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## CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT OF PERIPHERAL PARTS OF THE CZECH-POLISH BORDERLAND: CASE STUDY OF THE JAVORNÍK AREA

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### Abstract

Peripheral regions on the state border are among the most problematic areas of Czechia (the Czech Republic). The special case of the Javorník micro-region which is physically open to and historically anchored within Polish Lower Silesia was chosen as a study area. The question of possible substitution of a peripheral position in the national context by cross-border collaboration was posed, and it is shown that certain potential for this kind of collaboration exists, in the face of already-intensifying cross-border contacts, albeit with relations with Czech 'inland' areas remaining closer than the cross-border tendencies thus far.

### Keywords

periphery • Czech-Polish borderland • rural development • Javorník

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### Introduction

Peripheral micro-regions are among the CEECs' most problematic areas. Within them, remoteness from main centres usually combines with the issue of marginality, which manifests itself as a lack of capital, reluctance to invest and general backwardness. Moreover, a great part of the Czech borderland (apart from that adjacent to Slovakia) is affected by the problem of post-War population

exchange, whose effects remain tangible to this day where the specific quality of the social environment is concerned.

The micro-region of Javorník occupies the north-eastern corner of Jeseník district, but is surrounded by Polish territory on three sides. Moreover, the main ridges of the Rychlebské Hory and Jeseníky Mts. extend between the Javorník area and the Czech 'inland', which inevitably means that the micro-region opens into Poland's Opole

Voivodship, Nysa district. This is to say that, since the full opening of state borders within the Schengen Area, centres on the Polish side have become more accessible than those on the Czech side of the border. Is there any presupposition that the Javorník area could fall into the sphere of influence of Polish centres?

### **Theory: Periphery, marginality, borderland**

The periphery can be explained as the effect of the workings of the core – periphery model (Krugman 1991) within the 'new economic geography' (Fujita & Krugman 2003). Also in geography, the concept of central places introduced by Christaller in 1933 and the later work by Friedmann dealt with the periphery and peripheralness, the latter author (Friedmann 1966) attributing to the centre a high level of autonomy, and an ability to create innovations and follow the main development tendencies. In contrast to that, the periphery is characterized as territory not able to manifest the changes mentioned. The theory of nodal regions is the related concept in geography.

From Christaller's central place theory (Christaller 1966), it follows that the periphery occurs mainly on the limits of the spheres of influence of individual centres, distance being the decisive criterion. However, the phenomenon of peripheralness was later widened to include determination in line with physical conditions, historical development, political organization and economic power. Recently, in turn, peripheralness has been linked with social organization, and therefore with the activity of interested subjects, or more simply with human capital. Ferrão and Lopes (2004) observe the periphery from the viewpoints of more approaches – periphery as a distance (the spatial approach), periphery as a dependency (the core – periphery approach mentioned above), periphery as a difference (the global – local approach), periphery as a discourse (the representational approach, pointing also to positive characters of the periphery as regards the environment, heritage and identity).

Wójcik (2011) shows the development of the theory of rural periphery using the central place theory, the theory of the economic base, the concept of polarization, the urbanization concept and post-structural research theories. He points out that the post-structural approach overrides what

is imagined to apply to the developed centre and the backward periphery. The approach stresses non-economic and hidden values like cultural capital, action groups or mentality in the periphery.

Additionally, new theoretical modifications arise, like the concept of the semi-periphery introduced by Wallerstein in 1976 (on the global level), and various transitional states between core and periphery including the possibility of the periphery making itself independent of the core under new conditions engendered by progress in technology and communications (e.g. Copus 2001). These modifications somewhat tear down what was originally envisaged as regards the clear relationship between the core and the periphery.

The concept of the perception of the periphery also comes into play. According to Schmidt (1998), the periphery is perceived as a territory insufficiently integrated into dominant structures, processes and systems. Regions which have failed to follow global systems are called marginal. Nevertheless, the definition of marginal regions is vague and sometimes coincides with peripheral regions. Leimgruber (2004) defines marginal regions as those lying beyond mainstream processes (in a sort of vacuum) as regards both society and the economy.

In social sciences, marginality is often used to denote a weaker degree of exclusion. Opinions from other scientific branches can also be met with; for example in regard to agriculture, with relevant regions being those reporting less than 70% of optimal yield levels. Taking into account the various definitions of peripheralness and marginality, we prefer the standpoint that 'peripheral' indicates a spatial (primary geometrical) characteristic of territory, whereas 'marginal' marks spatial (qualitative) characteristics. It is clear that the situation is the most serious in areas where both spatial and qualitative aspects are active together.

In Article 2 of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Union calls attention to the geographic conception of the periphery as a remote and poorly accessible area. It constructs various indicators of peripheralness (at the NUTS 3 level), with the aim of problems being mitigated through the building of corresponding transport connections. Geography usually operates with the notion of distance. Hence, it follows that peripheral (micro)-regions should be distant from centres as somehow defined. Distance itself can be understood in numerous ways either geometrically or through

time, or as regards costs needing to be surmounted. However, essential for us in this context are consequences of a peripheral location that hypothetically entail complicated accessibility and hence worse conditions for the development of the micro-region.

