

Upper Silesia: a changing cross-border region. A field report from a Brazilian geographer

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Abstract:

This field report deals with a peripheral, or non-central cross-border region between Poland and Czech Republic. It presents some results of bibliographical research and field observations in the cultural-historical region of Silesia (PL: Śląsk; CZ: Slezsko), mainly in its part of Upper Silesia (PL: Górny Śląsk; CZ: Horní Slezsko). After the Introduction, the question of the location and position of cultural-historical Silesia and Upper Silesia is examined between the two countries. In the second place, the spatio-temporal development of the territorial formation of Silesia is presented. In the third place, the most important territorial features of the intensive urbanization process and the Silesian-Moravian agglomeration are treated. In the fourth part, which deals with “peripheral regionalism” in Central Europe, the report tries to show that Upper Silesia is a classic cross-border central region in the sense of a strategic “Heartland” between Poland and Czech Republic. In fifth place, the report addresses the current productive reconversions in Upper Silesia, the closure of coal mines and steel mills considered unproductive, the integration of the periphery into the central macro-regional production networks of the automotive industry, the gradual adaptation to the Paris Agreement, and the search for a service-based economy, mainly through historical and ecological tourism. In sixth and final place, the report addresses cross-border management, focusing on Euroregions, the EGTC Tritia, and functional urban areas (FUAS) in both sides of the countries. A concluding Discussion highlights that the concept of periphery may not be appropriate for Upper Silesia and, to some extent, for the entire cultural-historical Silesia, even though its geo-economic role in production networks is changing today. A brief Post Scriptum highlights the current state of cross-border integration processes, which respond to the uncertainties of nationalisms, the difficulties of integrating processes and productive reconversions, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Keywords:

Silesia; Upper Silesia; Poland; Czech Republic; peripheral regionalism; cross-border region

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Introduction

This field report² addresses the issue of a peripheral – or non-central – cross-border region between Poland and Czech Republic, presenting a result of exploratory research and field observations in the cultural-historical region of Silesia (*Śląsk* in Polish; *Slezsko* in Czech), mainly in its part of Upper Silesia (Polish: *Górny Śląsk*; Czech: *Horní Slezsko*). Most of the entire cultural-historical Silesia region is currently divided in three countries located in the south and southwest of the Republic of Poland, mainly in the current provinces (*Województwa*/Voivodeships) of Silesia, Opole and Lower Silesia; in the east of the Czech Republic, in part of the Moravia-Silesia (*Moravsko-Slezsky Kraj*) and Olomouc regions. In addition, the region is bordered to the south by the Slovak Republic on the Beskidy Mountains, the western Carpathian Mountain range.

The cultural-historical region of Upper Silesia is part of the most industrialized Silesian province, part of rural Opole province in Poland, the industrialized region of Moravia-Silesia and a small part of the rural and touristic Olomouc region in the Czech Republic. The intensively urbanized regions are based on traditional mining and steel production, which are now in process of productive reconversion. Having undergone an intensive privatization and attraction of FDI – Foreign Direct Investments process – towards a market economy since the early 1990s, adjustments to the European Union's greenhouse gas emissions reduction Agenda of the 2016 Paris Agreement (Despiney-Zochowska, 2006) are at stake for both countries and regions.

The report is divided into six main parts, besides the Introduction, a concluding Discussion as well a short *Post Scriptum*. The Introduction provides the theoretical background and methodology. The main findings addresses 1) the issue of the location and position of cultural-historical Silesia and Upper Silesia between the two countries; 2) the space-time of the territorial formation of Silesia from the origins of the Duchy of Silesia and its main historical periods to the present; 3) the main territorial features of the intense urbanization process and the Silesia-Moravian Policycentric Metropolitan Area; 4) the issue of “peripheral regionalism” in Central Europe and Upper Silesia, a classic cross-border central region in the sense of a strategic “Heartland” between Poland and the Czech Republic; 5) the

