

Stanisław Korenik

Wroclaw University of Economics
e-mail: stanislaw.korenik@ue.wroc.pl
ORCID: 0000-0002-7629-0484

Artur Żurkowski

PPHU Merkury Sp. z o.o.

THE PROBLEMS OF THE MARGINALIZATION OF BORDER AREAS USING THE EXAMPLE OF PRUDNIK DISTRICT

PROBLEMY MARGINALIZACJI OBSZARÓW PRZYGRANICZNYCH NA PRZYKŁADZIE POWIATU PRUDNICKIEGO

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Summary: Contemporary developmental processes take place in diverse ways in socio-economical space. Diversity occurs among individual regions as well as inside of those regions. The border areas are a specific example of this. As commonly is accepted, they show a natural tendency to peripherality. The reasons for this are manifold and in the contemporary realities of Central Europe, they cannot be attributed only to location. The aim of this article is to systematize the knowledge about border areas and the reasons for their peripherality, and an example of Prudnik District has been used.

Keywords: region, border area, peripherality, endogenous resources.

Streszczenie: Współczesne procesy rozwojowe zachodzą w różny sposób w przestrzeni społeczno-ekonomicznej. Różnorodność występuje zarówno w poszczególnych regionach, jak i wewnątrz nich. Obszary przygraniczne są tego szczególnym przykładem. Powszechnie przyjmuje się, że wykazują one naturalną tendencję do peryferyjności. Przyczyny tego są różnorodne, a we współczesnych realiach Europy Środkowej nie można ich przypisywać jedynie lokalizacji. Celem artykułu jest usystematyzowanie wiedzy o obszarach przygranicznych i przyczynach ich peryferyjności na przykładzie powiatu prudnickiego.

Słowa kluczowe: region, obszar przygraniczny, peryferia, zasoby endogenne.

1. Introduction

In the realities of the modern economy, the change of many regions' status can be observed. Some have become a place of intensive activity where the newest sectors are located, while others have lost their previous position, obtaining worse and worse results. However, in the mosaic of spatial units there are some that have always shown the tendency to be marginalized and were perceived as being the outskirts of the national economy. These are the border areas. At present, i.e. at the end of the second decade of the XXI century in Europe, different paths in their developmental trajectories can be observed. Thanks to the abolition of the national frontier as a barrier, with the support of the European Union's funds and integrational processes they have been given an unprecedented opportunity for development. Thus to make good use of this and endow it with the attribute of resilience, there should be an aspiration for the greatest possible use of those regions' endogenic resources in their development. Without that stimulation, the developmental processes may turn out to be merely an episode, and what is more, the beneficiaries of these processes may be other regions, most often of a metropolitan or capital character.

Having the above conclusions in mind, the authors took as their aim to organize and present the knowledge about border areas and to show the basic developmental problems that they are troubled with in today's reality. As an example, Prudnik District has been used.

2. The notion and the nature of the border area

The term border area has ethnic connotations, which in a natural way gives it a spatial dimension. When speaking of borderland as a territory, it can be assumed that it is an area where contacts of many social groups (cultures) take place. Consequently, a phenomenon of permeation occurs here and a specific, unique cultural relation is created. It constitutes a melting pot of communities living in a particular area which accept new, common values.

Most often the term border area refers to a strip of land of a few dozen kilometres, situated on both sides of the state border. Thus these are "junction terrains of one state situated near the border and limited from one side by this border" [Opióła, Trzcielińska-Polus 2013, p. 7]. The term formed by T. Borys confirms this notion. According to it, the border area (borderland) is the terrain lying in the neighborhood (in the vicinity) of the border on both sides of it. Usually it is the periphery of the state of which it is the part of [Borys 1999, p. 70]. A similar definition is applied to the cross-border area, which is a part of geographical, natural, cultural or socio-economic space, directly adjacent to the state border and including terrains of neighboring countries [Zioło 1995, p. 83]. In the European Union's

documentation, there functions the term *frontier zone* which, according to the accepted explanation, does not reach further than 30 kilometers from the border. In reference to administrative division units, frontier zones are determined by interested states in bilateral agreements [The Polish Central Statistical Office 2016, p. 1]. The frontier zone also includes areas detailed in the Regulation (EU) No 1342/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council from 13 December 2011.

