

PERCEPTION OF THE HISTORICAL BORDER BETWEEN MORAVIA AND SILESIA BY RESIDENTS OF THE JESENÍK AREA AS A PARTIAL ASPECT OF THEIR REGIONAL IDENTITY (CZECH REPUBLIC)

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Abstract

A border is considered to be very important for regional identity. It is used not only for the creation of regional identity from the outside by inhabitants living outside the particular region, but especially for generating regional identity within the population of that region. The Jeseník area is delimited by the border between Moravia and Silesia. It is also regarded as a territory of weak regional identity. This contribution deals with an empirical analysis of perceptions of this historical border by inhabitants of the Jeseník area through applying a mental map concept. The main objective is to verify the hypothesis about the weak regional identity of the population in the Jeseník area using this analytical approach.

Shrnutí

Vnímání historické hranice mezi Moravou a Slezskem obyvateli Jesenicka jako dílčí aspekt jejich regionální identity (Česká republika)

Hranice je považována za významný atribut územní identity. Bývá využívána jednak pro vytváření identity regionu z vnějšku obyvatelstvem žijícím mimo daný region a hlavně pak pro generování regionální identity zevnitř obyvatelstvem daného regionu. Jesenicko je oblastí z části vymezené zemskou hranicí Moravy a Slezska. Zároveň je považováno za oblast, jejíž obyvatelé jsou nositeli nízké úrovně regionální identity. Předložený příspěvek přináší empirickou analýzu percepce zmíněné hranice obyvateli Jesenicka, a to za využití konceptu mentální mapy. Hlavním cílem je dílčí ověření hypotézy o slabé regionální identitě zdejších obyvatel s pomocí výše zmíněné analýzy.

Keywords: regional identity, border, perception, mental map, centrography, Jeseník area, Czech Republic

1. Introduction

This article deals with the evaluation of the 'relict' boundary between Moravia and Silesia or, rather the role which it plays in minds of local people in the context of their regional identity. Identity is one of the means by which people differ. One of its fundamental dimensions is space: the relation of people to their region is a natural part of their lives. The importance of regional identity can be acquired, for example, in relation to regional development of smaller territorial units (Chromý, Skála, 2003) or in connection with their administrative demarcation (Žigrai, 2000).

The current Jeseník area is situated in the northwest corner of the Czech part of Silesia (with the exception of the village of Ostružná, the built-up area of which is located in Moravia). The toponymic Jeseník area can be considered as spatially inexact for several reasons.

The first can be seen in the objective historical-administrative development of the area, which was the reason for changes in the administrative demarcation of this territory. In the latter case, it is a subjective attribution of the territorial scope of each individual, which may vary from case to case. The authors do not claim any right to their own exclusive spatial definition of the Jeseník area, and therefore for the purposes of this paper they used the administrative demarcation valid at the time of field research (2009). Thus, they pinpoint the Jeseník area and identify it de facto with the administrative district of Jeseník with extended authority (hereinafter the Jeseník administrative district). The area under study is shown in Fig. 1.

The region was chosen for study because of its post-war development. Dynamic social processes represented mainly by the post-war transfer of the