2 This report is a partial result of the research project *Territorial Policies in Changing Scenarios. Cross-border processes and cross-border regions in the European Union and South America* (2019-2022), supported by CNPq - National Council for Research and Technology and FAPERGS - Foundation for Research Promotion of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The field observation activities in Upper Silesia in 2019 were financially supported by the agency CAPES-PRINT Internationalization Program of the Ministry of Education of the Brazilian Federal Government.

current productive reconversions in Upper Silesia, the closure of coal mines and steel mills considered unproductive; peripheral integration into core-based macro-regional production networks of the automotive industry, by gradual adaptation to the Paris Agreement and the search for a service-based economy; 6) finally the report addresses the cross-border management focusing on Euroregions, the EGTC (European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation) Tritia and the functional urban areas (FUAS) across the two countries. A concluding Discussion highlights that the concept of periphery may not be appropriate for Upper Silesia and, to some extent, for the entire cultural-historical Silesia, even though its geo-economic role in production networks is changing today. A brief *Post Scriptum* highlights the current state of cross-border integration processes, which faces the uncertainties of nationalisms, the difficulties of integrating processes and productive reconversions, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Theoretical background

Field observations carried out in the cross-border region of Upper Silesia were associated with concepts concerned with territorial formation; “bordering-debordering-rebordering” processes in territorial integrations as well as macro, medium, and micro-regions concepts in the context of New Regionalism and its policies.

The “geopolitical chessboard” in the historical-cultural region of Silesia over time is one of the factors that makes it a unique and paradigmatic area. The geohistorical overlapping layers in the territorial formation of the region and its borders find their theoretical support in temporal-spatial references. In other words, the space is a product of the uneven accumulation of times specific to each place. This leads to the “roughness of space”, whose variables are derived partly from current flows and partly from past flows (Santos, 1978, p. 205-212).

Space-time, the uneven accumulation of times, and the “roughness of space” are in turn linked to analytical methods for understanding territorial processes. Accordingly, the constitution of a territory is a cumulative process that is a result and a possibility at every moment - a continuum in motion (Moraes, 2000, p. 17). Territorial historicity in this way begins to favor the movements of economic and political times in what is called “territorial formation”.

... the territorial formation is conceived as an empirical object, the adjustment of the focus in this angular perspective of the capture of the historical movement.
 ... From an epistemological point of view, one moves from the vagueness of

the category of space to the precise concept of territory. And in doing so, or rather, in its production, the specifically economic determinations relate to the arrangements of the universe of politics. In the full historicity of singular processes arises the possibility of naming the actors of the process, the concrete subjects of spatial production. Land uses, settlements, forms of occupation, and hierarchies between places also express the results of struggles, hegemonies, violence, and ultimately political actions (Moraes, 2000, p. 17).

Thus, Silesia and Upper Silesia have been observed along a geohistorical process, even if the main focus is on the contemporary changes. The formation and changes of borders as results of geopolitical conflicts; the intensive cross-border regional urbanization nowadays; the role of the region in a “peripheral regionalism” perspective when new centers may grew up and change old regional functions; present productive reconversions and cross-border territorial policies were the main variables chosen to analyze the territorial formation of Upper Silesia, mainly.

Cross-border issues have been brought to the debate in the years 1990 and 2000. One of its focuses understands borders as “bordering-debordering-rebordering processes” as simultaneous constructions, deconstructions, and reconstructions of these spaces (Newman, 2003, p. 13; Scott, 2015, p. 27; Kolossov & Więckowski, 2018, p. 6). So, one takes “...into account that the border is a category of unstable space, we can say that it is a process rather than a place...” (Amilhat-Szary, 2015, p. 29. Author’s translation). In this perspective, cultural-historical Silesia is described by geopolitical conflicts between the empires and powers of Europe before and after World Wars I and II, territorial dismemberments, and national realignments after major conflicts that define it as a region where several successive “borderings-deborderings-reborderings” processes are visualized along time.

Presently, New Regionalism has been advocated by important academic institutions, supranational and financial organizations such as World Bank, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Economic Organization for Cooperation and Development (OECD), Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG-Regio) of EU, as well as a set of think tanks associated with The European Think Tanks Group (ETTG)³.