In delimiting the border area, no matter of the distance from the border, its characteristic feature is that it consists of a kind of buffer zone between the neighboring states and regions not directly adjacent to the border in the parent state [Opiola, Trzcielińska-Polus 2013, p. 7]. According to A.Sadowski the notion of border area has a diversified meaning [Sadowski 1992, p. 10]:

- it is a territory on which there exists a specific type of coexistence of two or more ethnocultural groups; in this perspective, it is referred to the terrains situated on the outskirts (in the borderland) of the state together with the entirety of issues appearing there;
- these are the forms of coexistence of two or more ethnocultural groups;
- it refers to people (individual or whole communities) characterized by a specific type of conduct and values which are the outcome of two or more cultures.

The important element in explaining the nature of borderlands is, according to the author, the so-called territorial boundary as a specific unifactor connecting communities to a specific territory and manifesting itself in diverse cultural and social interactions in a strictly closed area, in consequence taking on the character of a social borderland [Sadowski 2008, pp. 21, 22].

A precise definition of the border area causes many difficulties resulting from the interdisciplinary nature of the notion on the one hand, and from the diversity of the terms used in relation to the areas of that type on the other. In practice and in theory, one can come across such terms as: “cross-border area,” “frontier zone,” “frontier region,” “cross-border region,” “frontier area” and “border crossing points.” In a narrow definition, a cross-border area is a part of a geographical area which directly adheres to the state border and includes the land of neighboring countries. A broad definition of a cross-border region was formed by A. Skrzydło, who points out that this is: “(...) an area crossing at least one state border and consisting of the sum of at least two socio-geographical areas with a polycentric manner of organization. A necessary element of this definition (...) is the willingness to cooperate in economic, social, cultural and other fields, clearly expressed by frontier regions belonging to different countries and also the conformity of all the actions of those structures to the national law of a given state” [Skrzydło 1994].

In the subject literature one can encounter attempts to specify the width of that strip of land. Assuming that cross-border cooperation takes place on the border areas of neighboring countries, it should be acknowledged that the strip of land stretches along the border and includes up to 100 km of a given county on both sides of it. However, the size is a relative category, and it depends on the set of factors

constituting the basis for grouping spatial units and counting them as cross-border areas. Establishing the size has a greater significance for planning aims than for the development of cross-border cooperation [Rapacz (ed.) 2004, p. 14]. A cross-border region is, in turn, understood as an allocated, relatively homogenous area, situated on both sides of the border, differing from adjacent territories in natural or acquired features which have a cross-border character [Borys 1999, pp. 14, 72]. The criteria of distinguishing cross-border regions include: the level of homogeneity of the region (geographical, economic, of cultural unity, of regional awareness, etc.), the elimination or low formalization of the state border, the level of development and the status of the region, the situation of the region along the borders of the European Union, or the existence of cross-border cooperation and the level of institutionalization of the community's structures [Borys, Pansiewicz 1998, p. 11]. It is not necessary that all the assumptions listed above coexist in order to distinguish a cross-border region.

With such characterization of the area, the territorial perspective of the notion of border area becomes important. In this approach, the specificity of the place and its diversity from other parts of the country was captured. In the geographical aspect, it is assumed that it is a strip of land along the borders of the state; it is distinguished and often categorized in the pejorative perspective, i.e. as outskirts, the frontier. The indicated notion concerns all areas of social life, which is also reflected in the economy. According to S. Ciok, the causes of the low development of border areas are to be sought in two important issues:

- the area usually was a place of low economic activity for a long period
- the delay (in relation to other areas) is a result of changes in the route of the border or (and) changes of its function [Mync, Szul (eds.) 1999, p. 159].

