumava National Park, which objectively obstructs the start of economic development. Timber, the main wealth of the micro-region, is mostly exported unprocessed. Only one company has over 100 employees. Today's micro-region has 45% of its pre-war inhabitants and even these days it experiences depopulation. Another problem is the population aging. The micro-region focuses on tourism (Fig. 4), but tourism can hardly replace previous activities. In addition, many enterprises in this sector are based elsewhere, which means that the profits leave this micro-region.

The Vranov nad Dyjí micro-region does not have any town in its territory. It is extremely far



Fig. 4. Modrava: rural seats in the Šumava Mts. were transformed into tourist destinations. Photo by A. Vaishar.



Fig. 5. The village of Bernartice in the Javorník micro-region. Photo by A. Vaishar.

from the centres on both the Czech and Austrian side. The existence of the Podyjí National Park limits cross-border contacts. The micro-region has been recognised as peripheral for at least 150 years. Post-war population exchange deprived it of 30% of inhabitants. Even today the Vranov region experiences depopulation; individual settlements are small or very small and do not form sufficient basis for social infrastructure.

The Javorník micro-region on the Czech-Polish border has better access to resorts on the Polish side, as it is surrounded by the Polish territory from three sides and the main ridge of the Rychlebské hory separates it from the Czech inland. Historically, the town of Javorník belonged to the bishops of Wrocław. The population was reduced by half as a result of the post-war displacement of people. A settlement structure is very fragmented although some larger villages survived (Fig. 5). Demographic trends are mostly negative and the qualification structure of the population is low. The traditional economy is focused on the processing of agricultural and forest products, stone extraction and the processing industry. A major employer is the public sector and people are hired particularly in social services. Today's diversified structure of small- and medium-sized enterprises and social services may become a relatively viable programme for the future. It could be supplemented with tourism for the development of which necessary infrastructure is still missing.

## Consequences

The case study shows that the displacement of people after the WWII affected the population and indirectly also the economy and social system

of the peripheral borderland a lot. In urbanised border regions the situation is different. Let us concentrate, however, on the rural borderland. We discuss social, economic, settlement and landscape consequences which manifest themselves to a greater or lesser extent in all case study areas.

### Demographic development in the borderland

Out of the municipalities with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants in the borderland, 60.3% experienced a population increase in the period investigated, whereas 37.2% recorded the loss<sup>3</sup>. Out of the communes with less than 200 inhabitants (which are usually considered as demographically endangered) 109 recorded the demographical increase and the same number the demographical decrease. As a result, the whole group of the smallest municipalities has been losing demographic perspective. The problem should be observed individually. Therefore, the demographic situation of the rural borderland is relatively favourable.

### Social consequences

As it was stated, the Czech borderland was resettled mostly by Slavonic people from the inland and from abroad – from different parts of Europe with different cultural, religious and economic levels. In such a way, nearly a homogenous ethnical structure was created there. On the other side, the new population structure was culturally significantly heterogeneous. They were trying to find common ground to deal with difficulties.

The borderland was a scene of the first large-scale communist social experiment in Czechia. The original population mostly disappeared. Immigrants had more or less the same social status. The middle class was practically eliminated. It resulted in the strong electoral support for the Communist Party in the borderland from the post-war period to the present time (Daněk 2000). Whereas the establishment of agricultural cooperatives met some resistance in a fertile inland area, in the borderland they were mostly accepted.

The education structure of the population has been significantly weaker in the borderland than in the inland. All borderland micro-regions have the smaller share of people with a university degree than the national average (ca. 12%). It results in lower human and social capital and lower preparation for innovations of any kind at the present time. The education structure responds to the employment demand in productive branches with limited value added. People have the mentality of employees. Such an education level can also be manifested in the limited knowledge of languages which is important for the cross-border collaboration (Petrjánošová 2012).

The differences in social capital in the borderland and social capital in the inland area are visible also at present. As Ptáček et al. (2013) stated: “The continuously settled model territories exhibit much higher social capital scores than the resettled model territories.”

The mentioned manifestations of the population exchange varied in various sections of the rural borderland and in different villages as well. In south Moravia, some villages were resettled mostly by people from another village, e.g. from eastern Moravia. The newcomers brought along their customs and way of life. The vine culture in the part of the south Moravian borderland supports the creation of new identity and restoration of traditions.