The European countryside is developing under the sway of general globalization trends (Woods & McDonagh 2011). Globalization means equalization of production and consumption patterns, which are managed from a very limited number of world centres. In reality, globalization is also capable of delivering new technologies of consumption to the periphery also, very rapidly. The same may not be said about the technologies of production, because the financial sources needed to introduce new technologies are as a rule missing there. The introduction of innovation to the periphery seems very positive, but does occur at the expense of a certain loss of local and micro-regional identity that could also impact upon the motivations of people, and sometimes also attractiveness as regards tourism.

The changing role of the borderland in the re-integrated Europe is discussed, e.g. by Bufon (2007). Nevertheless, in our paper, a borderland is investigated as a special case of peripherality. The border problem is in fact but one of the circumstances impacting on rural development in the area in question. Together with Minghi (1991), we can state that border geographers focus on the edges – not the cores of regions. They investigate a local-scale dimension within international context.

In generally it is rare for European geography to see a borderland as a periphery. For cross-border collaboration, and exchanges of goods, people, know-how etc. across a border, as well later institutionalization of co-operation in the form of Euroregions and cohesion programs probably favors the borderland as set against inner peripheries. Salgado (2010) speaks about new ways of thinking as regards the organization of European territory, though Perkman (2007) suggests that the Euroregions are part of the policy innovation scenario enabled by EU multi-level Governance, rather than new types of regional territorial entities.

The question is how to evaluate the development in borderlands and how to evaluate successful rural micro-regions. Some studies (e.g. Hampl 2000) seek to achieve these goals by comparing

a borderland with the 'inland' area. For example, Bański (2008) proceeds on an assumption that the aim of development is increased wellbeing of residents, i.e. enhancement of living standards and quality of life quality, and then goes on to assume that this happens through the improvement of infrastructure, housing development, sound environmental management and nature conservation, the acquisition of new investments and the development of social and economic activism on the part of residents. This kind of idea was further developed by Czapiewski (2010). Similarly, for Perlín and Šimčíková (2008) successful municipalities are those with an increasing number of relatively young residents, in which there is a development of functional economic activities sufficiently equipped, looking pleasant and operating correctly. However, there remains a problem with measuring these factors. Apart from that, different social groups have obviously different ideas about development. Bański et al. (2010) studied the impact of the borderland position on the rural development in the Lublin Voivodship, going on to stress how borderlands are usually remote from the national and regional capitals, and thus only poorly accessible. They often display a marginal character in consequence, this denoting economic stagnation, poor infrastructure, limited investment and a decline in population. However, not all borderlands are marginal, since some have the potential for economic collaboration and further development.

From the Polish side, the situation could be perceived differently from the perception in the Czech Republic. According to Dołzbłasz and Raczyk (2011), the southern border of Poland is typical on the one hand for its mountainous characteristics attracting tourism, and on the other hand for the relative cultural proximity of Poles, Czechs and Slovaks that it has to offer. Additionally, in contradistinction to the Polish eastern border, the southern one is a frontier within the Schengen Area characterized by economic disparities between Polish, Czech and Slovak areas that are more limited than those along other sections of the Polish borderland. Dołzbłasz (2013) also shows that cross-border cooperation projects being implemented on Poland's southern border are aimed more at tourism – as distinct from those in the western border area. Nevertheless, from the same source it follows that the numbers of projects on the southern Polish border decrease from west to east.

From the Czech side, the attractiveness connected with mountains is distributed to all sections of the borderland (with a short exception in southern Moravia), while all Czech frontiers are inner borders of the Schengen Area, with cultural proximity with the Slovaks further perceived as being closer than that with Poles. Additionally, circumstances as regards stability of population in the Czech-Polish and Slovak-Polish borderland are quite different. Whereas the Slovak-Polish borderland is inhabited by the same people, with joint and familiar customs and way of life known of for ages, the population along the Polish-Czech borderland was mostly exchanged after World War II. The contacts among people on either side of the Polish-Czech border had therefore to be built up again from the early 1990s onwards.

The Czech borderland is a special case, as its peripherality (and marginality) are conditioned, not only naturally, but also by the ethnically-based population exchange after WWII (in truth this was the case for the whole Czech borderland beyond the Slovak part). Moreover, a significant part of the Czech borderland assumed the character of Iron Curtain up until 1989.

Although the overall historical development was similar, there are differences among borderland sections in regard to their natural character, social conditions, geopolitical importance, etc. This paper is focused on just one part of the Czech-Polish borderland, though a similar analysis was carried out for the South-Bohemian and South Moravian borderlands (respectively Kubeš & Kraft 2011; Vaishar et al. 2013).

Hypothetically, cross-border collaboration could be the driving force by which to overcome borderland marginality. Jeřábek (2002) assessed the overall situation in the field, while Ptáček and Mintálová (2012) defined five development stages to the collaboration within the Czech-Polish borderland:

- 1) 1989-1992 wild (spontaneous) collaboration;
- 2) 1993-1996 establishing of cross-border regions (Euroregions);
- 3) 1997-2004 using the Phare CBC funds for collaboration;
- 4) 2004-2007 interim period between the accession of both countries to the EU and to Schengen Area;
- 5) 2007 and later improvement of conditions as regards collaboration within Schengen Area.