M.S. Szczepański and A. Śliz assert this precisely. According to them, the most important aspect of borderlands is that it is the area of specific socio-cultural, economic or cultural features [Szczepanski, Śliz 2014, pp. 52, 53]. The area is characterized by lasting cross-cultural contacts of a diverse character which result in the shaping of specific, basically unique conduct for a given place and time.

In the realities of each national economy, specific areas are delimited where diverse socio-economical phenomena take a form (more or less) different than the forms typical for a given country. In the case of the borderlands, the element which distinguishes them from other areas is undoubtedly the border, because it creates boundary with its 'otherness' since it is the area situated near the border on both sides of it. The territory typically constitutes the periphery of the states in which it is located.

Independently of the sources of those areas' problems, they show a natural tendency to be socio-economically marginalized, therefore they are referred to as peripheral areas. The word peripherality is to be understood as 'of secondary, minor importance.'¹ Peripherality in the economic perspective is seen in all fields of social and economic life. The peripherality of rural areas is the result of the demographical

¹ <http://sjp.pl/peryferyjno%C5%9B%C4%87>.

factor and the large migration from the countryside. The trend is currently changing because of the increasing interest in treating the countryside as a residential area [Gorzela 2007, pp. 12-34]. This tendency is applicable especially to rural areas situated in the neighborhood of large urbanized areas. Frontier regions have become a specific kind of peripheral areas. According to M. Kotler, they are characterized by a particular location what shapes their geographical identity and results in low accessibility, low level of development, low urbanization or multiculturalism, and often by political instability and militarization [Koter 2003, pp. 13-22].

A peripheral area in the structures of the spatial economy is not only the one most distant from the center and characterized by a low level of urbanization and low employment, but it is also a backward territory in economic (economic peripherality) and civilizational (social peripherality) respect. The basic features of such a place are: impeded access, low level of human capital, (e.g. low level of schooling), limited enterprise (and connected with that weak innovation), the phenomenon of migration to better developed areas, the domination of employment in the primary sector (including forestry and agriculture), production based on a cheap labor force which is the basis for competing with other regions. There appears also the phenomenon of distance from the whole economy of a geographical, institutional and organizational character [Kuciński (ed.) 2011, pp. 251, 252]. At the same time the area is, to a large extent, economically dependent on the center, including help from the budget (of the state or of, e.g. the EU). Such an area does not have at its disposal endogenous resources of a specific character thanks to which it could develop, and if it does possess any it is not able to undertake any reasonable exploitation to use that opportunity. Therefore, to a large extent, the processes taking place in such an area are the result of an external intervention (e.g. as a part of the regional policy or, a broader cohesion policy). Additionally, as was highlighted by K. Kuciński, the assessment of peripherality is ambiguous, since for a given time it was undoubtedly a negative notion, however in light of the risks and possibilities resulting from the globalization processes, it could be its chance [Kuciński (ed.) 2011, p. 40], however connected with the necessity of changes which “knock out” the area from the traditional path of development. As T. Grosse points out, basing his findings on the examples of other counties, such actions have to connect closely the lasting economic policy of the government (central authorities) with the actions of the local authorities. Its aim is to build a new endogenous resource [Grosse 2016] by diversifying the former economic structure of the peripheral area.

3. The peripherality of border areas

The problem of peripherality of border areas is directly connected with the distance and dependence of those territories. They have also “weakly developed infrastructure of an information society, low qualifications of human resources,

fragmentary connections of medium and small enterprises sector, underdeveloped social capital, weakly developed institutional network, weak connections with the global environment” [Proniewski 2014, p. 80]. The listed features have a negative character, and that determines the backwardness of border areas in relation to the whole national economy and in relation to its individual parts. In effect these areas lose contact with the best-developed areas, becoming only a recipient of products and services. It should be remembered that although within the framework of progressing elasticity of spatial structures [Kuciński et al. 2002, p. 50], services and products are subjected to globalization, their manufacturing is subordinate to places strictly set in their space. This backwardness has also a historical character and is connected with a special attitude to the border which appeared in the process of the shaping of the modern state, where it was perceived as a barrier but also as a real threat. A. Miszczuk depicts four causes of regional peripherality which also could be related to border areas, specified and described in Table 1.