### Economic consequences

The way of life characteristic of the rural borderland disappeared with the original population. Owing to the fact that the natural conditions of the borderland were not very favourable for agriculture, economic life was a combination of activities in agriculture, forestry, services, commerce and employment in industrial factories. This made it possible to offset problems concerning individual branches and ensure living conditions for original families. Nevertheless, the borderland was losing its development potentials long time before the WWII as a consequence of the exhaustion of local ores and the decrease in traditional industrial branches.

After 1945, new economic activities appeared in the borderland: agriculture cooperatives (often unsuccessful), state farms (supported by the state) and the branches of big industrial

<sup>3</sup> The rest is manifested by the municipalities where the population number at the beginning and at the end of the period was the same.

companies from the inland. The territory was also settled by military services as a result of the creation of the Iron Curtain: the Czech army, border police, customs services). This structure created employment opportunities and strengthened the employment psychology of local population.

After 1989, this employment system collapsed. The unwieldy agricultural structure was fully revealed. Industrial companies from the inland closed down their branches in the borderland which was one of the first signs of economic problems. The military forces (and supporting services) mostly left, which has been perceived as a big loss for the borderland. Tourist services are not able to substitute for the jobs lost. The education structure and employment psychology limit new activities – even if there are suitable conditions in the borderland.

### Settlement consequences

The original population was replaced in towns but never in rural areas. New settlers occupied central and easily accessible areas in valleys. Small villages especially in less accessible mountain regions lost the majority of the population. Many villages ceased to exist (Mareš et al. 2013). Their number is estimated from some hundreds to about 1,200. To be accurate, it is necessary to note that some villages disappeared because of the creation of military areas, mining activities or waterworks in the borderland.

As a result, the population density considerably decreased. The role of central areas (mostly

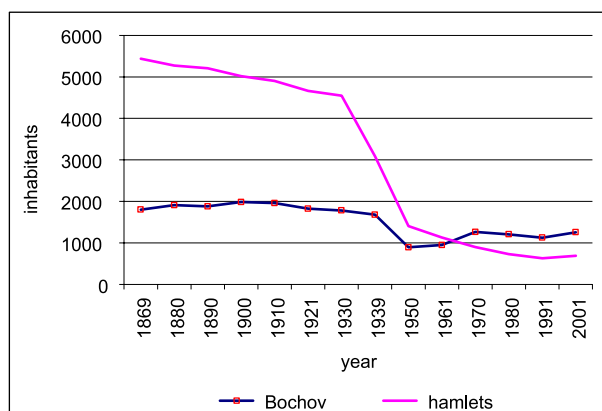


Fig. 6. Case of the Bochov micro-region (W Bohemia): population development in the central place and surrounding villages in 1869–2001. Source: Perlingerová – Vaishar (2012).

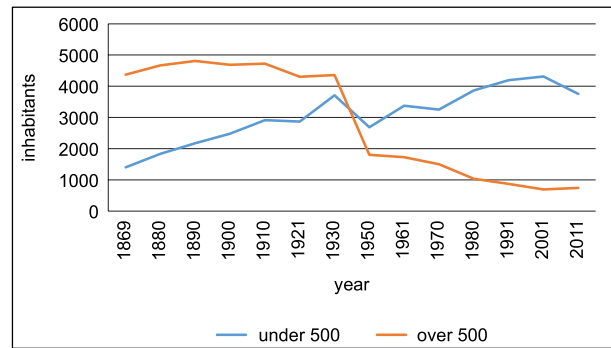


Fig. 7. Case of the Hanušovice micro-region (N Moravia): population development in settlements under (blue) and over (red) 500 m above the sea level 1869–2011.

Source: Historický lexikon obcí 1869–2011.

small towns) increased at the expense of other settlements (Fig. 6). The population moved from higher altitudes to easily accessible valleys (Fig. 7). Small villages lost the important part of services. This fact deepened their peripherality. Unfortunately, the concentration of population in valleys caused higher vulnerability of settlements to flooding.

It is necessary to state that the government did not intend to replace the original population completely. It was presupposed that the territory would play the role of a buffer zone in case of a military conflict. Additionally, it was acknowledged that the living conditions in the borderland are poor and the territory was not able to provide for the initial number of inhabitants. New settlements in central locations were spontaneous at the beginning but later they were regulated by the policy of the concentration of settlements in central areas.