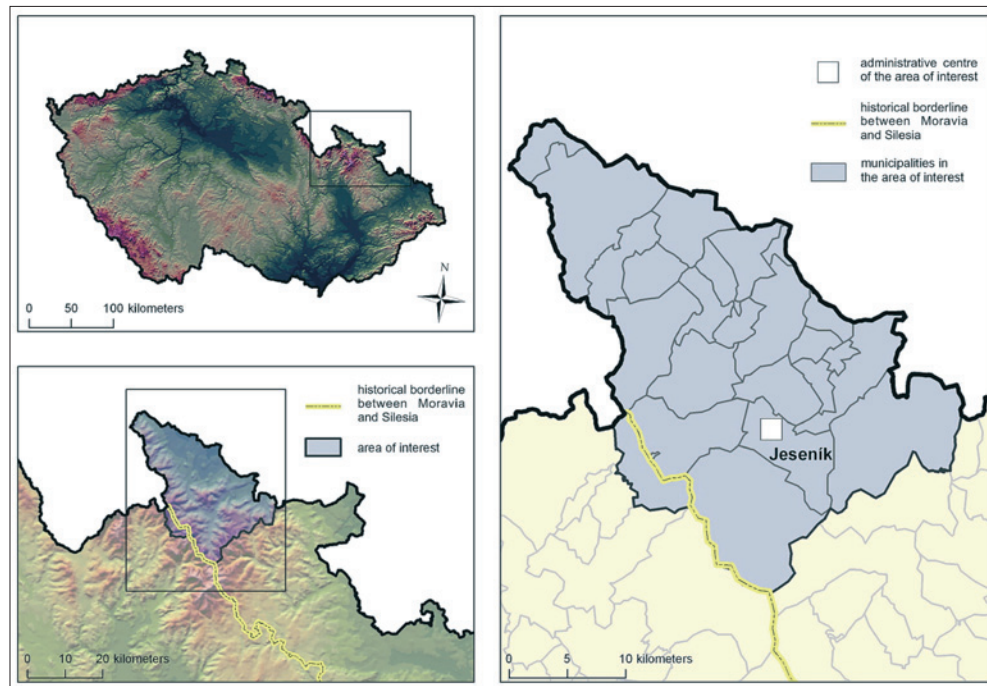


Fig. 1: Area under study (Sources: ArcČR 500 version 2.0a; Siwek and Kaňok 2000; Compiled by authors)

autochthonous German population from their homes and by the subsequent resettlement of the area with a geographically heterogeneous mass of migrants, led to the loss of regional identity carriers. The regional identity of the Jeseník area was then completely transformed by the population of newcomers and therefore it is possible to say that the Jeseník area is a region with interrupted traditions.

According to Häkli (2008), borders and boundaries are everywhere. As he continues individuals and human communities define and structure the social world by making distinctions between groups, spaces, times, objects and meanings. We encounter borders constantly in our everyday lives. The border can also be seen as an important constituent in the process of identifying communities in general (Paasi, 2002). For residents of the Jeseník area, this function was fulfilled by the border between the historical lands of Moravia and Silesia (until the above-mentioned processes emerged), which defines the area under study from the South and de facto represented the spatial range of regional identity for inhabitants of the Jeseník area. Reflecting this fact, the question is whether this relict borderline, which is however a substantial part of the administrative delimitation of the area, still performs a similar function in the present. If the answer is yes, then it leads to another question. Is the current function more significant in the case of the older generation, i.e. as possible witnesses, as compared to younger generations? The influence on the character of border perception by locals may be seen also in phenomena such as education and place of birth. Are

there any fundamental differences in such determined population sub-groups? This paper can be understood as an attempt to answer these questions. The main goal of this work is to assess the level of boundary perception described by the contemporary population of the Jeseník administrative district. Partial goals of the work consist in the analysis of differences in the perception quality of the assessed entity by various population structures (gender, education, birthplace, age) and also in outlining the spatial range of the regional identity of the local residents.

2. Theoretical and methodological basis

Identity is a term that seems self-explanatory and unproblematic until people really stop and think about it (Penrose, Mole, 2008). At its simplest, identity is who we are. Strictly speaking, the issue is how to construct and understand the fact of who we are. Everyone is confronted with questions such as “Who am I? and Who are they?, Where do I belong?, How do I differ?”, etc. Asking these questions is rooted in the fact that identity, or the need to belong somewhere, is considered to be a basic social need of every human being. The crucial importance of this need was recognised by the American psychologist Maslow more than sixty years ago (1943), who was the author of the pyramid of human needs, constructed in the context of his theory of a hierarchy of needs. As regards the pyramid of human needs, its base is formed by basic physical needs (hunger, thirst) whose satisfaction is a prerequisite for the survival of an individual. This essential kind of needs is followed by the need of safety,

and further by the need of belonging somewhere, which is hierarchically the third most important. The successful meeting of these three forms of needs is necessary for the development of further needs, such as aesthetic needs or the need to be respected by others (Brown, Cullen, 2006).

The phenomenon of identity includes many dimensions whose interactions, i.e. mutual complementarity but also replacement or overlapping, form its final nature. Identity is similarly described by Zich (2003) who argues that human identity consists of several identifications. Personal identity may thus arise through the integration of aspects such as the specific characteristics of a person, their profession, ethnicity, membership in a religious community and, last but not least, the space in which the person lives. The spatial (geographical) factor of an individual's identity often serves as a common denominator with identities of other people and can be considered to be one of the essential characteristics of collective identity. The collective identity of a community, expressed by the relation to an area where everyday activities take place, or its living space, can be called the regional identity.

The creation of regional identity is, according to Raagmaa (2002), a profoundly social, spatial, cultural and historical phenomenon that embodies both stabilization and also variable character. The historical context of the process of building regional identity is of crucial significance. The regional identity contains images of the past closely connected with events which have influenced the region's development, its attractiveness, patriotism or emotional aspects of the regional identity of its inhabitants (Balek, 2005). In connection with the history of the region, traditions must be taken into account as well, especially if they were interrupted during its historical development or, to the contrary, if the traditions were continually maintained. The importance of the continuity or discontinuity of traditions lies in their direct impact on the character of local communities that bear the territorial identity.