Table 1. Causes of regional peripherality of borden areas

No.	Sources of peripherality	Description
1.	Historical factor	The process of forming a capitalistic economy resulted in strongly industrialized areas coming into existence. With time, they became economic cores. This resulted in the “colonization” of other regions, especially cross-border areas.
2.	External effects [Cieślik 2005, p. 116]*	In the core regions, external benefits achieved thanks to accumulating capital and investments in small, strictly closed locations, turned out to be essential. In the performance calculation, this is more vital than access to cheaper resources of border areas.
3.	Innovations	Border areas, because of their low potential, are not able to create innovations. At most, they take part in their diffusion and often take a passive attitude.
4.	Local elites	Border areas are characterized by a low level of human capital, which is not in favor of creating local elites interested in stimulating the socio-economic development of a given region.

* External effects – additional unintentional influence of activity of one subject on the situation of other subjects. They take the form of external benefits or external disadvantages. Then, these effects are the result of the activities of business entities which work to the advantage or disadvantage of other enterprises as well as of households. External effects are a peculiar additional product of business entities’ activity, which is not included in the market turnover. They are thus spread outside of the market, consequently their value is not objectively assessed, Ccf. [Cieślik 2005, p. 116].

Source: own elaboration based on [Miszczuk 2013, pp. 24-25].

The list should be supplemented with the actions of the central authorities in relation to those areas which were often characterised by the lack of will to develop those areas. One can find extreme examples of this in the period of the start of the Cold War. The border area was perceived as a potential place of conflict, therefore

it was given a military character and access to it was impeded and surrounded with many prohibitions. Under these conditions, socio-economic development was considerably restricted, which was directly translated into the living conditions and resulted in the outflow of people (the beginning of the depopulation process) and of capital. From that time, the frontier as a barrier has been subject to a slow process of its disappearance, which has its reflection in new postmodern concepts where the development of border areas is shown as an advantage over the rest of the country.

The development of the border area in a modern economy, undergoing globalization is, to a large extent, an outcome of the size and quality of the endogenous potential. The disintegrating influence of the border, which had to be dealt with in previous years, has meant that those resources were not developed. The majority of these areas can only offer simple resources and base their development on low costs. However, there are a lot of such areas in the joint global economy, and the capital which wanders between them often shows features of nomadism. For those regions, external impulses of systematic character are important, e.g. the activity of the state or of international institutions. The permanence of the development of the area gives ground for forming the widest possible cross-border cooperation. The result of this is often the development of a cross-border region. However, to begin and to continue cross-border cooperation is a necessary condition [Rapacz 2004, p. 16]. The cooperation creates an exceptional kind of international collaboration, characterized by specific features such as neighborly contacts and local or regional levels of cooperation. At the same time, it is not an expression of the foreign policy of the state and it does not have an impact on its territorial integrity.

4. Prudnik District as a border area

In Polish reality, the marginalization processes concern not only the area of the whole country but also the areas of specific regions (provinces). In the scale of the whole country, the state of the so-called eastern provinces (podkarpackie, lubelskie, świętokrzyskie, podlaskie and warmińsko-mazurskie) is especially negatively visible. They show the lowest macroeconomic indicators not only in Poland but also in the structures of the European Union.

The phenomenon of peripherality occurs not only among regions but also takes place inside those units. This is especially visible in areas where large urban centers occur. They create with their base a metropolitan area which develops a growth pole in the region's space (accumulating the growth processes) and in this way has a negative impact on the remaining parts of the region. An example of such a phenomenon is undoubtedly Prudnik District, located in the south part of Opole Province. It is a varied territory of low mountains (built from old Paleozoic formations) which is part of the Opawskie Mountains Landscape Park. The natural

and landscape values, together with the existing tourist infrastructure, make the Opawskie Mountains a unique attraction.

The district of Prudnik consists of urban communes: Prudnik, Biała, Głogówek and the rural commune of Lubrza.