At the present time, the collaboration in the area under study is supported within the framework of an Operational Programme dealing with cross-border collaboration between the Czech and Polish Republics over the years 2007-2013. Its priorities are:

- 1) improvement in accessibility, environmental protection and risk prevention;
- 2) improvement in conditions for the development of the entrepreneurial milieu and tourism;
- 3) support for collaboration between local communities;
- 4) technical aid.

Tourism could play an important role in the borderland economy. Więckowski (2010) argues that tourism plays a significant role in areas of the Polish borderland, even sometimes the most important role in the borderland economy. Vodeb (2012) states that the competitiveness of border regions is often lower than that of a country's interior regions. She is of the opinion that tourism alone is able to overcome the barrier and to connect both sides of the borderland. In this connection, David et al. (2011) point out that accession to the Schengen Area has supported cross-border tourism in Central Europe, whereas barriers have remained on the frontier of non-Schengen countries in the east and south including the Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Belarusian border. Weidenfeld (2013) remarks that it is not only direct benefits from tourism that are to be taken into account. Cross-border tourism is also an instrument for the transfer of innovation knowledge. Więckowski (2008) adds the importance of tourism in relation to protected areas in the borderlands.

## **Methodology and hypotheses, aim of the work**

For the analysis, standard methods of regional geography were used, i.e. a combination of the technique of the analysis of statistic data, field research and qualitative approaches in regional projection.

The main hypothesis of the research was that the micro-region, which is a historic part of Silesia and opens rather into Poland than into the Czech 'inland', including as regards its contemporary reality, may gradually gravitate towards centres on the Polish side of the border, with there therefore being more marked trends for cross-border collaboration than in other borderland sections,

separated from neighbouring states by a barrier of borderland mountains.

The main goal of the work was to analyze in greater detail the mechanism underpinning developmental relations and trends in one of the remotest borderland sections, which is in fact less remote from foreign centres than it is from centres on the Polish side of the border.

The aspects checked in the above connection were:

- transport connections between the Polish and Czech sides of the border;
- the presence of Polish entrepreneurial activity on the Czech side of the border;
- the use of existing legislation in support of such activities;
- the existing linguistic barrier;
- tourist activity capable of supporting the collaboration;
- official and unofficial contacts at the levels of communes and associations.

The region under study is a part of the Praděd/Pradziad Euroregion. From the Czech part, the territory has been investigated by Mikšátková (2005), who stated that the Euroregion helps to equip individual local authority areas with networking of personal, cultural and sporting activities. On the other hand, it is of hardly any importance when it comes to establishing economic collaboration. No change in the situation has been seen within the framework of our investigation either, and the territory in question remains peripheral. Let us presuppose that the Euroregion plays some role in bringing people together, but almost a zero role in regional development. Bukała (2008) suggests that there are two topics of collaboration in the Euroregion under study: historical heritage and tourism.

It was the aim of the work described in this article that the micro-region of Javorník on the Czech-Polish border should undergo investigation. Questions revolved around whether the mentioned micro-region satisfies the conditions of peripherality and marginality, what are the reasons for that situation, should it apply, and what are possible potentials for (or possibly barriers to) future development. At the outset, the following specific aspects of the Javorník micro-region should be defined hypothetically: geomorphological openness of the territory to Poland and the mountain range barrier separating it from the rest of Czechia, and a position close to the border with Poland which was formally alien under the War-

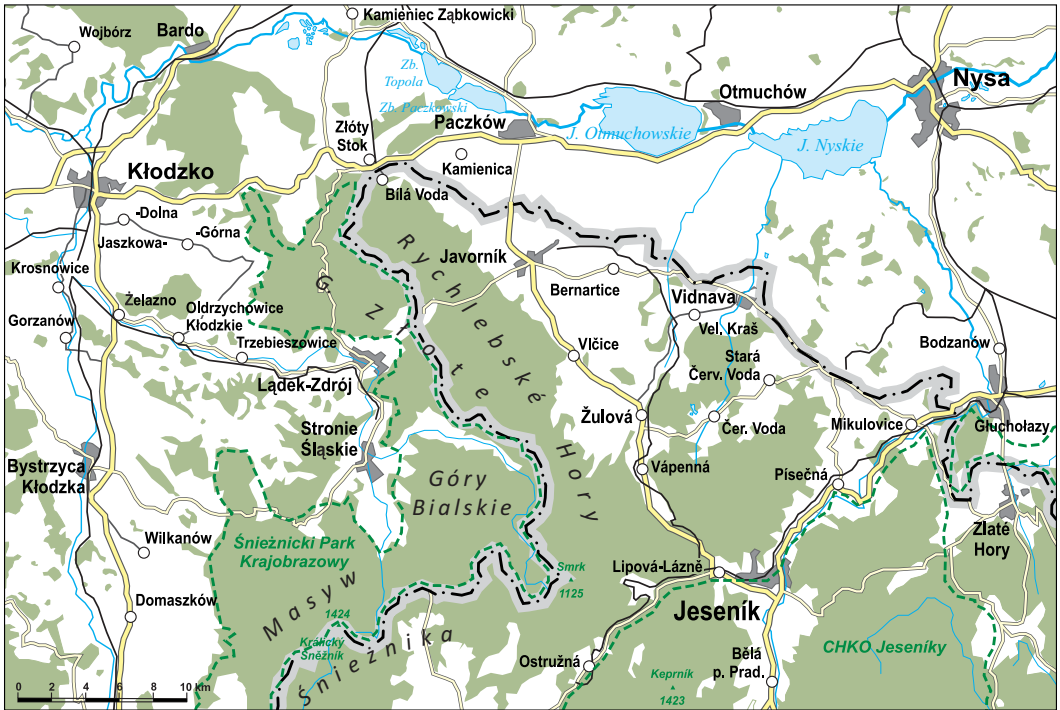
saw Agreement, albeit with limited confidentiality pertaining between the two countries.

