

SUDETES – CROSS-BORDER REGION?

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Abstract:

The first aim of the article is to present the changing, from a dawn of time, cross-border functions of the Sudetes region. The second aim is to present changes which occur in the booming Central European cooperation within the confines of the European Union integration. Authors, on the background of the broad historical background, try to answer the question what is the role of Sudetes in the Polish-Czech cooperation. Conducted research suggests the conclusion that the Sudetes, despite the elimination of administrative barriers, continue to perform the function of the contact region which is marked by the discontinuity in space and infrastructure.

1. Introduction

Functions of border regions, in the rapidly changing spatial conditions, undergo significant transformations. It is a result of processes of the European integration, abolishing traditional administrative barriers in crossing borders. This situation produces a wide field to study changes in relationships and socio-economic links which are being developed in these areas.

Position of the Sudetes between two historical lands – Silesia and Bohemia since a dawn of time, influenced their cross-border functions. These functions, depending on circumstances, underwent considerable changes. The Sudetes, either bound economically, culturally and socially both these areas, approaching the function of the cross-border area. At other times were rather a barrier to the diffusion of all kinds, gaining functionality, rather, of the contact region which separated and not linked adjacent socioeconomic systems.

The first aim of the article is to present the changing, from a dawn of time, cross-border functions of the Sudetes region. The second aim is to present changes which occur in the booming Central European cooperation within the confines of the European Union integration. In the latter case, authors try to answer the question what is the role of Sudetes in the Polish-Czech cooperation. Are the Sudetes a region which is supporting the development of socio-economic links, or, on the contrary, they are a barrier which reduces mentioned links.

The region which is associated with the state border can be generally defined as border. Depending on the location relative to the border and the level of its formalization, it can be distinguished several categories of border regions. The criterion of the position constitutes border and frontier regions. The literature (e.g. [6], [3], [1], [10]) is dominated by point of view that the border region is adjacent to the state border, and is situated on one of its side. On the other hand, the frontier region is the area which is cut by the state border however, according to certain criteria, can be considered as a coherent integrity.

In such approach, as an example of the border region, it can be indicated the unit of the administration subdivision which functions within a particular country and it lies at the state border. On the other hand, an example of the frontier region may be the unit which is designated as part of the geophysical regionalization and it is located within more than one state. Therefore, the Sudetes – as an mountain range which is located in the area of Poland, the Czech Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany – are the typical, frontier region.

The cross-border region is the specific case of the frontier region. Z. Przybyła [6] defined it as “the territorial socio-economic system which is the manifestation of the elimination or the low level of formalization of the state border”. M. Więckowski [10] emphasized the importance of real cross-border links as a factor which constitutes the cross-border region. Such links are described as “regional relationships which cross the border” and contacts between authorities, institutions and people from two or more bordering states and transport links were included to them. He stated also that these links determine the spatial extent of the cross-border region.

The strength of cross-border relations may change with time. In the situation of the development of these relations, the cross-border of the region is amplified. Generally it

is a consequence of the reduction of the formalization of the border by the removal of barriers to cross-border flows. However, even the complete abolition of the border does not automatically result in the integration of the territories which are situated on both sides of the border. Z. Rykiel [7] defined as “contact regions”, regions which are located at the state border, which, indeed, has been abolished, but it still marks in the socio-economic structure.