The formative constituents mentioned above are included also in the concept of territorial identity creation by the Finnish geographer Paasi (2003). Furthermore, he points out the meaning of economic and political dimensions that are, in his opinion, also essential for the genesis and further development of regional identity. In this context, a process of region forming which Chromý (2003) divides into individual and institutional, can be included. Every region would change over time and it is always a matter of community that would shape the regions. Regions can be delimited subjectively on the basis of territory

perception and attribution of particular importance compared to other regions. Likewise, there can appear an institutionalized definition of regions, which can be considered a political process. The course of region creation and the strong connection with institutions is described in detail by Paasi (1986) who divided the process of region creation into several consecutive stages. The core of the very first stage is acquisition of a spatial form where the significant phenomenon of the delimitation of regional boundaries can be observed. These boundaries do not have to be understood as purely political lines, they can be defined on the basis of physical-geographical conditions or cultural features. Thus, the definition of a region's territory is a condition for creation of the spatial awareness of the local population. Particularly, due to the existence of boundaries, which give these spatial concepts a certain form, the residents dichotomously realize their own peculiarity, specificity and uniqueness in comparison with 'the others' living beyond this border.

This argument suggests that there are two points of view as to how the entity, such as a boundary, can be analyzed. Firstly, it can be analyzed as an external factor of regional identity. It studies how inhabitants of other regions perceive such a region, which generates the identity of the region created from the outside. Secondly, the boundary plays an important role in defining the region's identity from inside. In this case it is a process when a region is perceived by its own inhabitants who thus reproduce the regional identity of their region (Hubáčková, 2006; Siwek, Bogdová, 2007). This fact demonstrates that the border is a significant component of regional identity and its existence can be used in research dealing with the phenomenon of territorial identity.

Given the above, the area of Jeseník can be described as a region which shows, compared with most of the remaining regions in the Czech Republic, significant differences in formative aspects that condition the nature of the regional identity of the local population. From historical, social and cultural points of view, it is an area with lost identity. This apt term was used by Chromý (2003) to describe the areas depopulated after World War II. The Jeseník area can be undoubtedly considered such a region because it was one of the areas where the autochthonous German population, as the majority of the local population until the end of the war, was displaced from their homes. Full details of the population dynamics of this period are given in Tab. 1.

The forced migration of people who carried the regional identity of the Jeseník area represented a significant break of traditions and an important intervention into the local regional identity. A wave of geographically

1930								
total	Czechoslovaks		Germans		Others		Foreigners	
	abs.	rel. (%)	abs.	rel. (%)	abs.	rel. (%)	abs.	rel. (%)
71,717	2,703	3.77	66,987	93.4	135	0.19	1,892	2.64
1947								
total	Persons of 2 years of age and older	Persons of 2 years of age and older presented on 1 st may 1945						
		Same municipality	Same municipality in borderland	Inland		Slovakia	Germany, Austria	Else, unknown
Bohemia	Moravia, Silesia							
35,836	abs.	Abs.						
	33,778	5,592	1,814	1,710	19,923	2,958	545	1,236
	rel. (%)	rel. (%)						
	94.26	16.56	5.37	5.06	58.98	8.76	1.61	3.66

Tab. 1: Population dynamics in the area under study after the end of World War II
Sources: Bartoš, Schulz, Trapl (1994); CZSO (1951); authors' tabulations

heterogeneous settlers immigrating to the Jeseník area to substitute for the displaced Germans transformed the original regional identity completely.

There is an assumption suggesting that the current regional identity of the Jeseník area's population is very weak. This claim can be supported by articles published in local newspapers appealing to the inhabitants that the city of Jeseník, or even the whole Jeseník area, is a particular city/region located in Silesia.

The analyzed region belongs to Silesia and it makes the Jeseník area strange if we take into account the political factors that had been shaping regional identity. The fact that the Jeseník area belongs to Silesia was formerly generally accepted by local inhabitants. Moreover, this fact was one of the important attributes of the Jeseník area regional identity, which can be demonstrated by testimonies of displaced witnesses (Procházka, 2007). The border between Moravia and Silesia, then, represented a certain limit of the thus conceived regional identity of the local population in the Jeseník area. It was probably a very good image of the border that helped generate a relatively strong connection between residents and the Jeseník area.

