CULTURAL POPULATION STRUCTURE OF THE CZECH BORDERLAND 70 YEARS AFTER RESETTLEMENT
A CASE STUDY: TACHOV

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Abstract:
This study focuses on the ethno-cultural situation in one of the regions of the Czech borderland, from where almost the entire population was displaced after the Second World War. Ethnographic, historical and geographical methods were used for the research.
The studied region consists of the small town of Tachov and 12 surrounding municipalities, which include a total of 38 settlements. Before the Second World War, the Tachov area was inhabited almost exclusively with people of German ethnicity. After the war, most of these people were displaced to Germany under the Potsdam Agreements. The region also lost most of its Jewish population as a result of the Holocaust and the emigration of those remaining abroad. The area was then inhabited by various groups of Slavic inhabitants from the Czechoslovak interior and other countries, including Czechs and Slovaks from the Czechoslovak interior who were looking for a chance for a new life across the border, and repatriates from the Czech or Slovak minorities in Volhynia, Hungary, Romania. The numbers were supplemented by Ruthenians, who took advantage of the possibility of resettlement after the transfer of Transcarpathian Ukraine to the Soviet Union, by Romanians and Bulgarians who came to the region as forestry experts, and individuals of other ethnic groups.
The original population was far from being replaced, nor was resettlement considered as due to a lack of local economic resources and the border position. The loss of about a third of the population was concentrated in the town of Tachov along with the extinction of a number of original settlements due to the protection of the state border, the construction of the Lučina waterworks, or unsuccessful settlements. The result is an extremely low population density of 15 people per km².
The western part of the area includes a very sparsely populated landscape of the protected landscape area of the Upper Palatine Forest, while in the eastern part of the area, the Tachovská brázda Furrow is used for agriculture. There are practically no mineral resources. The economic base of the region lies in its manufacturing sector, especially in the processing of plastics in Tachov, which is reflected in its weaker educational structure. The sphere of services is undersized. Unemployment is not high, as Bavaria's proximity allows people to cross-border commuting.
Although an ethnically almost homogeneous Slavic population emerged, the socio-cultural levels of the settlers were different. The following ethnocultural groups in particular were singled out and characterized in the territory: Czechs from Czechia, Slovaks from Slovakia, Czechs from formerly Ukrainian Volhynia, Czechs from formerly Polish Volhynia, Slovaks from Transylvania, Ruthenians from Romania, Ruthenians from Transcarpathian Ukraine, and Romanian and Bulgarian forest workers. The Roma. German and Jewish ethnocultural groups disappeared, while a new Vietnamese ethno-cultural group formed. A military-police ethnocultural group was also set aside as a remnant of settlers who came to the area within the protection of its state borders.
The events of the twentieth century completely changed the ethnic and cultural structure of the population of the Tachov region, when the original majority groups practically disappeared and a completely new structure was
created. The study shows how the seemingly ethnically homogeneous structure of the population is in fact culturally differentiated. This had consequences for the entire post-war development of the region. The relationship of the locals to the landscape, to the settlements, and to the land was broken and it took some time for a new local community to form. Moreover, the borderland, in a way, served as a social experiment. The restoration of the middle class was prevented, which today is reflected in a lack of knowledge, and entrepreneurial drive to do business. There is an increased nostalgia for the social security of the socialist period. This is reflected in an increased proportion of votes being cast for non-systemic parties in elections.

It turns out that the data on the ethnic structure of the population do not reflect the real cultural diversity of the region. It is necessary to use other statistical data that describe the cultural structure indirectly. Above all, however, it is necessary to carry out ethnographic research which can both characterize the current state and contribute to its explanation using the historical method.

At present, the possibilities of migration are open. Czechia is becoming a destination for economic migrants from the East and potentially also seniors from the West, or refugees from the South. The experience of this study shows that the assimilation of people from different cultures is a long-term process. People of foreign cultures have a natural tendency to concentrate and separate from domestic culture in order to maintain their own culture. However, intercultural enrichment can only occur if they cooperate with the original culture and gradually integrate into it.


Introduction

Ethnic and religious population structures are often the subject of geographical analyses. Such analyses usually serve political science purposes. In the past, they were often a basis for the demarcation of regional state borders. However, people are often pressured to declare or change their declaration of nationality for political reasons.