2. The evolution of the cross-border function of the Sudetes

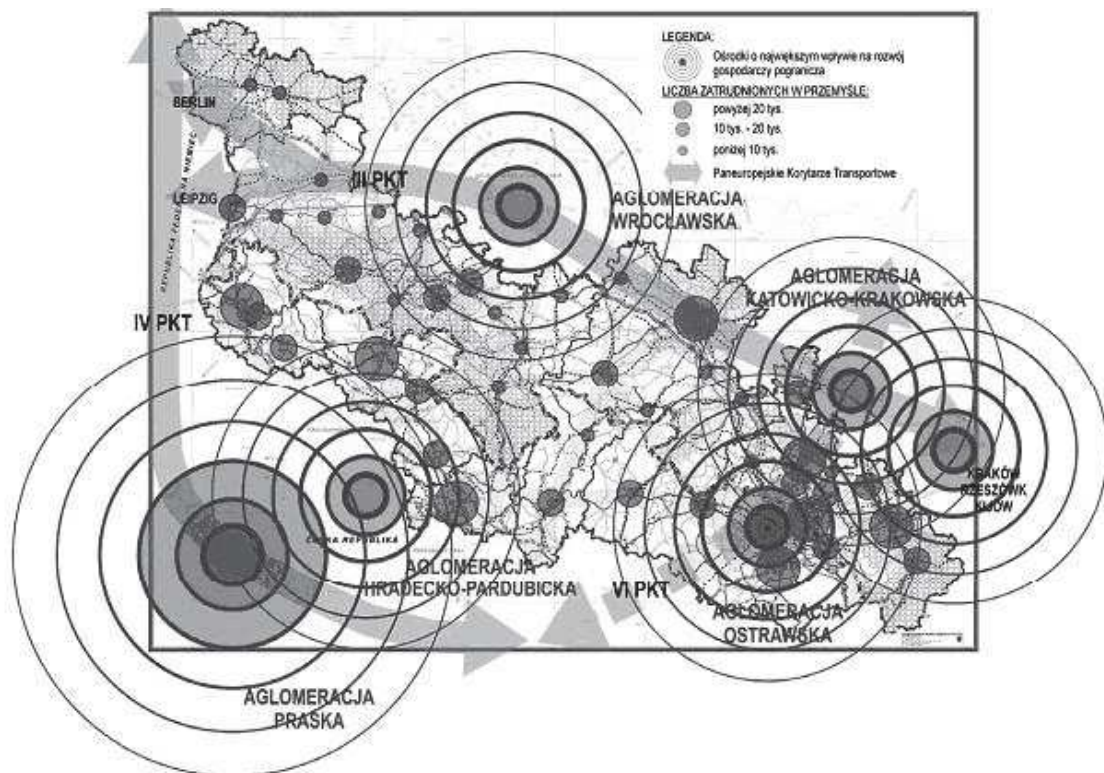
Political and economic transformation in Central Europe, has considerably changed the situation of the border between Silesia and the Czech Republic. Polish and the Czech Republic 's accession, first, to the European Union and, then, to the Schengen Area, abolished political and institutional reasons which determined the poor diffusion between these two areas. At the same time, after the problems connected with the transformation, both areas have entered a phase of dynamic growth. Both Polish western regions and northern and central Bohemia primarily developed to the cooperative links with the largest European economy – Germany. The main stream of the trade has also been directed towards developed countries in the European Union. It imbued parallel to the mountain range of the Sudetes, the latitudinal system of the trade flow between the two countries. Thus, in the late 90s, priority, for both Poland and the Czech Republic has become the construction of high class of linkages with Germany and the European transport system. Therefore, it did not change the logic of the pre-World-War-II plans and locations.

Meanwhile, after the accession of Central European countries to the European Union, the cooperative cooperation and the trade within the group began to rapidly increase. In particular, it became apparent between Poland and the Czech Republic. Analysis of the geographical structure of western Polish exports, conducted in a dynamic approach, leads to the conclusion that the share of Germany in exports is decreasing. In Lower Silesia and Opole provinces¹, has nearly doubled the role of the Czech Republic which is for them the second trade partner. Poland is the third partner for the Czechs, both in terms of exports (after Germany and Slovakia) and imports (after Germany and China).

¹ Province (voivodeship) – it is the level 2 in the Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics (NUTS).

It especially concerns electromechanical and electronic industries which, as a result of the inflow of foreign direct investments, have evolved primarily in western Poland and in the Czech Republic [2: 49]. The trade between these two countries has increased in the first decade of the twentieth century up to four times. In recent years, despite the crisis, it increases by about 30% per year [4: 3]. A typical example of the Polish-Czech co-operation system are factories of Toyota and other manufacturers of automotive components. Engines and gearboxes are produced in Toyota plants in Walbrzych. Then, they are assembled in a common plant of Toyota and French PSA in Kolin in the Czech Republic.

FIG. 1: The economic potential of Silesia and northern Czech Republic on the background cross-European transport corridors.



Source: *Studium zagospodarowania przestrzennego pogranicza polsko-czeskiego*, Ministerstwo Budownictwa RP, Ministerstwo pro Mistni Rozvoj CR, Warszawa-Wrocław-Praga 2006

Despite these economic transformations, the communication system between western Poland and the Czech Republic has not changed and, as before, it shows characteristics of the gravity to a latitudinal form. No investment, which would alter in any way the

system, has not been implemented in the entire length of the Sudetes – from the Zittau Valley to the Moravian Gate.