As outlined above, it was the level of awareness of the boundary that was analyzed among the Jeseník area population. In other words, we compared an objective reality, i.e. the real behaviour of the boundary, with a subjective image of this entity as created by people living in the Jeseník area. These subjective images are the results of processes of perception. Definitions of perception can be found for example in The Dictionary of Human Geography (2009): perception should be understood in the widest sense, referring to both

the bio-psychological idiosyncrasies of individual sensing, information processing and cognition, and the issue of collective cultural beliefs, values and aesthetic judgements concerning natural and built environments. An alternative definition of perception is offered by Golledge and Stimson (1997), who see it as the immediate apprehension of information about the environment by one or more of the senses, as well as secondary environmental information culled from the media and through hearsay via communication with fellow human beings.

Thus, perception is considered to be the result of mental activity which is produced by noticing current stimuli in the environment and the ability of imagination. Images which are the results of such a process are stored in the human mind and can be recalled, if necessary. What shapes its actual form are circumstances in which it is necessary to use perception. The quality of these perceptions is also affected by various factors such as age and related personal experience, education, information given by people we meet every day, media or a relationship to the object perceived. Therefore, perception cannot be understood as something static, fixed in the mind – it develops and transforms. Concerning these changes, we can define two basic trends. The first one is reduction of image quality as a result of forgetfulness; the second is, on the contrary, improvement of images particularly due to their frequent recall.

Although geographical research of perception has never been at the core of human geography research, the significance of perception surveys can be demonstrated by a relatively early interest in this issue in geography from the 1940s and the 1950s. In the 1960s, the

systematic understanding of perception of the geographical environment as a new and significant topic relevant to geography emerged. Bunting and Guelke (1979) point out that the realisation of many studies of this phenomenon began in this period. Such a boom led to perceptual geography being recognized as a separate discipline by some researchers (Tuan, 2003). Although many experts argue against or even disagree with such a defined sub-branch of the scientific discipline, the influence of perception studies on the later focus of cultural geographic studies is, according to Tuan (2003), evident.

The authors of this paper decided to use the mental map as a tool for testing the perception quality of the entity analyzed – the border between two historical lands. A definition of the meaning of the term ‘mental map’ is not easy because the concept is used in many disciplines, such as psychology (the idea of a mental, or more specifically of a cognitive map was invented by the psychologist E. C. Tolman), sociology, cartography, and last but not least geography (Lloyd, 1989). The geographical concept of mental maps can be represented by Yi-Fu Tuan, one of the main representatives of humanistic geography in the 20th century. Tuan (1975) believes that a mental map is a special kind of image which is even less directly related to sensory experience – that the mental map could be the cartographic representation of peoples’ attitudes toward places for geographers. In the Czech context, ‘mental map’ was defined by Drbohlav (1991), who described it as a graphic, cartographic or schematic expression of a man’s concepts of geographical space, often about its quality or organization. Mental maps can be understood as a construct arising from internal psychological processes. However, there are also external factors influencing mental maps (e.g. the length of stay in a place we create the image of) which form this construct carefully. Mental maps have very important functions and one of them is that they are sources of information for decision-making processes that result in spatial behaviour within an environment (Lloyd, 1989). They could be viewed as a mnemonic device; it allows mental practice which promotes assurance in subsequent physical performance. Mental maps have yet another function in geographical knowledge (Tuan, 1975). Like real maps, they are means to structure and store knowledge. It is a way to organize data.

The latter function makes the mental map an appropriate tool for the assessment of mental images of the boundary among the Jeseník area population. This choice is also supported by one of the attributes of a mental map, which is its graphics, its visualisation. Graphically depicted images of space or perceptions of specific entities that are part of a certain space,

can be readily analyzed. In the case of a relatively specific entity, which the border undoubtedly is, it is a complicated but achievable process. This method was used in Polish geography for research dealing with the subjective perception of borders and spatial delimitation of Greater Poland Voivodeship by local youth (Dolata, Konecka-Szydłowska, Perdał, 2009). Even despite the fact that the study of borders, and in the narrow sense the study of a relict border of historical lands (Toušek, Šich, Vašíček, 1991), is part of contemporary geographical research, in the Czech Republic no analysis of a specific boundary on the basis of a mental map has been done so far.

Despite this finding, this contribution is not the first case when a mental map has been used for research in the Czech environment; on the contrary, the concept of mental maps has been known in Czech geography for quite a long time. Hynek (1991) points out that geographers from Charles University informed their students about the existence of spatial image mapping in the 1970s. Although mental maps were not used in research on geographical environment perception at that time and not even the above-mentioned geographers used them, the introduction of mental maps to the Czech environment is ascribed explicitly to these geographers from Charles University.

The application of mental maps in the research of spatial images was introduced at the beginning of the 1980s when Hynek’s studies using mental maps, which analyzed the nature of perception of the environment, cities or landscape, emerged (e.g. Hynek, Hynková, 1980; Hynek, 1984).