3 The European Think Tanks Group (ETTG) comprises, among others: The German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE); The European Center for Development Policy Management (ECDPM); The Elcano Royal Institute / Real Instituto Elcano; The Institute of International Affairs / Istituto per Affari Internazionali (IAI); The Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations / Institut du Développement Durable et des Relations Internationales (IDDRI) e The Overseas

The guidelines of OECD and DG-Regio of the European Union towards “competitive territories” through the emphasis on the competitiveness of places and “place-based policies” are related, in turn, to the general principle of “territorial cohesion”, a polysemic concept associated with territorial planning, the French “territorial management” (Faludi, 2004; 2007). The approach of competitiveness of places, however, contrasts with “lagging regions” (Farole et al, 2018) as they do not contain factors such as high levels of education, science, and technology. These regions cannot compete on equal terms with those that have the highest indices of GDP, science and technology, and high added value manufacturing indices, such as the geographic pentagon formed by London, Hamburg, Munich, Milan, and Paris.

It is undeniable that the New Regionalism concept of competitive regional markets gave rise to a movement of theoretical renewal of the very concept of region, even creating concepts such as “regionness”, or “regionality” (Hettne; Söderbaum, 2000, p. 457). The process of “building regions” and the creation of a new state-society paradigm stands out since it “...suggests that new forms of politically relevant action can (or must) increasingly take place, beyond the state’ and beyond the seemingly inflexible territoriality of the state” as Scott (2008, p. 3) states.

The original contribution of Roger Brunet, elaborated in the 1980s and 1990s (1980, 1986, 2001, 2002)⁴ dates to the period before the theoretical renewal of the concept of region, as already mentioned above, and could nevertheless provide some elements for the observation of changes in the territorial structure of the European Union. His proposals were based on regions in the Central Dorsal – the above-mentioned pentagon or megalopolis – where high value added production cities are located between England and Italy, and on the non-central or peripheral regions located in the outer circles (old peripheries with new technologies) of the “central ring” extending to Central and Eastern Europe.

According to Szabó (2008, p. 4), the Pentagon is one of the recent models of the territorial structure of the EU, “very popular in the *milieu* of its bureaucratic system”⁵. Nevertheless, the methodological option here is to retain

Development Institute (ODI), etc. (ETTG).

- 4 French geographer Roger Brunet was director of the GIP - “Reclus Public Interest Group” at the House of Geography in Montpellier (FR) between 1984 and 1997 (for more information see: <http://www.mgm.fr/ARECLUS/index.html>; <http://www.mgm.fr/ARECLUS/gipf.html>). His contributions are mainly related to the proposal of modeling the European geographic space, the most famous being the “blue banana”.
- 5 Szabó (2008, p. 1) acknowledges that there are different names for the most dynamic areas, which have been investigated in a pioneering way by Brunet and GIP Reclus. She mentions, for example, the European megalopolis, the golden plateau, the blue banana, *nord des suds*,

Brunet's (2001, 2002) original model of central dorsal or megalopolis and its outer regions, as described below. Cross-border regions that lie inside or outside the diagonal or the pentagon, in turn, point to relatively advanced research issues in the European context.

Finally, as far as scales of regions are concerned, by macro-region it is understood that they are large multi-state or transnational groups integrated or in process of political, economic, and territorial integration, referring here to the case of the European Union (Mareš & Richard, 2018, p. 30). The focus here is that the EU macro-region comprises two dimensions: an analytical dimension that allows treating its political geography on a medium scale, still unusual (in this sense, it is said to be a political integration), and a prospective dimension that leads to examining the evolution of international relations in the long term (Girault, 2018, p. 54). In this report, it is mainly highlighted that the cross-border medium-regional scale is related to the cultural-historical Upper Silesia which, located in the south and southwest Poland and east of Czech Republic, as mentioned above, comprises three Euroregions on micro-regional scales: Silesia, Cieszyn Silesia and Praded⁶ as well as EGTC Tritia.