Tonnage limits, applicable to cross-border routes cause that for cargo traffic and transit, in the entire length of the border in the Sudetes, nothing has changed. Everlastingly, routes on which traffic of lorries weighing over 12 tons is allowed, remained roads leading through former border crossings Kudowa Słone/Nachod and Jakuszyce/Harrachov. What's the meaning of keeping the transit traffic through Jakuszyce – the highest in Poland located section of the road. The road in this point reaches a height of 880 meters over the sea level, passing through most snow areas of Poland (Fig. 2). To overcome the route, lorries have to pass through the tourist center of Szklarska Poręba and Harrachov and steep and narrow winding roads before Jakuszyce and in Kořenov.

FIG. 2: The Cross-border road E65 in Jakuszyce (880 m a.s.l.) in the winter



Source: phototrans.pl/images/photos/original/573/536721.jpg [downloaded 12.07.2012]

Winding mountainous sections of roads are burdensome for the transit traffic, significantly slowing down the movement of vehicles. Terrain and climatic conditions cause, especially in the winter, a lot of difficulties. As a result, many companies which have had to co-operate on a just-in-time way has been forced to invest in an unplanned pre-storage areas². Difficulties in the continuity of supplies, especially in the winter, cause stopping the production, even in large companies like Škoda factory³.

The spatial discontinuity of infrastructure which can be seen in the Sudetes inhibits the creation of a kind of a platform linking the two main axes of development of neighboring countries which are characterized by the latitudinal, aiming at Germany, orientation. Otherwise, we are only threatened by the dependence of the latitudinal direction of economic gravity (Fig. 3). Meanwhile, investments of this kind, both in Poland and the Czech Republic are not seen as a priority. It seems that there is a lack of vision and adequate overtaking reaction to the Central European trends. Many policymakers who are accustomed to the present gravity system, do not see the legitimacy of considering perspective and potential development axes.

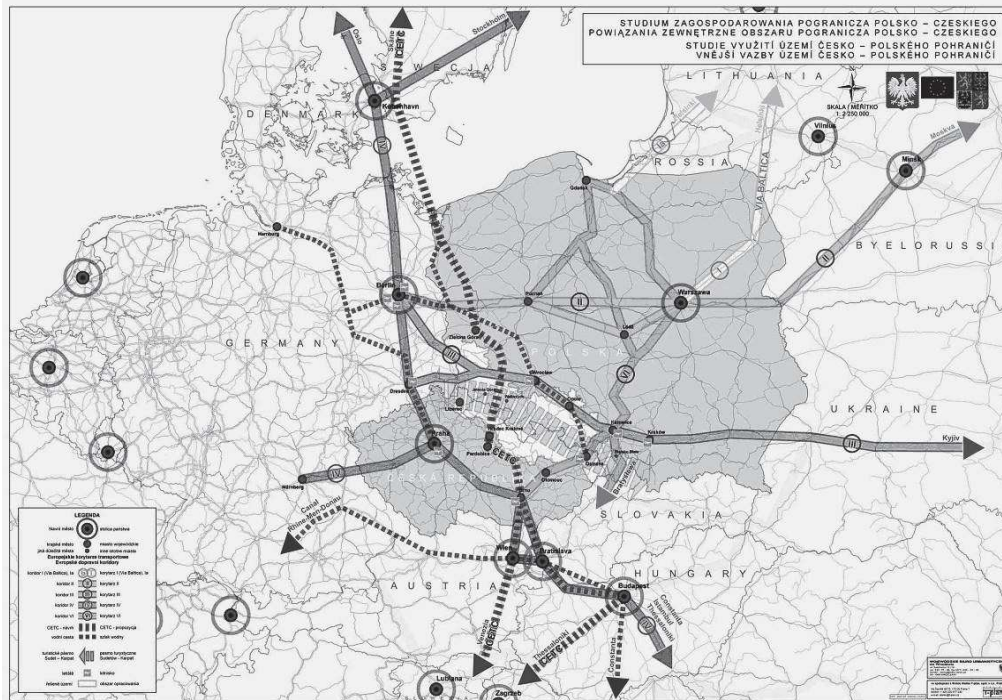
An example of struggling of such a point of view is the story of the cross-Sudetes section of the expressway S3/R11. Its implementation has already been repeatedly displaced in time. The reason of mentioned situation is a little traffic on the examined road. Indeed, when we look at the traffic stream across the border in Lubawka, it amounted approximately 3.5 thousand vehicles per day in 2011⁴. It is worth to remember that; firstly, there is the tonnage limit (up to 12 t), and secondly, there is currently the narrow and winding driveway (both Polish and Czech side). Currently, the mountainous barrier distil the traffic on many alternative routes, including its complete avoidance which is connected with the cost of significant detours.