Geographers from the Palacký University in Olomouc (Ptáček & Mintálová 2012) came to the conclusion that Poles know more about the Czech part of the borderland, have more positive attitudes to collaboration and make more efficient use of existing potential for it. The neighbouring Králický-Międzylesie area was investigated by Vaishar et al. (2007) as a cross-border region, this being unusual since their analyses very often concern just one side of the cross-border space. Kladiwo et al. (2012), in comparing the Czech-Polish and Slovene-Austrian borderlands, stated that the former (its easternmost part excluded) is characterized by substantial population loss still more marked on the Polish side. According to their typology, the Javorník micro-region is classified with traditional industrial areas without larger towns in which only a limited proportion of the population is in the tertiary sector, and the young and working-age populations assume a high share. On the Polish side, rural areas with a very high share of the primary sector and of older population are to be found.

Of the Polish side, Heffner (1996, 1998) was active in the investigation of territory not far from our micro-region during the 1990s. The Proceedings (Heffner & Drobek 1996) brings a large amount of knowledge about the problem to bear. Oleszek (2007) in turn deals with Polish border villages of the Kłodzko micro-region. The marginality of the area under study is nevertheless underlined by the fact that more attention was paid to the border regions near the industrial space of Ostrava-Katowice (Runge 2003; Kłosowski et al. 2004), to the territory of the Polish-German-Czech triangle (Ładysz 2006) or to Lower Silesia (Ciok et al. 2006).

## **Empirical analysis: The case study region**

The Javorník micro-region is surrounded by Polish territory on three sides. In the west it borders with the historic Kłodzko in the Lower Silesian (*Dolnośląskie*) Voivodship. The state border there is the physical barrier constituted by the Rychlebské Hory Mts. Right over the border on the Polish side, there is the most popular Polish spa resort of Łądek Zdrój and the recreation village of Stornie Śląskie. The old mining town of Złoty Stok is



**Figure 1.** Map of the micro-region under study. It shows that the space between Bílá Voda, Javorník and Žulová is open to Poland, whereas a mountain range separates this area from the rest of Czech territory.

situated in the north-west, directly on the border. The terrain into the Opole Voivodship in the north and east is open. The nearest small towns are the historic Paczków and Otmuchów with their well-known lakes. In line with the condition of roads on the Polish side of the border, a possibility offers itself for Polish vehicles to transit via Javorník.

In turn the Javorník area is separated off from the remaining part of Jeseník district by the Sokolský ridge horst of the Rychlebské Hory Mts. Behind them 'inland' lies the district and spa town of Jeseník. Further still there rises the barrier of the Hrubý Jeseník Mts., which separate the entire Jeseník district from Czech 'inland' areas. The area in question is thus relatively exceptional by Czech borderland standards in being rather open to the territory of a foreign neighbour. The distance separating Javorník from the nearest centres of settlement on the Czech and Polish sides of the border illustrates this well. Javorník is about 25 km from Jeseník, but this district centre is in fact nothing more than a small town. The nearest town of medium size in Moravia is Šumperk (28,000 inhabitants) at a distance of

64 km beyond the mountains. In turn the regional centre of Olomouc and the historic Opava are at distances of 121 and 98 km respectively.

On the other hand, Poland's Kłodzko, whose size resembles that of Šumperk, is just 37 km distant, though a mountain chain must admittedly be traversed if it is to be reached. Nysa with nearly 47,000 inhabitants is closer (at 35 km), while the nearest more major city is Wrocław (633,000 inhabitants) at a distance of a mere 92 km. What is more, Wrocław has a significance on the European scale rated at two orders higher than that of Olomouc.

It is thus reasonable in the period of the decreasing importance of the state border as a barrier to question whether the Javorník micro-region would or will not tend to orientate to Nysa as the nearest medium-sized town, and to Wrocław as the nearest city, rather than to Šumperk and Olomouc on its own national territory. A further, though somewhat distinct, question concerns the extent to which cooperation between peripheral small towns on either side of the border might potentially or actually gather pace.

## Historical development

Javorník was originally property of the Diocese of Wrocław, a fact also confirming the micro-region's historical tendency to gravitate towards Polish Silesia. The beginnings of colonization here date back to the 1260s, while first mentions of the castle are from 1307. In the 16th century, silver ore started to be extracted, a foundry and an iron mill were constructed, and mining colonies started to come into existence. The Thirty Years' War along with plague epidemics brought recession, ensuring that Javorník remained an unattractive small town as of the end of the 17th century. A boom commenced in the 1720s, however; the market eased up, and guilds developed. In 1748, the head office for the diocesan farms was established in Javorník, and the town thus became a centre for the entire Jeseník district. The Seven Years' War brought new hardships, however. After the division of Silesia, Bishop Schaffgotsch moved to the Janský Vrch chateau, to which regional authority transferred in 1767. The town and its surroundings recorded a new prosperity in both economic and cultural spheres.