At the present time, ethnicity and religion has ceased to be the main force of political development, while the importance of nation-states is declining despite repeated attempts to accentuate the issue. Nevertheless, the culture connected with ethnicity and religion is still important, and it will almost certainly survive nation-states. Neither ethnicity nor religion, however, is able to explain cultural differences completely. In general, different cultures are the results of different attitudes, values and skills (Inglehart, 2018).

Apart from the two mentioned factors, many other circumstances play a role in cultural differences: region of origin, education and social structure of population, historical experience, physical-geographical situation, relation to other cultures in the same region. It is known that believers of the same religion or members of the same nation from different regions have different cultures. People from the highlands have different cultures than people from the lowlands. There are cultural differences between people of different social classes and different education levels. This means that the ethnic and religious population structure alone is not sufficient to explain cultural development.

Massive international migration has caused changes in the ethnic and religious population structure. South-to-North and, less visible, East-to-West migration (Kopnina, 2019) streams prevail in contemporary Europe. Different ethnic and religious population groups are mixing with both positive and negative consequences. The concept of multiculturalism has been intensively discussed, likewise its political consequences. Its perception has changed from being viewed as a solution to Europe’s problems rather than a cause of its problems, which leads to a certain crisis (Chin, 2019). Prato (2016) highlights the conflict between cultural identity and individual choice. She is of the opinion that ethnic identity can acquire a positive value only under the condition that it does not overshadow the universal identity of a citizen...
who shares the common norms and values of the society they live in. In general, however, problems are mainly connected with the immigration of non-Europeans to Europe.

Migration is not a new factor in Europe. The Czech borderland (except for the part next to Slovakia) is a territory where almost the entire population was exchanged after WWII on an ethnic basis. The majority of its population (Germans) was expelled at that time - their evacuation and the following re-settlement process has been described, for example, by Gerlach (2017). The majority of the post-war population consisted of new settlers. They came not only from the Czechoslovak inland, but also through re-emigration of Czechs and Slovaks from foreign countries. Outwardly, a new ethnically relatively homogeneous population structure (Slavonic) arose in the borderland areas. Although ethnically homogeneous, the population that arose there was culturally quite heterogeneous. The new population was of a different and various social origin, age, and education.

The coexistence of different cultures and their assimilation into the Czech borderland took place under the conditions of a non-democratic society. The levelling of the society, including the ethnic structure, was supported by the political system. Additionally, those features related to specific cultures which did not fit communist politics were suppressed – namely religion among others. Thus, the circumstances of the multicultural society were impacted by the regime, and the data and information about cultural structures are not easily accessible.

The research question of this paper regards which cultural groups formed the post-war population, and how the present situation can be characterized from this viewpoint. We aim to show that not only ethnic or religious, but also social structures form different cultures. The investigation was done in the Tachov micro-region on the western borderland of Czechia.

**Theory: Ethnicity and Culture**

Of three generally used definitions of culture (Storey, 2018), we use the following one: *culture is a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group*. Cultural studies are oriented toward the analysis and practical critique of concrete, contemporary cultural distinctions that are based on and that propagate differentials in economic and political power (Surber, 2018). The concept of culture includes non-material manifestations and customs as well as material artifacts (Berger, 2016). Even if the original population disappears, the remnants of material culture remain as a rule.

According to Mosse (2018), culture possesses a soul, while civilization includes an external and artificial state, of which humanity is capable. European civilization was connected with Christianity in the medieval age, after which it changed with nationalism. However, what does civilization mean in the period of globalization? Mozaffari (2017) argues that the pressure of accelerating globalization will tend to some unification of civilization. He hopes that the present civilization level originates from the youngest one, which is European and Western. Could it be interpreted that the civilization level could be measured on the following scale; religious – nationalist – European? Higher levels of civilization do not regulate the previous ones, but include them within themselves. So Europeanization includes both religion and ethnicity, but it no longer places them in a decisive position.

The declarative character of statistical evidence of ethnicity is a key problem for cultural investigation. Moreover, these questions are often subjects of political pressure and intention. Assimilation tendencies lead parents to register their children in schools with the ethnic majority for practical reasons. While statistical evidence of ethnicity in population census
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seems to have the character of hard data, in fact, these data are actually very soft. That is why official statistics about ethnicity can only have an auxiliary function.