In spite of this quite early application of mental maps in geographical research, it must be mentioned that the use of mental maps as a component of methodological apparatus in Czech geographical research is relatively rare. However, there are a few exceptions. Even before 1989, the concept of mental maps was applied by Siwek (1988) who studied the attractiveness of individual regions of the former Czechoslovakia. In the early '90s, the issue of mental maps was discussed by Drbohlav (1991), who attempted to define the term ‘mental map’, thought about the formative factors of mental maps, and suggested possibilities for their application. In the second half of the '90s, Voženílek (1997) tried to assess the mutual relation of mental maps and mental spatial images. In the current millennium, it is mainly Siwek who uses mental maps in his scientific research, thanks to which he analyzed the current situation of Silesian identity (Siwek, Kaňok, 2000). He later used mental maps in a survey dealing with the identity of cultural historical regions of the Czech Republic (Siwek, Bogdová, 2007).

3. Research methods

In order to obtain sufficient data to assess the quality of perception of the historical border by local inhabitants, a questionnaire survey was carried out in May 2009, with a final sample size of 420.

The questionnaire focused on issues reflecting some aspects of regional identity, including part of a map containing the basic settlement structure and communication network. Respondents were asked to draw their image of where the border between Moravia and Silesia lies.

The assignment of a particular area to a given historical land was then defined by whether such area was regarded as Moravia or Silesia by an absolute majority of all respondents. It can then be said that the final delimitation of the border was based on the median value of the analyzed questionnaire data.

The term 'median' is a well-known statistic equivalent to the value which divides the studied sample into two equal sections. However, in geography the median is understood differently (it is not of purely numerical nature) and is defined by centrographic methods. Centrography is a descriptive statistical method used for measuring and spatial delimitation of various (even weighted) average or mean values of the sample or for the definition of spatial dispersion of its values. Kellerman (1981) considers centrography a powerful tool for the description and analysis of data in all branches of geography.

The use of centrography in the study of mental maps is demonstrated by Ebdon (1977), who tried to assess the results of mental spatial images drawn by students at the University of Nottingham by defining mean centres and ellipses of dispersion.

As mentioned above, the centrographic method is most often used to construct a 'mean centre' or 'median centre' (sometimes also misleadingly called the centre of gravity) which, however, characterize the whole sample of geographical diversity by one item, and so they deprive it of a part of its geographical nature. As to the studied phenomenon of the Moravia-Silesian border, which has a linear character, the authors were concerned not only with the creation of the median centre but they attempted a more geographical concept of median creation by curve construction.

Geographical information systems (GIS) seemed to be the most appropriate for the processing of mental maps, or more specifically of borders depicted on them, their analysis and the further visualisation of results.

The first step of the procedure was to transfer the completed questionnaires into a digital form, putting all the responses into a database and to scan the mental maps. Then the scanned maps in the form of images were uploaded into the GIS where they were georeferenced, and borders made by respondents were digitized into the format of vector polyline layers.

The pre-prepared vector polygon layer (made by one polygon) which delimited the area given to respondents for drawing the boundary, was then for every questionnaire split according to the recorded border into sections (polygons). Thus, 420 new polygon layers emerged that were used in the next phase of the analysis.

At this point it was necessary to define every polygon, whether it is labelled Moravia or Silesia. This was achieved through changing values for all records (polygons) in a column 'ID' in an attribute table of each layer depending on whether a respondent selected Moravia or Silesia according to the key: Moravia = 0; Silesia = 1.

Each polygon layer modified in this way was converted into a raster layer (all layers were set to the same pixel size which corresponded to a square of 50 × 50 metres in reality, which provides sufficient detail for further analysis) while keeping the 'ID' attribute values – every pixel of a newly created raster layer bearing either the value 0 (Moravia) or 1 (Silesia). Raster layers made by the process described above were subsequently layered and counted up. Strictly speaking, values of pixels lying in the straight vertical succession were counted up, which led to the creation of a new raster layer as shown schematically in Fig. 2.

Pixels bearing the same counted value were logically located in clusters whose presence was of a linear character, in other words, these clusters occurred in some 'stripes'.