About 1770, manufactories started to emerge that produced homespun, and their output increased during the Napoleonic Wars. Develop-

ing at that time were crafts such as hosiery or linen- and hat-making. The growth was not disrupted even by a disastrous fire in 1825. As early as in 1830, the construction of transport infrastructure was commenced with, this culminating in the bringing into operation of a railway line in 1897. This stimulated further development of small industries and trades.

World War I and the period between the Wars saw emerging nationalism of the local German population, this culminating in the 1930s and leading to the occupation of the promontory by Germany even before the Munich Treaty had been signed. Subsequent events brought local German residents war losses on the fronts at first, and later in the post-War period, the confiscation of their property and their transfer. The diocesan property was confiscated in 1948.

The first modern census (of 1869) revealed that the micro-region had nearly 29,600 inhabitants. Javorník itself was not much larger than it is today, and its population excluding attached settlements reached 3,174 persons (i.e. 128% of today's population). However, apart from Javorník, there were numerous other large villages, which had their own local markets capable of maintaining the basic commercial infrastructure and services. The population density was 2.5-times higher than today (at 86 persons/km<sup>2</sup>). Until World War II, the



**Figure 2.** The Žulovská Pahorkatina Highland forms a north-south axis of the territory (photo by A. Vaishar).



**Figure 3.** The chateau on Janský Vrch Hill – the former seat of the Bishop of Wrocław (photo by A. Vaishar).



**Figure 4.** Bílý Potok. The typical condition of original farms in the Javorník area (photo by A. Vaishar).

population remained at more or less the same level. A peak for the micro-region was in fact recorded in 1900, when the number of inhabitants exceeded 30,000.

In spite of all efforts to resettle the area, the transfer of the German population resulted in more than a halving in the number of residents.

In the post-War period the micro-region attained peak population in 1961, when the number of residents stood at about 15,100. The population slowly but steadily decreased thereafter, such that the census of 2001 revealed around 12,800 residents. Numerous rural municipalities that were large in size before the War became medium-sized or



small villages. All that logically reflected in the size of their local markets, and hence in the range of services on offer. The decreasing population in the micro-region after the loss of German citizens also showed in the extinction of settlements in both the Rychlebské Hory Mts. and the lowland of the Javornicko-vidnavská nížina. Some other settlements became nearly depopulated, such that their current function is that of chalet sites.

## Population and settlement

The Javorník micro-region consists of 13 municipalities, of which Javorník, Vidnava and Žulová are statutory towns. Apart from these, there are twenty other parts of municipalities in the micro-region that can for simplicity be considered settlements; 17 parts have fewer than 100 inhabitants<sup>1</sup> and are therefore ranked as very small settlements. Under the conditions of the Javorník area, settlements of 200-500 residents are considered medium-sized; there are eight such settlements in the micro-region. Another eight settlements have a population in excess of 500. This settlement structure is typical of peripheral mountain areas. In this case, however, the topography (with the exception of the

Rychlebské Hory Mt. foothills) cannot be classified as montane. The population density is 37 persons per km<sup>2</sup> (2001), which is a very low value, attesting not only to the rural, but also to the peripheral, character of the settlement.

A great majority of municipalities in the Javorník area recorded a natural population decrease in the 2002-2007 period. On the other hand, half of the municipalities recorded a population gain through migration, this attesting to ongoing counter-urbanization processes that reach even this remote corner of the borderland. The Javorník area can be divided into two sub-regions – north-western and south-eastern, this division also being reflected in the existence of two voluntary community associations within the micro-region's territory – in the Javorník part and the Vidnava part.

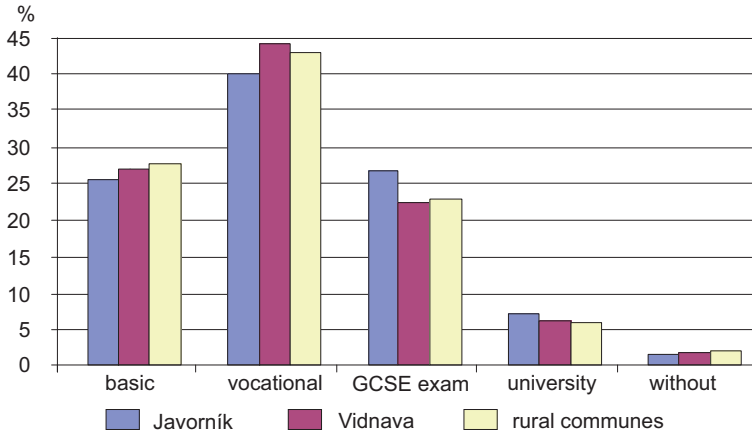
Data on the population structure in the micro-region originate from the last Census<sup>2</sup>. Educational structure, an indirect predeterminer of a range of other categories, could be considered the most important. In this respect, the Javorník area reaches half of the Czech national average as regards residents over 15 years of age with higher and university education. The reason is apparently the



**Figure 5.** Žulová – the centre of the local authority area (photo by A. Vaishar).

<sup>1</sup> Data for local neighbourhoods are from the Census 2011 (CSO 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Census as of March 2011 (CSO 2011).