Ethnicity is considered to be an important cultural aspect. However, we are of the opinion that ethnicity forms only one part of the regional culture. Baer, Grabb and Johnston (1993) show with the example of the USA and Canada, that cultural differences do not precisely respect ethnic borders. This means that there are some additional aspects which differentiate regional cultures. Additionally, Desmet et al. (2017), based on the results of a survey in 76 countries, are of the opinion that ethnic and cultural diversity are unrelated. At the same time, however, ethnicity is defined by a specific culture among other factors.

The intricate development of the ethnic structure of Central-Eastern Europe was analyzed by Eberhardt (2015), who noted the extreme differentiation and variability of the ethnic and religious structure of this part of Europe, which led to a number of conflicts in the 20th century. Central Eastern Europe, perceived as a more or less homogeneous post-Soviet bloc, is in fact very culturally differentiated.

Religiosity seems to have a closer relationship with culture. However, how should official census data about religious belief be interpreted; through a declaration of faith, or dedication to a church or simply to a tradition to maintain social habits? Which viewpoint is true in individual cases is not always clear. The situation is complicated by the fact that according to the last population census, only 14% of the Czech population reported an affiliation with a church, while 7% are believers without any relation to a church. On the other hand, 35% of the population reports that they are unbelievers and the remaining 44% did not answer the question. So, statistically it is difficult to evaluate religiosity in Czechia. In our opinion, the share of believers indicates a more or less traditional society than one relating to faith.

Regional cultures are sometimes highlighted in relation to exogenous regional development (Kockel, 2017). This could manifest itself through entrepreneurial culture (Fritsch & Wyrwich, 2019), social acceptance and encouragement of entrepreneurs and their activities in a region (Šebestová et al., 2015), or as Benner (2017) discusses, the systemic role of culture in local conditions, including diversity, creativity, and experimentation, and its impact on local or regional development in areas such as economic growth and employment.

The borderland which was occupied by the German Third Reich as a result of the Munich Agreement (1938) is incorrectly named Sudetenland. In this sense, the borderland is rather a sociological concept than a geographical one. It is possible to compare this with Reed’s concept of the US South (Reed, 1982).

Methodology: Ethnological Research

Our research used mainly ethnographic methods; namely using extracts from documents, interviewing, largely, witnesses, consulting museums as well as municipal offices, and also visiting cemeteries which testify the history of the local population. The use of these methods is complicated in the study area. The territory along the iron curtain was a very special area during the socialist period of 1948 – 1989. Written materials are incomplete, often confidential, or they are archived out of the reach of researchers – sometimes in inaccessible archives in Russia. The towns Tachov and Bor were excluded from the detailed research because the social systems of the towns are formed by a different method, and are more mixed.
Each social situation has to be anchored in the respective time and space. That is why historical and geographical methods complete the ethnographic ones. They include research in archives, elaboration of statistical data, as well as mapping and analysis of regional circumstances. The procedure included the delimitation of the territory of study, its geographical characteristics, field research including visits to selected institutions, and generalization of results.

**Material: the Tachov micro-region**

The micro-region under study includes the small town of Tachov and a part of its rural hinterland. Previously, Blanc (1963) considered the Tachov area as one of the laboratories for the analysis of the re-colonization of the Czech border lands. The territory, defined as the administrative district of the municipal authority with extended competence of Tachov, comprises 12 municipalities, which consist of 38 sections of municipalities (which can be simply considered as settlements), where (without Tachov) about 4,400 inhabitants live in an area of 286 km² which results in an extremely low average population density of 15 persons per km².

In the western part of the territory near the state border there are dense, almost uninhabited parts of the Upper Palatine Forest, where a large part of the territory is formed by the protected Landscape Area Český les. The main watercourse is the Mže River, on which there is a water reservoir Lučina (80 ha). During its construction in the 1970s, the settlement Lučina (Sorghof) was flooded. Mineral resources are virtually absent. Local resources are, therefore, mainly forest and agricultural products. The eastern part of the territory consists of the more agriculturally used Tachovská brázda furrow.