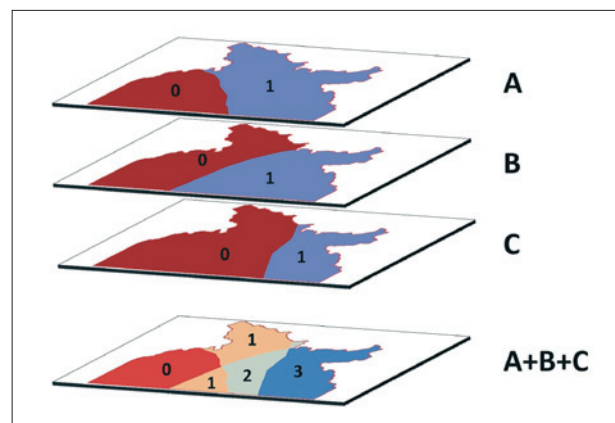


Fig. 2: Schematic representation of raster addition (Compiled by authors)

A median value of the sample which was used to draw mental images of the border line helps to define each pixel if it is Moravia or Silesia – i.e. if that pixel was classified by an absolute majority of respondents as Moravia or Silesia.

One of the centrographic methods was also used in processing the border line itself. At this point, however, it was the calculation of geometric centres of polygons (centroids) in the layer which was created by the conversion of pixel clusters carrying the value of the median from the raster to the vector form. Due to the nature of centroids, a new point vector layer depicting geometric centres of polygons emerged. From the spatial sequence of these points, a line representing the desired border of the two areas was created by connecting these points.

4. Characteristics of the sample

The questionnaire survey was conducted in May 2009 in the Jeseník administrative district. In total, 420 persons were surveyed, residents of the district. The respondents were subsequently divided into four main categories, according to identifiers that were included in the questionnaires. The identifiers generating the final form of the structure were: sex, age, level of education and place of birth, or more specifically the length of time during which the person had lived in the municipality of the study area (Tab. 2).

The similarity of age and education structures, structures by gender and birth place of the sample inhabitants with the same structures of total population living in the Jeseník area, was verified by a χ^2 test: see the following Tab. 3.

The χ^2 test showed at a significance level of 5%, agreement between the sampled set of respondents with the total population of the Jeseník area in the case of gender, age and birthplace structures. On the other hand, a substantial disagreement was identified in education structures of the sample which is indicated by the fact that the resulting value of the criterion significantly exceeded the critical value. The reason of this incongruity lies in the exceptionally high proportion (11.3%) of people having a university diploma in the sample.

In summary, it can be said that the sample group forms a representative sample of the total population in the Jeseník area with the only exception being the education structure.

5. Results

The analysis of collected mental maps offered quite interesting findings. Based on our analysis, it can be said that the perceptions of Jeseník area residents about the border lying between Moravia and Silesia does not correspond with its real position. The resulting perception of all respondents can be characterised as follows: the image of the border was perceived by respondents similarly to the actual border, from northwest to southeast, while the spatial localisation of lines significantly differed. Throughout all the course of the mental image of the border, it 'cuts off' part of Silesia in favour of Moravia, and this tendency is more obvious in the north rather than in the south. The resulting image of the border is inappropriately settled outside the peak parts of the Jeseník mountain range into low elevated areas located to the north of the massif. This is quite a surprising finding because

Time spent in the area as resident					
Natives	Bigger part of life		Lesser part of life		Short-lived
45.5	33.5		14.0		7.0
Age group					
15–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+
21.6	14.3	16.9	14.6	18.9	13.7
Education					
Elementary	Secondary school without graduation		Secondary school with graduation		University
19.6	37.2		31.9		11.3
Gender					
males			females		
50.8			49.2		

Tab. 2: Characteristics of respondents (%), authors' processing

	Value of criteria	Critical value	Structure answers
structure by gender	0.16	$\chi^2(0.05;1)$	Yes
		3.84	
age structure	11.05	$\chi^2(0.05;5)$	Yes
		11.07	
educational structure	32.04	$\chi^2(0.05;3)$	No
		7.81	
structure by a birthplace	1.12	$\chi^2(0.05;1)$	Yes
		3.84	

Tab. 3: χ^2 test results (Sources: CZSO 2003, CZSO 2010, field survey, authors' processing)

the administrative boundary is, in this case, connected with a conspicuous physical geographical barrier (the Hrubý Jeseník Mts). The connection of the physical barrier with the assessed boundary should make the accuracy of the perception easier.

There were a few findings that are surprising. Firstly, the region's centre, the city of Jeseník, was intersected by the mental image of the border; the respondents did not assign it to Silesia unequivocally. Secondly, the line that defined the Moravian Osoblaha exclave (the foreland located to the east of the area studied) whose genesis and delimitation was described in detail by Trávníček (1966), was not drawn by any respondent.

The extent of border images drawn by the respondents significantly differed. These differences are most apparent in the north-western part of the analyzed area where the respondents showed greatest uncertainty. On the other hand, much more confidence was shown in depicting the course of the border in its southern part. Thus, we have a paradoxical situation when the respondents were able to agree on the course of the boundary which is perceived outside the analyzed region, while its course in the Jeseník area and its surroundings is much more ambiguous, as demonstrated in Fig. 3.