Only in the second half of the socialist period (the 1970s–1980s), some of the borderland villages began to revive together with the development of the second housing. An attractive landscape and relatively cheap real property attracted people from inland towns who rebuilt original buildings. It can be assumed that such activities saved some borderland settlements from extinction. The trend deepened after 1989 when also foreign citizens (especially German and Dutch) participated in it.

### Landscape consequences

The landscape of the borderland was changed both as the consequence of general trends,

continuing at national and European levels and as specific consequences of the post-war population exchange (Kučera and Kučerová 2012). Newcomers had hardly any relation to the settlements and/or houses in the borderland, they perceived the land as rented – so they did not invest there. Coming often from quite different nature backgrounds, the settlers did not understand the mountain landscape of the borderland. Old terraces, paths but also lookout towers ceased to exist. Changes in the landscape micro-structure were connected also with the collective farming, of course. People failed to create any relationship to the acquired land due to the rapid collectivisation of agriculture in the 1950s.

Bičík (2012) documents that the largest decrease in agricultural, especially arable land after 1948 was shown in the territories of the population exchange. Sklenička et al. (2014) recorded the differences between the Czech and Austrian landscape across the border. The Czech part is much more homogeneous as a consequence of creating tracks of fields.

Such an approach to the landscape was manifested also in the time of floods in 1997 in Moravia and 2002 in Bohemia. Having no historical memory, people had no idea how to deal with a catastrophic event. With the movement of people and their constructions from hill areas to valleys, floods caused huge damages and several deaths.

On the other side, the borderland regime – especially in the southern and western borderland caused the nature to be exceptionally

well-preserved. The environment is legally protected (Fig. 8). All four Czech national parks are situated in the borderland. At present, the Iron Curtain is partly substituted by the green iron because of the limited permeability of protected territories.

## Contemporary development

The possibilities of the cross-border cooperation were overestimated just after 1990. There are many problems which limit such activities. Borderland regions in the neighbouring countries are also destitute and underdeveloped as a result of their situation behind the Iron Curtain. The tradition of cross-border collaboration was interrupted not only by the Iron Curtain but also by the population exchange. This is particularly true in the case of the Polish border where the population was exchanged on both sides of it. It seems that only the Bavarian borderland can partly play a role of an axis of development.

The perception of the neighbours seems to be important for the development of the cross-border collaboration at the local level. Some burdens of the past remain – especially on the Austrian border. They are manifested by the Austrian resistance against Czech nuclear power plants and decrees of the president Beneš after the WWII. However, more probably the relations are affected by some resentment of the Austrians extending into the older history (1918). On the other hand, Zich (1998) shows that the Germans are positively perceived by local people in general. At the same time, all the demands of Sudeten<sup>4</sup> Germans' organizations are conclusively rejected. Bazin (1998) argues that people in the borderland view the situation differently than those living in the centre (namely Prague), an area of privileged contacts with Europe. Matušková and Rousová (2014) show the role of geographical education in improving Czech-German (more specifically Czech – Bavarian) relationships.

Building of cross-border identity is one of the crucial problems of the future in the Czech

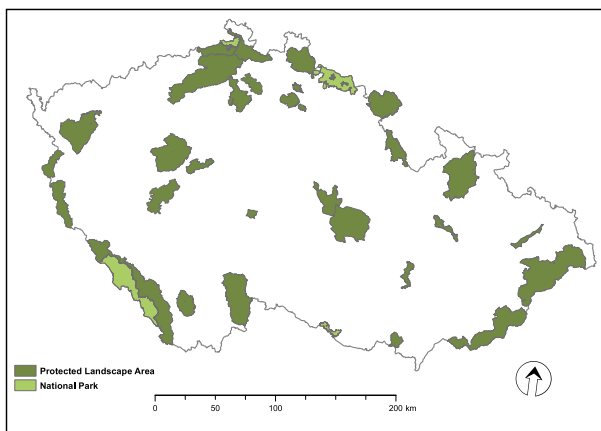


Fig. 8. National parks and protected landscape areas in Czechia.

Source: Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic 2012. Drawn by P. Dvořák.