Forest occupies about half of the area. Arable land and permanent grassland each make up approximately one fifth of the area. Other types of land use (with the exception of the so-called other areas) occupy insignificant space. The soils are typically not very fertile. The average official price per 1 m² of land in the border regions is approximately CZK 2, towards the Tachov furrow it rises to almost CZK 9. The coefficient of ecological stability of the landscape¹ has a very favorable value of 2.64.

The main traffic routes of the territory are the second-class roads, namely the 198 and 199, on which the border crossing to Bavaria is located at Pavlův Studenec – Bärnau. The nearest town on the Bavarian side is Bärnau (3,179 inhabitants, 2016), 21 minutes by car from Tachov. The nearest D5 motorway exit is just 12 km away. The section of road II / 198 from Tachov towards the highway is the most frequented road in the Tachov area, with an average of 6,571 vehicles passing every 24 hours. The regional railway line Planá – Tachov – Domažlice crosses the territory in the north-south direction. The regional centers are quite distant: on the Czech side is Pilsen, on the Bavarian side are Regensburg and Nürnberg.

The long-term population development of the Tachov region since the first modern census in 1869 is shown in Fig. 1. After an initial growth it is clear that the population was slowly declining until the Second World War. In the post-war period there was an extremely sharp drop to below one third of the Pre-war state, with settlements completely disappearing. The largest of these was Pavlův Studenec, which had 1,400 inhabitants before the war. Blanc

¹ The share of ecologically stable land use (forests, meadows, gardens, waters) and ecologically unstable ones (arable land, built-up and other areas)
(1963) identified the lack of investment as a major problem. In subsequent periods, the population declined only slightly until the situation stabilized in the last 20 years, and there has been a slight increase which is consistent with the prevailing urban-to-rural migration trend in Czechia. At the same time, the town of Tachov, which represented only 15% of the population at the beginning of this period, has been increased by migration from the surrounding countryside since the 1950s, almost tripling by 1990. This shows not only the overall trend of population decline of the micro-region for most of its modern history, but also the concentration of the population in the only city of the micro-region.

Fig. 1: Long-term population development in the Tachov micro-region.


Recently (2013 – 2017), the population development of the Tachov area has stabilized. Over this period, rural municipalities recorded a natural increase of 51 inhabitants and a migration loss of 52 inhabitants, which is a movement of 1% of the total population. On the other hand, the town of Tachov (including the connected local districts) recorded a natural decrease of 50 people and a migration increase of 73 people (representing 4 and 6‰ of the population). However, the depopulation tendencies stopped, not only in the micro-region itself, but also in virtually all its municipalities. Housing construction is not large; between 2012 and 2016, 157 apartments were built, of which 105 were in Tachov itself. Tourist facilities are also concentrated in Tachov. It has 3 facilities with 56 rooms and 150 beds, in which 1,650 guests spent a total of 5,619 nights in 2017.

The settlement structure of the area consists of one small town and a set of rural settlements, none of which have more than one thousand inhabitants. The only medium-sized village is Halţe with 726 inhabitants. The rest of the settlements are 9 small villages and 26 very small villages, of which 23 have less than 100 inhabitants.

At the end of 2016, in the municipalities of the Tachov micro-region there were 9,289 employees, of which 8,685 were employed in Tachov and 604 in other municipalities. 59% of the population of the town of Tachov worked in manufacturing industries (2011), as
did 69% of the inhabitants of rural villages in its vicinity. The main industry of Tachov is plastics processing. Other industries include agriculture, forestry and fishing (13.1%, which is well above the national average), and construction (6.7%). In Tachov, on the other hand, there is an under-average representation of all service sectors as well as transport and logistics. Of the employed, 9.8% had only a basic education (including uncompleted), 42.5% were apprenticed, 34.5% completed a secondary school leaving examination, and 13.2% had some form of tertiary education. The economic structure of the micro-region thus corresponds to its hitherto predominantly production-oriented character, which, largely, is mirrored by the educational structure. The unemployment rate was 3.2%. In March 2018, there were 387 job seekers and a corresponding total of 1,185 job vacancies.