Methodology

According to the research Project *Territorial policies in changing scenarios. Cross-border processes and cross-border regions in European Union and South America* (Rückert, 2019a, 2019b) two main guiding issues were held in mind during the fieldwork as well as for the literature review: are outside located regions of the European Dorsal non-centralities or supposed peripheries as could be the case of cultural-historical Upper Silesia in specific? Or, on the other hand, are these regions endowed with some important polycentric centralities in their respective national and supranational contexts in cross-border integration processes? The above mentioned variables were taken in account to try to deal with the complex territorial formation of Silesia and Upper Silesia and Moravia-Silesia in particular.

the golden banana, the yellow banana, the central European boomerang, the Japanese corridors, the blue star, the *Kreuzbanane*, the European mushroom, *la pieuvre rouge*, the blue orchid, the bunch of grapes.

- 6 For the whole cultural-historical Silesia, which is currently located between Poland, the Czech Republic and Germany, there are six Euroregions located between four countries, namely: between Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia – Beskidy and Cieszyn Silesia; between Poland and the Czech Republic – Silesia, Praded and Glacensis; between Poland, Czech Republic and Germany – Neisse-Nisa-Nysa. The Upper Silesia region, in its turn, corresponds approximately to three Euroregions – Silesia, Cieszyn Silesia, and Praded.

Considering the complexity of cross-border region, field observations were developed, especially on a medium-regional scale in its urban axis between the cities of Katowice (PL) and Ostrava (CZ). Exploratory observations, from 14 to 17 October 2019, were carried out in the Polish cities of Katowice; Dąbrowa Górnicza; Bielsko-Biała and the twin city of Cieszyn-Cesky Tesin⁷. The city of Ostrava and its VSB Technological University of Ostrava-Poruba were visited in the Czech Republic. Dąbrowa Górnicza, even if it is located in Silesia province, historically belongs to Lesser Poland region.

The visited cities are in two geohistorical parts of Upper Silesia: the part that was under Austro-Hungarian rule between 1526 and 1918 – this is the case of the cities of Bielsko-Biała and Cieszyn-Cesky Tesin – and the the part that was under Prussian rule between 1742 and 1918 – this is case of the city of Katowice. The Czech city of Ostrava, in turn, is in the far eastern part of the Silesia-Moravia region, in an area that until 1919 belonged to the Duchy of Cieszyn on one side, and other on the Moravian side, divided by Ostravice river. Both sides were under Austro-Hungarian rule, nevertheless. This territory was disputed between Czechs and Poles when the international borders between the two countries were first established in 1918-1920.

As stated by Foucher (2016, p. 11) time written in space – the aforementioned “roughness” – the borders are the traces of long-term history. Therefore, a periodization was necessary to explain the long times of the territorial formation of historical-cultural Silesia and Upper Silesia in particular. Therefore, the periodization adopted by Hobsbawm was adopted in accordance with his propositions for general history. Between the High and Late Middle Ages (between the 5th and 11th and 11th to 15th centuries, respectively), it is the Duchy of Silesia (*Silesia Ducatus*), from its origins as subjects of Great Moravia until 991; of the Kingdom of Poland between this year and 1327 and, finally, between this year and 1526 as subjects of Bohemia. In the Modern and Contemporary ages (1453 and after 1789), in the eras of revolutions, empires and capital (Hobsbawm, 1982; 1992, 1996a) Silesia was under the Habsburg monarchy of Austria from 1526 until 1918 and Prussia – from 1742 until 1918. In the Contemporary Age of Extremes (1914-1991) (Hobsbawm, 1996b) it is the fragmented Silesia after 1918 with the geopolitical and territorial repercussions of the First and Second World Wars, as well known.

At the present time, economic liberalism and globalization have been vectors that promised a “world without borders” and an increase in general

⁷ A second tour out of Upper Silesia also led to the town of Zywiec and the border region Poland-Slovakia reaching the city of Liptovský Mikuláš.

well-being. The understanding adopted here is that globalization has not fulfilled its promises, causing inter-regional inequalities to increase (Stiglitz, 2002, 2007). The contemporary scenario after the 2008-2009 crisis changed the globalizing promises and showed that heterodox models of fiscal adjustments have produced and deepened asymmetries and territorial fractures. The return of the war for territories in the invasion of Ukraine by Russia has deepened the process of closing borders and erecting walls around the world.