In the province, near the north ring road of Prudnik, the Wałbrzych Special Economic Zone has been located, covering an area of 8.97 hectares. Two sections in the “North Area,” i.e. the northern, industrial part of the city constitute an attractive proposition. These areas are very well connected with the state road 21, state road 20 and provincial road 414. The nearest entrance to the highway is only 28 km away. The province is a part of the Nysa Subregion which is less developed than the Opole Subregion, proved by the fact that in 2014 GDP per capita in that region was 65% of the national average compared to 76.3% of average in Opole Province.

As a result of the conducted analysis, it was determined that in respect of employment in Prudnik District the majority of people were employed in financial and insurance activities, real estate market services and other services (42.2% of the of all those employed). On the scale of the whole province, industry and construction dominated (39%). The size of activity on the labor market is especially worrying. Its indicator in Prudnik District in the working age group was very low: only 22.8%. Additionally, in relation to the average of the whole province, to subregion and to individual districts, the highest unemployment rates were noted in Prudnik District. However, in 2016 it was decreasing quickly and amounted to 10.5%. In this period, this indicator in the scale of the province dropped by 8.9% (in the subregion this was similar to that of the district and amounted to 10.6%). The average pay in Prudnik District in 2015 was 463.48 zł, more than 12% lower than in the province and 90.11 zł (2.6%) lower than in the Nysa Subregion.

The earnings of the communes of Prudnik District are lower per capita than the average earnings of all the communes of Opole Province. At the same time, the share of own revenue in the total revenue is, apart from the commune of Głogówek, lower than the average in the province. Apart from the commune Głogówek, it is also lower than 50%. This is important because in the scope of own revenue, the commune authorities have full revenue power, i.e. they can independently decide about its destination in relation to the budget transfers, and e.g. grants have to be spent according to the aim that they were allocated for. Otherwise the funds need to be returned.

The expenses of Prudnik District show, in turn, the low share of property expenses. In the case of Opole Province, they are lower, but not considerably. For the neighboring Lower Silesia Province, the indicator does not exceed 20%. At the same time, investment expenses per capita are considerably lower than the province average. The data show the low investment activity of the communes. In the solutions accepted for Poland, they are the main subject of public investment.² This shows that

² Communes, in Polish realities, have as much as 80% of the budget at the disposal of all local government units, cf. [Tarnowska 2011, p. 170].

most of the expenses are current expenses. The proportion is unfavorable because it does not benefit the development of the communes.

So far the assessment of the situation of the Prudnik District and the communes that constitute the district in comparison to Opole Province has been static, that is it reflected the status of the given processes in a given time. However for the assessment to be complete, the chosen tendencies occurring in this unit need to be analyzed in comparison to the province. Since 2015, Namysłów District has been excluded from the Nysa Subregion (it became part of Opole Subregion), and Głubczyce District has been included in the region, however to show tendencies in the calculations, the old division of Opole Province into subregions has been kept.

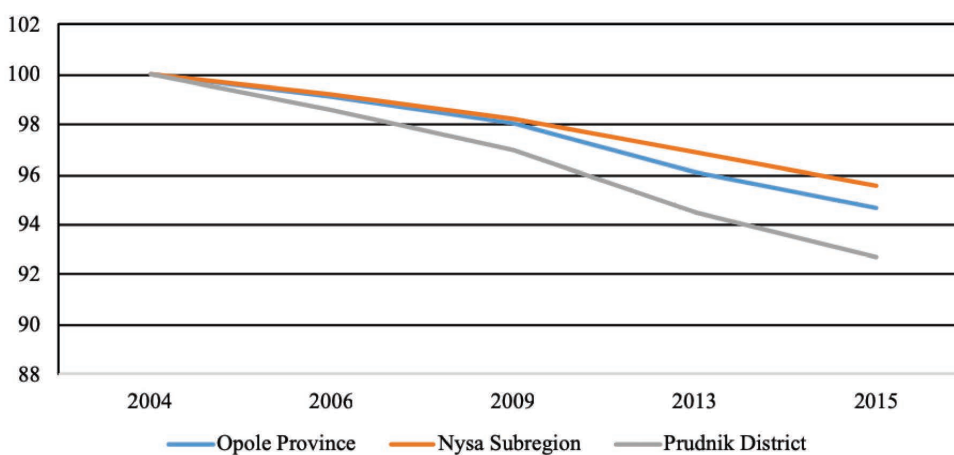


Figure 1. Percentage drop in the number of inhabitants in Opole Province, Subregion Nysa and Prudnik District (2004 = 100%)

Source: own elaboration based on data from <http://opole.stat.gov.pl> (access: 12.04.2017).