<sup>4</sup> The term Sudeten Germans has been recently related to all the Germans transferred from Czechia after the WWII regardless of the regions they came from.



borderland. Liebenath and Knippschild (2005) mentioned a high level of uncertainty in the Czech Republic – Germany border which was manifested during the formation of cross-border networks of actors. The efforts are institutionally supported by the establishment of Euroregions. There are 14 Euroregions the Czech Republic is the part of; 13 of them cover the section from which the German population was displaced. The question is to what extent Euroregions contribute directly to the situation in the borderland. It is observed that Euroregions tend to build relationships with regional centres that are sometimes distant from the borderline. The cross-border collaboration directly on the border depends on the level of freedom given by the central government to borderland municipalities.

Although infrastructure cooperation on the border is very often possible, this opportunity is rarely used. For example, a railway station *Železná Ruda* (where the borderline runs right through the platform) is used only from the Bavarian side, although there is a railway also on the Czech side. The *Vejprty* micro-region, which is cut off from the Czech inland by the *Ore Mts.*, should be better serviced by the hospital in *Saxonian Annaberg-Buchholz* because the hospitals on the Czech side are more distant due to the mountain range. The *Javorník* micro-region is open to the *Opole* region in Poland but relations are very rare. The *Integrated Transport System of the South-Moravian Region* runs only to *Laa an der Thaya* although the negotiations on the extension of the system to Austria have been underway. Only recently have some rescue services been allowed to act on the other side of the border if necessary (e.g. *Upper Austria – South Bohemia*). It seems that the development of a cross-border identity and cross-border infrastructure is in its formative stages.

Although Czechia joined the Schengen Area years ago, the legal, institutional and mental barriers of cross-border cooperation still persist (Knippschild 2011). Possible trends of future development were evaluated. They include: A continuous shift of labour from manufacturing to non-manufacturing sectors, penetration of other sectors in rural areas (energy, waste management), orientation towards services and workforce qualification, further delays in the social

infrastructure in peripheral rural regions and the breakdown of a welfare state, the increasing interest of Czech citizens in domestic tourism, the aging of the Czech population, the continuation of counter-urbanisation together with easier migration, increased focus on nature and landscape protection and the ongoing process of European integration.

## Conclusions

Following questions should be put regarding the aim of the paper: To what extent is present development in the borderland a consequence of the population exchange after the WWII? Is it possible and realistic to do anything to improve the situation in the borderland?

In our opinion, the unfavorable education structure which is present in all border micro-regions (including urban) seems to be a clear consequence of the post-war population exchange. Some other non-statistical features could be documented from the field (like the persistent ‘employee’ mentality of people). Yet, every generation loses something from the mentioned characteristics.

The younger population structure which defies stronger depopulation could be mentioned as a positive consequence. Borderland villages have sometimes free areas in their urban territories (left after demolished buildings) which enables new construction without changing territorial plans.

Possible strategies of the development of rural peripheries are seen in the orientation towards primary and secondary industries, the production of energy from renewable resources, focus on tourism and services, focus on housing and housing infrastructure, and focus on the cross-border cooperation.

Unfortunately, no general recipe has been found. Possible positive factors and activities which could be used by local people in some parts of the borderland: a landscape of an excellent quality (but landscape protection often goes against economic activities, cross-border collaboration (with many obstacles), ecological agriculture, forestry, development of local products, social services, the use of attractive, individual places.

The situation in the rural borderland will be problematic and each individual case requires different solutions regarding its specific conditions. On the other hand, when compared with other borderland sections the situation could be evaluated differently. Málíková et al. (2015) analysed the entire borderland of V4 countries using such indicators like unemployment, out-migration or ageing. It can be stated that in some parts of eastern (Byelorussia and Ukraine) and southern (Serbia) borderlands of the Visegrad countries individual indicators are worse than in the Czech borderland.

In general, no quantitative development (which is an idea of both socialism and liberal capitalism) could be expected. Moreover, the peripherality of the borderland is caused not only by economic underdevelopment (or by structural transformation) and geographical position. It is also a question of the cultural level and regional identity presented by Chromý and Skála (2010) on the example of the Sušice micro-region. We could do our best to maintain the quality of life, local peculiarities, tradition (if any exists). Human potential should play the most decisive role in such efforts.

Our paper can be also understood as a warning forecast – what could happen when the original population is substituted or overbalanced by immigrants of different culture.

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