After the field observations, it became necessary to proceed to an intensive literature review to try to understand and analyze some of the specificities of Silesia and Upper Silesia and its urbanized cross-border region. So, this report keeps focus mainly on the urban and regional specificities of the cross-border medium-region scale Upper Silesia to try to answer the main guiding issues above-mentioned.

1. Difficult toponyms and the issue of the location and position of Silesia and Upper Silesia

Long-lasting geopolitical processes have led to highly complex transformations of the territorial formation of Silesia in the course of several conflicts between modern and modern proto-states, reaching up to the present. It is not a simple toponymy, but a geopolitical chess game that it is difficult to understand for the external observer. The different definitions of the location of cultural-historical Silesia and especially Upper Silesia refer either to a) its historical-geopolitical location, b) its current political-administrative nomenclature, or c) its geo-economic aspects. It is necessary to try to clarify what is behind the term Silesia and how it is used in this report.

As Kosmala (2013, p. 21) points out, the meaning of the term Silesia is ambiguous and can refer to different areas depending on the geographical, historical, cultural, or administrative perspective. In recent decades, confusion on this issue has increased in Poland, due in part to the administrative reform of 1999. In addition to its historical and geopolitical position, Kosmala (2013, p. 39) refers to its location in the “heart of Europe,” at the crossroads of major transportation routes.

Silesia is a region located in central Europe, bordered by Greater Poland to the north, Lesser Poland to the east, Moravia, and Bohemia to the south and Lusatia to the west. In the south-east it shares its border with Slovakia and in the north-west with Brandenburg. Silesia's geopolitical location is an area

between Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, Hungary, Bohemia, Saxony, and Brandenburg; those mostly small state organisms were often part of much larger ones and, therefore, the statement that Silesia lies between Poland, Germany and Bohemia has caught on in popular literature. Moreover, in literature and publications on natural sciences the location of Silesia is sometimes described in rather approximate terms: Silesia lies in the upper Odra River basin or, a very inaccurate description, Silesia is the land to the north of the Sudetes (Kosmala, 2013, p. 21).

A very interesting report was prepared by the Directorate of the Historical Section of the British Foreign Office for the preparation for the Versailles Peace Conference. This report defined the part of Upper Silesia under the rule of Prussia, the *Regierungsbezirk of Oppeln*, as follows:

UPPER SILESIA, or the *Regierungsbezirk of Oppeln*, lies between 49° 50' and 51° 11' north latitude and 16° 55' and 19° 16' east longitude. It is the south-eastern part of the Prussian province of Silesia, and forms a tongue of land, roughly 5,087 square miles in area, jutting out between Austria and Russia. On the east and south-east, it is contiguous with Russian Poland and Galicia: on the south and south-west with Austrian Silesia, except for a stretch of a few miles where the Austrian province of Moravia juts out northward and meets the Silesian frontier. On the west and north-west lies the *Regierungsbezirk of Breslau*, which, with that of Liegnitz, forms the remainder of the Province of Prussian Silesia; while in the northern-most corner the district marches for some 12 miles with Poznania (Prothero, 1920, editor's note, p. 1).

The geopolitical situation of Upper Silesia had already also been the subject of classic analysis, like Pierre Denis' (1922), who signed his articles as Dumas, as an expert for the Council of the League of Nations in the issue of the redrawing of international limits of Upper Silesia after World War I for the new governments of Poland and Germany (Weimar Republic) after the plebiscite of 1921 (as mentioned ahead). Denis (Dumas) had already referred to Upper Silesia as "a political peninsula: *politische Hálbinse!*" (1922, p. 12) and Richard Hartshorne's (1933) as result of a field work in the years of 1931-32, had already referred to Upper Silesia as a peripheral zone. Later in his classic article, however, Hartshorne asserted that the region would be better defined as a "politically central location".