In the micro-region, a total of 2,250 inhabitants (13.2%) declared themselves believers of a faith in the last census (2011). The proportion of believers is similar in Tachov and in the rural settlements in its vicinity. The Roman Catholic Church was the strongest (51.7% of Believers), and the Orthodox Church was the second most (17.2%). Stočes and Váně (2017) show the gradual diversion of the Tachov settlers from the faith due to both the anti-propaganda of the communist regime and the loss of contact with their original community. In rural areas, however, the share of both churches is much closer (Roman Catholic 40.3%, Orthodox 37.8%). The Orthodox communities are in Lesná, Ctiboř, and Milíře. A total of 157 foreigners live in the rural municipalities, with the highest share being Slovaks (25.5%). There are 877 foreigners living in Tachov alone, out of which 188 are Slovaks.

**Empiric results: Individual ethno-cultural population groups**

During the research, we came to the conclusion that mere identification of nationality does not give a credible – or reliable – picture of the cultural composition of society. Culture is a result of social interactions, which come from ethnicity, religion and traditions, the region of origin, and also the social and professional inclusion of the population. Individual cultural groups enter into inter-relationships. At the same time, the culture that bears the strongest hold on its people will prevail - even when it can integrate elements of other cultures. In the study region, cultural population groups were identified, and their dislocation can be seen on the map (Fig. 2).

Czechs from the inner lands were represented by settlers from South Bohemia, Moravia and some other Czech regions. They were mostly small farmers, agricultural workers, and some handicrafts men or industrial workers. Their motivations were different. Some of them were looking for a new beginning, some of them understood it as a political task, and many of them wanted to gain some property and then leave the borderland again.

Slovaks from Slovakia were represented to a relatively small degree due to the distance of the region under study, from Slovakia, and came from the less developed Slovak regions. The interaction of Slovaks from Romania showed that they belonged to a more material and more religious culture, and they were trying to integrate into the milieu of Czech settlers from the inner lands.

Czechs from Volhynia came to the region mostly as former soldiers of the 1st Czechoslovak Army Corpus in the USSR, who won the right to settle in Czechoslovakia in WWII. They are divided into two groups. The Czechs from the Soviet Volhynia (mostly from the Zhitomir oblast of present Ukraine) had bad experiences with the era of terror and famine under Stalin. That is why they were considered by the Czech communist regime to be unreliable. Czechs from Polish Volhynia (Volyn and Rivne oblast), which fell to Poland on the Treaty of Brest-
Litovsk, formed the second group, and kept more their religious traditions. Czechs from Volhynia were considered to be good land managers. There were 1,283 Czechs from Volhynia in the Tachov region (Nosková, 1999).

Slovaks from Romania (Transylvania), in total 1,350 people, formed about a half of the Slovak settlers in the Tachov region. They represented a distinct group which kept relatively unchanged folk traditions in the foreign cultural milieu of Romanian and Hungarian languages, orthodox, catholic, and evangelic religions. They had a low level of formal education as a rule. Local people sometimes considered them to be Romanians (Nosková, 2014).

Rusyns from Romania represented a less developed cultural group from a civilization viewpoint. They were mostly forest workers who found their existence in the forests of the Tachov region. From a religious standpoint, they were Greek-Catholic, but the Greek-Catholic Church was administratively involuntarily connected with the Orthodox Church according to the Soviet model in 1948.
Carpatho-Ruthenians were from the Subcarpathian Ukraine – one of the lands of pre-war Czechoslovakia. Those who came with the 1st Czechoslovak Army Corpus gained the right to move to Czechoslovakia after the connection of Subcarpathian Ukraine to the USSR. These people totaled 1,200, some of which reported as Slovaks or Ukrainians.

Romanians and Bulgarians were invited by the Czechoslovak government as forest workers, who were much needed in the Tachov region. They represented an exclusive element, not being repatriates, and in the case of Romanians, they were not Slavic either. Individual families lived in peripheral villages.

Before WWII, Germans formed an absolute majority of the population and they dictated the culture of the region. After the expulsion, only a small number remained, were dispersed among different villages, and could not form any strong cultural group. Their descendants – often from mixed matrimony – relatively quickly assimilated, and they do not register German ethnicity at the present time. Renewed contacts of rural municipalities with their former inhabitants in Germany are limited, and function more for nostalgia. However, remnants of material culture remained: the ground plan of settlements, intravilan division, architecture, landscape, and cemeteries, which had not been destroyed.