² Examples of such development related primarily to companies in the automotive industry such as Japanese Takata Petri Parts in Krzeszów and Nova Paka.

³ For example, in Mlada Boleslav on February and March of the 2011, by four days car production has been stopped due to lack of part's supplies from Polish suppliers which reduced the production of 3200 cars.

⁴ *Średni dobowy ruch pojazdów silnikowych na sieci dróg krajowych w 2010 r.*, GDDKiA, Warszawa 2011

FIG. 3: The axis of the expressway S3 on the background of development axes of the Central Europe.



Source: *Studium zagospodarowania przestrzennego pogranicza polsko-czeskiego*, Ministerstwo Budownictwa RP, Ministerstwo pro Mistni Rozvoj CR, Warszawa-Wrocław-Praga 2006

Creating the convenient transport corridor will not only aggregate the traffic from current border crossing points in the Sudetes, but it also will move some traffic streams from routes which detour the mountainous area. The effect of absorbing the traffic from other directions is not calculated in analyzes presented by the General Directorate for National Roads and Highways⁵ on the basis of its current intensity on a particular route. It is confirmed by results of authors' research.

Assuming only that the new transport corridor will focus on 50% traffic of the adjacent border crossing points (Jakuszyce, Golińsk and Kudowa-Słone) and 20% of other routes located in the Sudetes, we obtain the number of 11 222 vehicles per day. It equates the potential traffic stream with its present intensity at Poland's largest cross-border routes in Jędrzychowice (approx. 13 thousand vehicles per day) and Cieszyn (approx. 12 thousand vehicles per day). The addition of 5% traffic of border crossing points which detour the Sudetes creates the new, even higher number – 12 677 vehicles per day.

⁵ Generalna Dyrekcja Dróg Krajowych i Autostrad (GDDKiA).

Conducted calculations clearly suggest that creating the cross-Sudetes road corridor in the standard of the expressway will concentrate the traffic stream to numbers that completely motivate the mentioned investment. The traffic congestion would not be lower than traffic congestions which are traced in other sections of the Polish road No. 3 (E65) (e.g. sections Legnica – Lubin or Zielona Góra – Gorzów Wielkopolski) and are higher than, for example, on the route Wrocław-Poznań. Results of the conducted calculation completely change the image of a potential traffic stream what can be expected in the mentioned section of the road. It would be worth, if the Polish General Directorate for National Roads and Motorways included these results in their analyzes. Therefore, it is rightly noted that delaying the construction of the expressway S3 from Legnica to Lubawka, and the consequent lack of the decision concerning on the construction of the expressway from Wrocław to Boboszów, and next to Brno and Vienna, eliminate the development of the economic cooperation between western Poland with the Czech Republic and the Republic of Austria (Mogila and others 2011), and also force the area of the Sudetes to playing the role of the border region – which de facto separates two economic areas.

3. Conclusion

The cross-border role of the Sudetes underwent, over centuries, fairly radical changes. The function of the area which separated Silesia and Bohemia in early Middle Ages, was replaced in later centuries by the function of the region which associated economically both territories. The degradation of the role and return to the function of the barrier which was strictly separating two economic areas, took place after 1945. The condition of the infrastructure which facilitate these linkages, not only did not follow the development of the civilization, but, further, degraded. The image of the former border station in Lubawka is the sad symbol of this.

In recent years, as a result of the integration both of Poland and the Czech Republic with the European Union, the economic linkages has been intensified. In first 10 years of the 21th century, the mutual trade of mentioned countries and their relations with Germany increased several times. Hence, the priority direction of developing the infrastructure, both in Poland and the Czech Republic, was the latitudinal system, aimed primarily at Germany. Unfortunately, at the same time, the focus on the modernization

and construction of new connections Polish-Czech only in the region of Silesia occurred. The entire area of the Sudetes was devoid of such projects.

As a result of the Schengen Agreement, formal barriers in crossing boundaries disappeared – therefore, directions of cross-border flows are dependent, first of all, on the quality and the condition of the infrastructure. Omission of the Sudetes in plans of the modernization and the expansion of the infrastructure causes that they are still a major barrier to cooperation. Therefore, they are playing the important role of the border region which inhibits the development of economic linkages between the Czech Republic and western Poland. No initiatives changing the examined area to the cross-border region - binding two adjacent areas, precludes the creation of a more sustainable cooperation zone in this part of Europe. The orientation of both countries, only on the relationship with Germany, with the lack of the supporting infrastructure of the developing latitudinal cooperation, do not use the possibility of increasing the competitiveness of countries which are neighboring through the Sudetes.

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