This area is a part of the great border belt between Germans and Slavs, more specifically a border corner where Germans, Poles, Czechs, and Slovaks meet

and mix... Although in many respects geographically united, the area has never had an internal political unity within itself, but rather was always a peripheral zone subject to the political expansion of neighboring states. ... Upper Silesia suffers from the fact that it has politically a peripheral location with respect to each of the states concerned, but in consequence of its mineral deposits in the interior of the continent, it has an industrial development, a density of population, and an economic and strategic importance which can best be associated with a politically central location (Hartshorne, 1933, pp. 196, 213).

A present-day definition of Upper Silesia within its historical and cultural borders is accepted in this report, as presented below, and illustrated on Figure 1:

Upper Silesia within its historical and cultural borders widely accepted by present-day regionalists, i.e., based on the former Prussian *Regierungsbezirk Oppeln* together with the former Austrian Silesia. Therefore, it takes into account both Cieszyn Silesia as well as the Kluczbork area and the former Duchy of Nysa, originally classified as a part of Lower Silesia. Former 'Moravian enclaves' in Austrian Silesia are also included (Czainski, 2021).

Figure 2 presents the location of the cultural-historical Upper Silesia in the provinces of Silesia and Opole in Poland and in part of the Moravia-Silesia and Olomouc regions in the Czech Republic.

2. The territorial formation of Silesia

The long territorial formation of Silesia follows, as above mentioned, according to Hobsbawm's historical periods: between the High and Late Middle Ages: the Duchy of Silesia (*Silesia Ducatus*); Silesia under the Austrian Habsburg Monarchy: 1526/1918; Silesia under Prussia: 1742/1918; the fragmented Silesia after the First and Second World Wars.

2.1 Between the High and Late Middle Ages: the Duchy of Silesia (Silesia Ducatus)

The Duchy of Silesia, a disputed border region (Bialasiewicz, 2002, pp. 111-132), is situated in the space-time between the High and Late Middle Ages; partly from the chronologies of the Holy Roman Empire and the modern proto-states of Central Europe; Great Moravia at the end of the tenth century (until the year 991); the Kingdom of Poland between that year and 1327 and Bohemia, at

the beginning of the tenth century, which controlled Silesia inhabited by peoples of Slavic origin. With the independence of the Polish Empire in the 14th century, most of the dukes of Silesia declared themselves vassals of the Kingdom of Bohemia under the Holy Roman Empire (Heffner & Solga 2011, pp. 42-45).



Figure 1. Upper Silesia borders (reproduction)

Source: Czainski, 2021



Figure 2. Location of the cultural-historical Upper Silesia in Poland and Czech Republic

Source: author, 2021

2.2 Silesia under the Austrian Habsburg Monarchy: 1526/1918

From Polish and Bohemian rule in the High and Late Middle Ages to later Austrian and Prussian rules (from 1526 and 1742 onwards, respectively), imperial ambitions frequently clashed at this crossroads in Central Europe (Bialasiewicz, 2002, pp. 111-132). At the beginning of the 16th century (1526), the Habsburg dynasty gained control over Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia when Ferdinand I of Habsburg became the new king of Bohemia. His coronation marked the beginning of the dynasty's rule of over 200 years in the Oder region, which can be considered the beginning of the modern era in the region (Wiszewski, 2013, p. 17; Britannica). Figure 3 shows the conquered area of Silesia by the Habsburgs which ruled the entire region from 1526 until 1742 and, after the Prussian conquest in 1742, ruled only small parts until 1918.