**Figure 6.** Educational structure of the population over 13 (as of 2011).

Source: Population Census 2011 (CSO 2011).

structure of jobs and the re-colonization character of the micro-region, whose strength lays in the category of skilled workers and persons with secondary technical education though no school-leaving examination. This characteristic corresponds to traditional industries and primary activities and does not mean any particular challenge for future growth. These circumstances have also to be taken into account as local development measures are planned out.

## Economic conditions

Industrial production in the region was historically based on the extraction and processing of mineral resources, namely ceramic clays, granite and marble, and later also uranium. Conversion of wood felled in the Rychlebské Hory Mts. also played an important role. The entire region was for decades (even from the mid-18th century) a peripheral area, partitioned from administrative and economic centres 'inland' by the profound barrier the Hrubý Jeseník Mts. were able to constitute. This truth revealed itself in limited industrialization, and in alternative orientations towards agricultural production or the exploitation of local natural resources.

The main economic entities up to the mid- 20th century were small tradesmen. Thus in 1946 there were twenty-five stonemasonry firms employing 706 persons in total. However, the Javorník area remained a peripheral region even after 1948. The importance of stone extraction and conversion

was decreasing steadily, as is documented in the closedown of the stonemasonry apprentice school at Žulová in 1998, following over 110 years in existence. Some industrial corporations built affiliated branches here in the period of socialist construction. But this gradually ceased to exist after 1990.

As at 1 September 2009, the total number of business entities<sup>3</sup> registered in the Javorník area was 2,627. Of these, 87.8% were active. As of 2008, the business activities in the primary sector were run by 16.3% of entities, while more than double that proportion (36.3%) were involved in industry and civil engineering, and 47.4% were engaged in activity in the tertiary sector. Most business entities are engaged in the trading, sale and repairs of consumer goods, as well as in the hotel industry. The region's economics in relation to other characteristics, e.g. levels of qualification, are reflected in the unemployment rate. Unemployment data<sup>4</sup> clearly show the seasonal nature of the process by which the unemployment rate fluctuates, this being typical for primary activities, the construction industry and tourism.

A precondition for economic prosperity is the transport interconnection of a micro-region with higher centres. The issue of public transport in the Jeseník district was studied by Boruta and Ivan (2010), who stated that the transport services in

<sup>3</sup> These data were provided from the Administrative Registry of Business Entities (ARES) as of 1 Sept. 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic.

the territory are far from being ideal. Railway is of limited competitiveness due to the low speed of secondary tracks. Accessibility of railway stations on foot is even worse due to greater distances, as well as the fact that the track in question has twice been affected by flooding in recent years. Distances to railway stations also play an important role in the micro-region on account of the very limited comfort that access roads have to offer.

**Table 1.** Size groups of the largest employers in the Javorník micro-region (as at 31 December 2008).

Enterprise type	Number of entities
Micro-enterprises (1-9 employees)	155
Small enterprises (10-49 employees)	53
Medium-sized enterprises (50-249 employees)	12
Large enterprises (>250 employees)	0

Data source: ARES 2013.

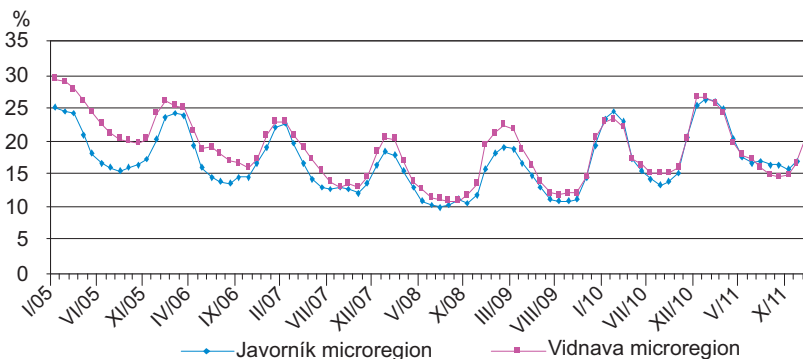
### Cross-border collaboration

It is not only the case that most formal barriers to cross-border contacts have ceased to exist recently, but also that formerly non-existing border crossings and roads, at least for pedestrians, bikers and passenger cars, have been interconnected, even if they are not always really comfortable, and the roads are unpaved in some places. The border is crossed by one 1st class road connecting Javorník and Paczków. Drivers have a further nine possibilities as to how to cross the border. There are ways with both paved and non-paved surfaces, mostly for cars of up to 3.5 tons. Tourists have a further two official border crossings along marked routes.

All of this has also made the surrounding Polish towns of Łądek Zdrój, Złoty Stok, Paczków and Otmuchów readily accessible. Unfortunately, this situation is not supported by any public transport.

Both the Javorník micro-region and surrounding Polish areas offer interesting localities for Czech and Polish tourists. In this context, it is possible to name the lakes near Otmuchów, the town of Złoty Stok with its unique museum of gold mining, or the oldest Polish spa of Łądek Zdrój – all on the Polish side, as well as the town of Javorník with its chateau on Jánský Vrch Hill and sacral objects in Bílá Voda, Travná and other places (of natural beauty). Nevertheless, Więckowski (2010) shows that the area under study is characterised by minimum tourist flows, though admittedly his analysis was based on overnight stays. It is our experience, and in line with the opinions of local residents, that this section of borderland is typical for day trips (not therefore associated with overnight stays). Small Polish towns are closer for the inhabitants of borderland Czech villages than are towns on Czech territory. Czechs can go there for trips, or for shopping for certain kinds of goods that may be cheaper in Poland. The dam reservoir along the Nysa may in turn become a recreational opportunity for residents in the Javorník area. However, the amount of money left in the neighbouring country is likely not to be high, because the outings in question are to be short facultative trips with no complementary activities.