Jews represented a very important element before WWII, mainly from the religious viewpoint. Ethnically, they identified themselves with the majority – i.e. with Germans. As a consequence of the holocaust, the Jewish culture in the region ceased to exist. Also, in the case of Jews, some elements of the material culture survived, especially cemeteries and rural synagogues.

Roma people do not form any significantly large part of the population of the Tachov region. They do not consider themselves a nationality. The majority evaluates them more as a social than ethnic group. However, within the population census of 1980, the census commissioners estimated the number of Roma (Gypsies according to the terminology of the time) at 182 (2 % of the population). The biggest concentration of them was recorded in towns.

The Vietnamese appeared in the 1990s. Their Buddhist religion does not manifest itself externally. They mostly use contacts which originate from their working stays in Czechoslovakia during the socialist period. They are interested in assimilating with the local population. They are engaged mostly in retail and services as private entrepreneurs. For this reason, they concentrate themselves in more important settlements close to main roads.

The military-police subculture is not pre-conditioned by ethnic or religious factors. It originated as a consequence of the old iron curtain. Officers of the military forces, Border Police, State Security and similar armed bodies often settled with their families in villages close to the state border. They have formed a special culture, until this time, which has been repeatedly confirmed by results of local elections.

In general, Slovak compatriots from Romania, Hungary and other countries found themselves in the role of cultural minorities. In the countries which they emigrated from, these people formed their small enclaves and diasporas. The ethnically related environment of regions in the Czech lands did not become for them a challenge to radically emancipate themselves, but rather a challenge to adjust and preserve a certain identity. Romanian Slovaks brought their own cultural capital to the borderland, which had its roots in their original Slovak home regions – Kysuce, Orava, Gemer and Hont, from where they left to Romania in the 18th century. Their cultural capital was influenced by their affiliation with the Catholic Church thanks to which a part of the liturgy was carried over into folk traditions. It became a regional cultural consciousness and an older variant of Slovak customary law in families and society.
Slovaks in Transylvania preserved their cultural capital through folk customs and traditions from generation to generation in unwritten form for two hundred years, only through their memory and traditions passed down orally. Local Czechs and Slovaks considered the way of life, living, clothing, diet, and farming of the re-emigrants to be old-fashioned and evidence of a lower social class. Their Slovak compatriots preserved their cultural capital until the 1970s—until later generations took over. In the micro-regions of Tachov, Sokolov, Cheb, Kaplice, Jeseník and other regions, folk traditions forming a specific cultural capital of Slovaks from Romania lasted until the 1990s (Nosková & Váchová, 2000).

The German minority became a cultural minority due to the effect of tools of foreign and local politics in Czechoslovakia. The tools consisted of displacement, deprivation of civil rights, and denial of education in their mother language or the development of their own culture. Also, Hungarians, Ukrainians and Ruthenians became a cultural minority in the Czech lands, as did Croatians, Greeks, and Bulgarians. The Roma could have become a cultural minority too, but they were not accepted by the majority. The Poles in the Czech Republic remained a national minority concentrated mainly in the North-Moravian borderland. Some cultural rights of Germans, whose minorities also lived in several border regions, were gradually restored. Hungarians, Ukrainians, Roma, Croatians, Ruthenians, and Lusatian Serbs remained as cultural minorities in Bohemia.

Cultural minorities in the borderland partially mingled with culturally-social minorities. Culturally-social minorities penetrated the majority to a larger extent, and with their border position between a cultural minority and a social group of the majority, they contributed to a mutual tolerance of both the groups or even to incorporation of a part of the cultural minority into the majority. A prerequisite for such incorporation usually was the same social identity of the majority and the cultural minority. The existing background field research shows that border regions were suitable for this inter-mingling. The identity of cultural minorities stayed on the level of individual perception and of a certain manifestation of common attributes.

Discussion: Consequences

Our research shows that in a relatively small area which seems to be relatively homogeneous from an ethnic and religious viewpoint, many different cultures can be found. The most numerous cultures from the Pre-war period—the German and Jewish ones, completely disappeared. This caused some disruption to local culture, cultural identity, the relationship between the people and the landscape and settlements, and also the relationship of farmers to their land as a part of the heritage which should have been inherited by sons and grandsons.