Analysis of the given data indicates that one can talk of depopulation of Opole Province. The most dramatic course of this process is taking place in Prudnik District. The claim that the district has become less populated is justified – in 12 years the number of inhabitants has dropped by almost 8%.

At the same time, according to data from The Polish Central Statistical Office, the number of business entities has grown in all the areas of Opole Province, but in Prudnik District the growth is considerably lower.

All these arguments allow to state that Prudnik District is an area which very poorly developed, showing features of peripherality, and among the most unprofitable aspects of socio-economic life of the district one can include:

- unfavorable demographical tendencies,
- a high level of unemployment,
- a low level of infrastructure saturation and the fact that it is largely worn-out,

- shortages in the education infrastructure, especially in smaller localities,
- low availability of medical services,
- weak development of enterprise and low level of employment activity.

The problems above and other problems, not stated here directly, have to be solved if the authorities of the area think about a satisfactory pace of development. Therefore, it is impossible to content oneself with current activities aiming to solve the most urgent problems. Strategic actions aiming to program the future should be undertaken. The undertakings should be based, to a large extent, on endogenous resources. Their diversity in the scale of the whole district is large. These are not only human or natural resources but also the fact of the geographical situation which should be treated as an asset, not as a threat. It should be highlighted that the endogenous potential of Prudnik District shows many unique features, which largely guarantees its effectivity and the influence on the development of the area. The assets are connected with the geographical situation (the climate, natural topography), the state border (cooperation with the Czech side), cultural diversity and social capital aimed at the development of the 'small homeland'. In former times, the values were often perceived as a developmental barrier and, to a large extent they conditioned the socio-economic situation of the district. At present, together with the abolition of the state borders (barriers to the flow of people, goods or services), the multi-sided diversity of the frontier territories is perceived as an asset of the district. The greater focus on the cultural traditions, as on essential material and non-material local resources, also has a big impact on the development. The result of these changes is the very strong activity observed in the economic, social and cultural spheres. The awakening of the local inhabitants' activity is a change to be expected, although this is a process and it cannot be realized in a short period of time. The basis of the community is changing from being apathetic and awaiting help from outside to spreading the idea of resourcefulness and organizing local economic networks in the form of different kinds of agreements between entrepreneurs, local authorities and social organizations. The changes are important because as their result, specific endogenic potentials get transformed into real factors of development. The result of the uniqueness and specificity of the factors is that the development of the researched area gains a unique character in the scale of the province and the country. The basic feature of the analyzed area is the large activity of its inhabitants based on the feeling of local patriotism (uniqueness) and joint building of their 'small homeland'. Such attitudes are of course characterized by mercantilism, but also by a willingness to work together for the local community and by the feeling of pride in being a part of it. In effect, the socio-economic development is realized largely in a responsible way, i.e. it accounts for the needs of the local community preserving the values of the natural environment and its cultural traditions.

5. Conclusions

The civilizational changes and the accompanying transformations in the modern economy, where quality, uniqueness, and originality become important, result in the opportunity for change for areas that were, up to this time, doomed to play a secondary role. This concerns also frontier areas, which in their European history have never had such conditions for development, and to work their way out using their diversity. The problem is connected with the fact that to make the most of the opportunity, the strong engagement (activation) of the local community is needed also employing endogenic resources of a unique character. In the realities of Prudnik District, which went through an unfavorable period, new developmental possibilities have appeared, based on utilizing the assets of the region which are connected with its geographical situation and with social capital, too. However, many issues remain unsolved, and not solving them may block the development of the area and turn it into being insignificant peripheries.

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