Apart from the shopping tourism, Poles also apparently make use of gastronomic facilities on the Czech side of the border. The dense network of hotels and restaurants creates very good prerequisites for this kind of tourism. Regarding the fact that the Javorník area is incised into



**Figure 7.** Development of unemployment rate in the Javorník and Vidnava micro-regions (2005-2011).

Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic.



**Figure 8.** Paczków – one of the small towns on the Polish side of the border (photo by A. Vaishar).

Polish territory, while roads on the Polish side are still of low standard, it is also possible to consider the transit of Polish vehicles through Czech territory. Other forms of economic collaboration are in their infancy. There are 23 Polish entrepreneurs active in the Javorník area. Most of them are natural persons living in Paczków and doing business in Javorník. Metal production, wholesaling and retailing are the main activities of Poles in Javorník (ARES – Automated Register of Economic Subjects). Unfortunately, the legislative situation in the Czech Republic is not favourable for either Czech or foreign natural persons, due to the permanently changing situation in the legal and tax spheres. On the other hand, the language barrier is not a serious problem through certain diversity of the two languages.

The micro-region is a part of the Praděd/Pradziad Euroregion, which however encompasses an essentially larger part of the Olomouc and Moravian Silesian regions. Partner municipalities are located in Poland's Opole Voivodship, this indicating that the collaboration should rather be directed into the lowland situated northwards and eastwards of the Javorník area, as opposed to westwards into Kłodzko. The cross-border collaboration between local-authority areas and associations is developing as partly financed from European programmes. The cooperation between fire brigades could serve as an example. Various social

events like children's competitions, cultural events, the creation of common advertising materials or common marking of tourist paths are organized.

The potential for the development of cross-border collaboration is sought especially in the sphere of tourism, including through mutual visits to events of a cultural character. The Rychlebské Hory Mts. and their borderline ridges provide good conditions for staking out common tracks for hikers, and for their joint publicity. The northern and eastern parts of the border with a nearly flat topography are favourable for cycling tourism. However, the infrastructure lags behind in both cases, even if with the exception of some partial improvements such as a lookout tower on Borůvková Hora Mt. It is possible to conclude that the cooperation in this direction is at the very beginning.

## **Discussion: What are the problems?**

In line with the criteria introduced in the theoretical part, the Javorník micro-region does not appear to be a successful rural area by any measure. The peripherality of the Javorník area is attested to in the distances from important settlement centres, but also in relation to the barrier constituted by a mountain range separating the micro-region from areas further 'inland'. The formerly leading



**Figure 9.** Bílá Voda – a psychiatric hospital in a former convent. An example of special social services being located here.

industrial branch of building-materials extraction was losing its importance after World War II. As a substitution, several affiliates of 'inland' industrial corporations were located in the micro-region, albeit ceasing to exist after 1990. This only enhanced the marginality of the micro-region. The primary sectors, such as agriculture, forestry and mining have retained a certain role. However, the current economic base of the micro-region is formed by a relatively diversified structure of small enterprises and micro-businesses. There is a total lack of any large employers.

The development of tourism is recommended as a substitute, because the region has some good preconditions for that, such as dissected relief in the western part, well-preserved and protected nature, as well as sights of a cultural nature. The installed infrastructure corresponds rather to the development of tourism for lower-income social classes, families with children, etc. It is also necessary to cope with some other shortcomings in the sphere of the general business environment in tourism, though the latter cannot be considered a panacea, and must usually grow in line with other activities and industrial branches. Specifically, the latter may be agriculture – focused on landscape management, forestry, traditional processing industries utilizing skills of the local labour force, and social services utilizing the tranquil

environment of the remote region. Not even these branches can be self-supporting, though, so only a combination and diversification of these activities may offer any likely solution.

The search for larger developers from elsewhere that may be attracted is not the best way either, as the probability of success is low and such investors are unstable in any case. Developers from other regions – both from the 'inland' part of Czechia and from abroad – have no affinity to the region, no interest in its growth, and no particular incentive or desire to cooperate with local institutions. The best solution for micro-regions of the Javorník type is a diversified structure of medium-sized and small enterprises, which is capable of transformation, and whose existence does not depend on a single large employer.

The factor of borderland location was one of the material obstacles to development in the past. Although the two countries were formal allies, the Czech-Polish border was never easily passable in the communist era. Moreover, as the populations on both sides of the border were replaced, cross-border contacts had nothing to link with any more. Today, the internal borders of the Schengen Area have become a psychological line. A legitimate question arises as to whether, in some cases, cross-border collaboration might at least partly eliminate marginality from the national point of

view. In this matter, we are sceptical about such a development since the Czech state border is in its greater part also a natural barrier. Nevertheless, there are several areas in which the landscape opens into neighbouring countries, in such a way that foreign centres may be nearer than those in the inland part of the Czech Republic itself. We ask a question as to whether the Javorník area represents such a region, and whether there are potentials for or first signs of international cooperation, as well as the prospects for such cooperation, as well as the barriers thereto.