Partial analyses of the maps drawn by respondents showed significant differences between the identified structures. The differences appear in perceptions of women and men, with the men's perception more accurate. Men's notion about the border is located to the north of the actual border, while its course is oriented similarly from the northwest to the southeast. The mental image of women is situated in the approximate direction from the north to the south, which leads to a more significant deviation

from the actual territorial border. With respect to the time they have had their abode in the Jeseník area, it was surprising that the most accurate notion about the border was given by people living in this region for a short period. Respondents living in this region for only a short part of their lives and also respondents who declared they had lived there most of their lives, indicated a deformed mental image of the border; its course significantly deviated from the actual border in both cases. Paradoxically, the results of countrymen, whose mental images of the border were expected to be the most accurate, corresponded least with the objective reality.

Concerning the age structure of respondents, inhabitants from 45 to 54 years can be regarded, from all the categories, as bearers of the most accurate image about the course of the border. Also the notions of the oldest respondents are very close to the actual border. The least credible image was produced by the age group from 35 to 44 – children of the generation that appeared in the Jeseník area after the war. In their case, we noticed a significant deformation of the image of the analyzed border.

The analysis also showed that the quality of the image is influenced by the level of education. Perceptions of university educated people create an image that corresponds to the objective boundary the most of all structural subcategories. Regarding the respondents with primary or secondary education, the course of the subjectively perceived border did not differ a lot. These groups showed similar depictions of very inaccurate images of the border (Fig. 4).

6. Conclusions

This analysis represents an effort to map the level of perception of a specific entity – a relict border, respectively administrative border of the territory. The authors tried to contribute to knowledge (in their opinion not so much hitherto reflected in Czech geography) of spatial concepts of border regions, as they are stored in the minds of people living in these spatial units. If we consider only regions with interrupted tradition, areas affected by a significant change in post-war population, the study can be seen as the first effort in trying to penetrate beneath the surface of this issue.

From the North, the Jeseník area is defined by the state border with Poland. In the case of this border, an accurate fixation of the entity in the minds of local inhabitants was expected. This is the reason why the authors focused their attention on the land border demarcating the studied area from the South.

Based on results of the analysis, the perception of the historical border between Moravia and Silesia by the local population can be identified as having only little correspondence to the objective reality. Nor did the above-average representation of university-educated people, whose presence among the respondents acted demonstrably positively on image quality, guarantee

a more accurate perception of the land border. In the background of the negative finding may be the nature of the relict border, although this can be viewed on the border since 1928, when it lost its function as a land border (its administrative function was still preserved by defining the political district of Jeseník), and yet the border was most likely generally anchored in the

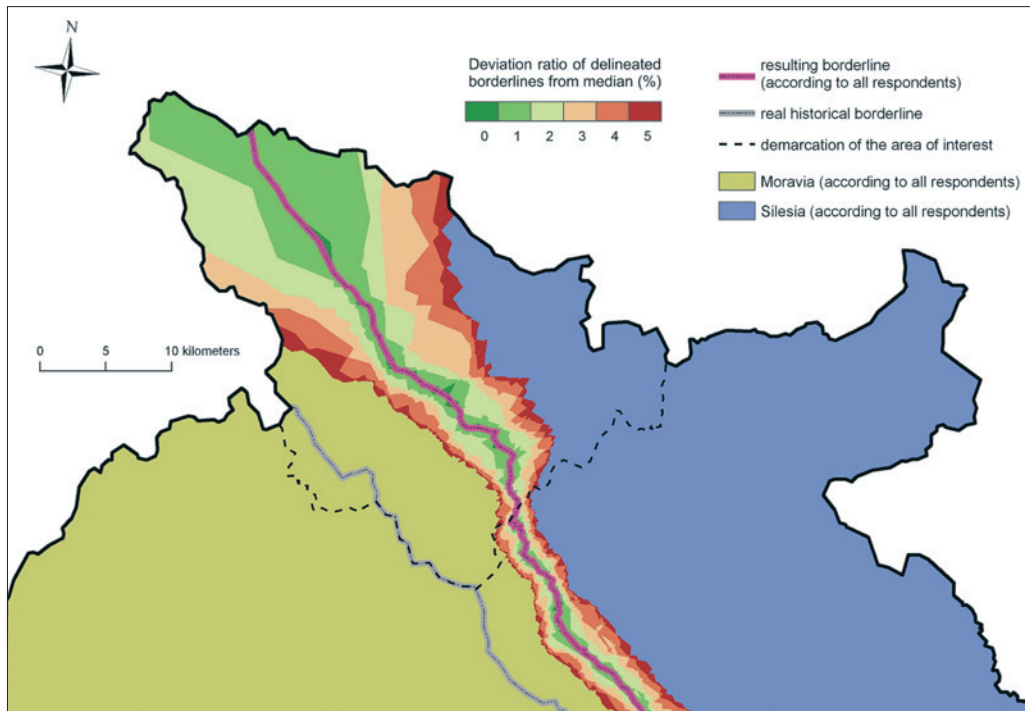


Fig. 3: Final resulting image of border according to all respondents
 Source: authors' processing of survey data