The new settlement took place under the direction of the Communist Party starting in 1945. From an overview, it follows that none of the new cultural groups could be classified as middle class (except maybe Slovaks from Volhynia who were strictly regarded, politically, as unreliable elements). The borderland served like a social experiment in creating a society without any spiritually or economically independent population classes. This fact, besides the mixture of people of different cultures from different parts of Europe, was the reason why a specific social situation originated in the borderland areas.

What components does the regional culture actually consist of? According to our findings, in addition to the ethnic and religious factors, a historical experience in different regions can be named. The civilization level including formal education, ways of farming, and social stratification play a role as well. The cultural politics of the state can support or defend cultural identity or assimilation of individual groups.
What are the consequences of such a special cultural population mixture after 60 years? There are only a very limited number of statistical indicators that can be discussed. The religiousness of the population (the sum of believers of all religions and believers without any religion) is 12.4 %, compared to the Czech average of 21 % – although we are speaking about a rural region where a higher religiousness could be presupposed.

The original structure of immigrants is reflected in the current political preferences of the locals. In the last elections into the lower house of Parliament (2017), the participation in the Tachov region was 52.0 % (compared to the national average of 60.8 %). Many more voters elected so-called non-system parties. The party ANO of the prime minister Babiš was supported by 34.8 % (compared to 29.6 % for the entire Czechia), the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia by 12.2 % (compared to the national average of 7.8 %), and ultranationalistic and anti-immigration Liberty and Direct Democracy by 12.1 % (compared to 10.6 %). We are of the opinion that such results express some nostalgia for social security.

The relationship between the cultural character of the region and its potential for regional development could be assessed by means of the share of entrepreneurial activities of the locals. In the Tachov region there are 11 active enterprises per 100 inhabitants. The respective value for Czechia is 14. Krupková (1998), comparing the district Tachov with the inner lands districts Písek and Tábor, states a better demographic situation in Tachov (a result of immigration), yet there is less interest in entrepreneurialism. Together with the election preferences, it shows that local people tend to prefer social security and state assistance.

Although the ethnic population structure in the borderland is almost homogeneous at the present time, different cultural origins can differentiate local populations. This is evidenced by the different folk traditions and habits – while the younger generation has also obtained standard education, including university. The question is how deeply is it rooted in its cultural origin?

After 40 years of Communist rule behind the iron curtain, when not only migration but also a visit to the borderland territory was difficult, the border re-opened. New cultural (often quite exotic) elements have impacted the cultural milieu of the Tachov region – immigrants from the East and the South, and later also from the West (seniors living from western pensions easily covering eastern living costs), new religions and confessions. On the other hand, the Tachov region has not yet been discovered by migrants from further afield; and the question is whether and when this will happen.

In general, the question of possible new immigration can be posited. It shows that immigrants usually tend to concentrate in selected villages where they are able to keep their cultural habits and customs and hope for assistance from their co-patriots if necessary. At the same time, such a model protects them from their quick assimilation into the majority. This could be a difficult problem to solve when the culture of immigrants is extremely different from the culture of the majority. Roma villages (sometimes termed, ghettos) in Eastern Slovakia could serve as an example (Mušinka et al., 2013). The same could happen with Islamic immigrants from Africa or the Middle East. Surprisingly, Islamic immigrants from the Balkan or former Soviet Central Asia do not yet represent any serious problem. It seems that it is not the religion itself, but a combination with a specific regional culture that could form a threat. On the other hand, when immigrants are dispersed among the original population, their assimilation can be a question of one to two generations.
Conclusion

Our research showed an interesting picture of the cultural milieu in the region under study, which appears to be quite homogeneous on the outside, but is actually quite diverse on the inside. The differences have persisted for more than 70 years, i.e. more than 3 generations, in the milieu which was more or less protected from external interference. The question is what happens in the present time when the area is open not only to the Bohemian inner lands, but also to Bavaria and Europe in general.

Possible migrations across Europe and their impact on the cultural milieu in individual regions manifest another unknown factor. Is the concept of multiculturalism more suitable or should we seek assimilation of the immigrants as quickly as possible? It is clear that our paper opens further questions which present possible themes for future research.

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