It is necessary to come to terms with the fact that the micro-region under study will remain peripheral in the near future. Social differentiation of regions is a natural phenomenon of the market economy. The point is whether it will provide worthy living conditions to people who decide to live there, and whether it will be capable of ensuring at least a minimum prosperity to business residing in it. There is no larger economic entity able to provoke commuting to work on either side. The economy in the region should focus on building a diversified structure of small and medium-sized firms, which would be resistant enough to the recession in individual sectors of industry.

On the basis of the results of this study, there can be no confirmation of the hypothesis that the Javorník micro-region gravitates more to the Polish side of the border than to the Czech side. Although there is collaboration and individual relations develop, some barriers probably remain. What are the reasons? First of all, the borderland is peripheral and marginal on both sides of the frontier. Under such conditions, the economic activities, including cross-border ones, are generally of low calibre. Secondly, there is no long-term tradition of cross-border collaboration. The population was exchanged on both sides of the border after World War II. But later cross-border relations were limited within periods of politically-conditioned distrust between Czechoslovakia and Poland. Thirdly, the educational structure of the local population does not contribute to potential collaboration because the understanding and tolerance between different ethnic groups increases with education. Fourthly, administrative jurisdiction plays its role. The absence of cross-border public transport on a local level can be named an indicator of the situation. Moreover, shopping and gastronomy tourism is wearing off with catching the situation on both sides of the border.

Nevertheless, the potential for much-closer relations does exist. Natural conditions (in the direction of the Opole region) are favourable. Also historical relations exist, unfortunately not in perception of local people. It is possible to suppose that the human factor will be decisive to the future development of the territory. Local tourism connected with the establishing of face-to-face contacts among people is being piloted.

## **Conclusion: Trends and possible solutions**

Under certain conditions, we may encounter the following general trends that could influence the future development of the situation in the Javorník area.

Counter-urbanization (Champion 1989) and amenity migration (Gosnell & Abrams 2011) trends will continue, which will increase the interest in living in the Javorník area; this will require that adequate conditions for new residents be put in place.

A move on the part of Czech tourists from middle and lower social classes from recreation abroad to recreation at home will be induced by the economic situation and by a greater interest in learning about the home country. This would anticipate a willingness on the part of the residents in the Javorník area to work in tourist services, as well as the development of relevant infrastructure and related forms of recreation (sports grounds, swimming pools, entertainment and learning opportunities), and the mitigation of negative effects of the seasonal character of recreation. Also necessary is the more intensive publicizing of this little-known micro-region.

A certain revitalization of agriculture in connection with the global developments on food markets, gradual equalization of differences in subsidies between old and new EU member states (Hudečková & Lošťák 2002) and necessary landscape management.

Population ageing (Heley & Jones 2013) will call for the development of social services for seniors and related services of a healthcare-related, rehabilitation or cultural character. The Javorník micro-region not only has good prerequisites, but also a certain tradition in this regard. Facilities in the form of mental institutions or homes for troubled young people are of a similar character. At the same time, it is useful to take account of the fact

that the ageing population may have other ideas about prosperity and quality of life than the young generation, which connects it with growth.

A general transition to a learned society (Rag-gatt et al. 2000), and an economy with higher added value and services. It seems that the traditional branches of industry cannot form the backbone of the economy, even in the Javorník area. Regarding the region's character, a more suitable orientation would be towards the development of services of both a manufacturing and non-manufacturing character, including in construction, transportation, etc.

The Javorník area will pursue its development in competition with other micro-regions. This is why competitive advantages have to be sought, probably also among objective given facts, such as natural conditions or geographic location. This shows that small towns as centres of micro-regions play an important role in the territorial development of peripheral areas (Vaishar & Zapletalová 2009). This should be the case for Javorník town. It would seem, however, that the human factor is markedly more important.

The Javorník area is one of the most remote borderland areas in Czechia, and at the same time a micro-region that opens into Poland while being separated from the 'inland' part of the Czech Republic by a barrier of mountains. Although the historic development of Silesia was interrupted by the Seven Years' War, and by the subsequent division of Silesia, and although the continuity of population disappeared after the removal of ethnic Germans from both the Czech and the Polish side of the border, a sort of historic awareness about the cross-border relations has remained in the region.

On the other hand, the micro-region struggles with general problems of the peripheral border-

land, such as weak economic structure, limited adaptability of the population, and a lack of investment capital. The landscape has remained in relatively good shape, but its greater utilization in tourism is hampered by poor infrastructure and the seasonal character of recreational opportunities. Viewed from this point of view, the Javorník area represents a micro-region useful for the comparison and theoretical generalization of knowledge as regards the peripheral rural borderland of Czechia.

Thus far the relationship between the Javorník area and adjacent parts of Poland cannot be considered more intense than those pertaining with areas of the Czech Republic 'inland' in Jeseník district. Put in place during the decades of centralization, the administrative links with that inland area still persist. This puts paid to the original research hypothesis. On the other hand, relations with the Polish centres are certainly becoming closer and more regular, so a re-routing of the micro-region's gravitation may be just a question of time.

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