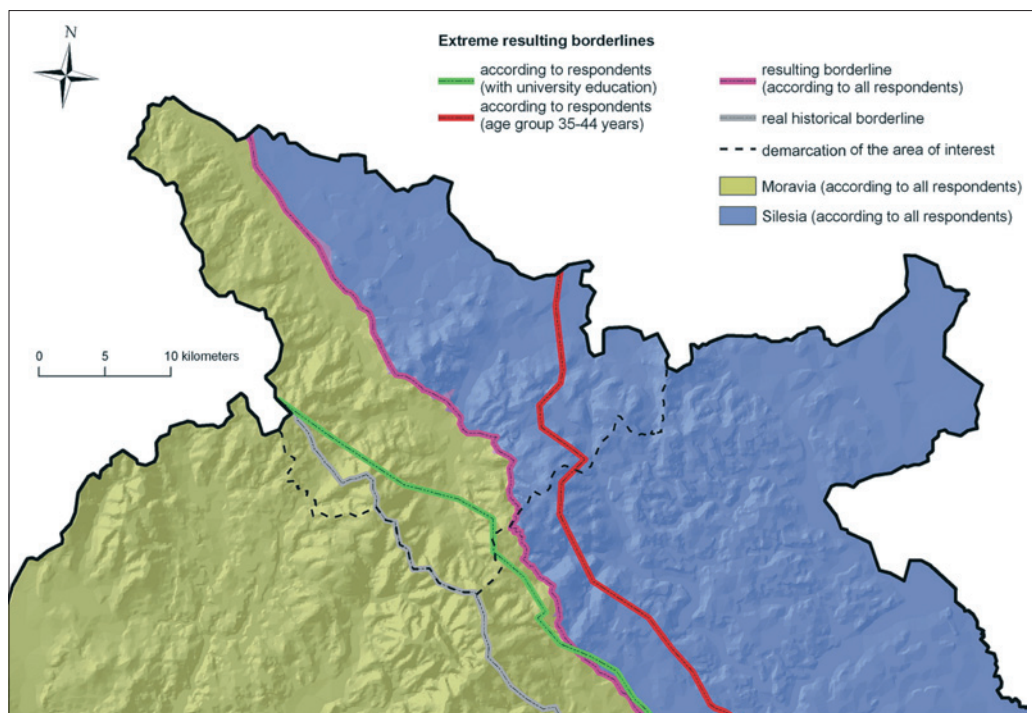


Fig. 4: The best and the worst resulting images according to population sub-groups
 Source: authors' processing of survey data

consciousness of local people. On the other hand, an essential part of the evaluated entity is created by the current borderline of a relatively new administrative unit, which apparently is not in the public awareness (not only in the Jeseník area).

The relatively inaccurate image of the border can also be due to poor geographical knowledge of residents about their territory. Another reason could be the fact that the border does not have much significance for the current population of the Jeseník area. This statement implicitly emerged from informal interviews conducted with some of the respondents. From this finding, we can identify the position held by the assessed border as an eventual constituent of regional identity of the population, as very weak. This position expressed by the surveyed mental images evokes presumption of a deformed spatial range of regional identity of the Jeseník area inhabitants. This deformation manifests a lack of clarity and particularly spatial shrinkage in comparison with the probable regional identity of the population that had been displaced from this territory after the war.

One group of respondents was found from the sample whose image of the borderline was very accurate. The

analysis showed that they were university-educated respondents and people from 45 to 54 years of age. The spatial range of regional identity of these groups can therefore be seen as broader than the spatial range of the remaining respondents.

The current results of this study can not be generalized yet. The creation of unambiguous conclusions from the analysis of one region would be misleading. Comparison of findings presented in this study with the knowledge that would emerge from research on other regions with interrupted traditions, seems to be inspiring for further research. Also, a comparison with areas that could be identified as traditional, could help formulate more general conclusions about the true nature of border perceptions, especially the spatial range of regional identities of inhabitants in regions with interrupted or continuous traditions.

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