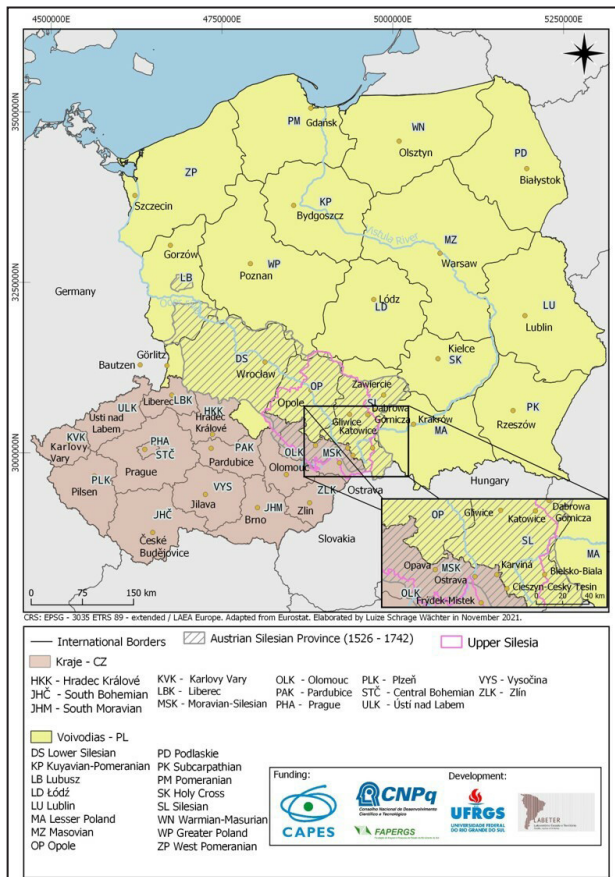


Figure 3. Austrian Silesia, Habsburg Monarchy (1526-1742)

Source: author, 2021

As Mortimer (2015, p. 68) notes, Bohemia disappeared from the map in 1918, at the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire rule, and was incorporated into Czechoslovakia, which a British prime minister later described as “ ‘a distant country’ ruled by ‘people we know nothing about’ ”. The western two-thirds of what is now the Czech Republic, the author continues, was then the Kingdom of Bohemia, with its capital in Prague and its second city in Pilsen (*Plzeň*), while the eastern third was the Margraviate of Moravia, with its capital in Olomouc, although Brunn (*Brno*) was its largest city. The lands of the Bohemian Crown, as they were called, included both Bohemia and Moravia, along with the Duchy of Silesia and the Margraviate of Upper and Lower Lusatia.

2.3 Silesia under Prussia: 1742/1918

The three wars over the Austrian succession (1740-42; 1744-45 and 1756-62) set the time frame for the transfer of most of Silesia from the Austrian Empire to Prussia. Frederick II (the Great) of Prussia invaded the region in search of mineral resources and made old dynastic claims to the region. In December 1740, Frederick II invaded the province of Silesia, threatening not only the Habsburgs’ richest lands but also challenging Maria Theresa’s right to rule the Austrian Empire, which was soon followed by other powers such as France, Bavaria and Spain. In a first agreement with Frederick II, Maria Theresa ceded Silesia in the treaties of Breslau and Berlin in June and July 1742 (Austria, Britannica).

Austria retained the main districts of Opava (*Troppau*) and Cieszyn (*Teschén*) in the southwest and parts of the duchies of Nysa (now in Poland) and Krnov (now in the Czech Republic on the border with Poland in the valley of the Opava River), which were united with Moravia until 1849, when they became crown territories of the Austrian Empire (Treaty of Berlin, 1742; see Figure 4).

2.4 The fragmented Silesia after the First and Second World Wars

The struggles over the “ownership” of Silesia by the Czechoslovak, Polish and German states at the beginning of the 20th century are only the latest chapter in a long history of disputed allegiances (Bialasiewicz, 2002, pp. 111-132). One of the consequences of World War I was that the Germanic and Austro-Hungarian empires broke up and nationalisms emerged in their vast territories. The most important effect for Silesia was the proclamation of independence by Poland and Czechoslovakia. These two countries, together with Germany, became competitors in the struggle for the division of Silesian territory.

Most of Austrian Silesia – then officially called the Duchy of Upper and Lower Silesia – an area roughly equivalent to the current region of Moravia-Czech Silesia whose current capital is Ostrava, was ceded to the new state of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1919 by the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Lay (10 September 1919), except for the former Duchy of Teschin - Cieszyn Silesia which became the object of territorial disputes, this time between the new states of the Second Republic of Poland and Czechoslovakia (Bialasiewicz, 2002, pp. 111-132).



Figure 4. Silesia divided between the Prussian and Habsburg monarchies after the Treaty of Berlin (1742)

Source: author, 2021

According to the same above mentioned author (p. 113) with the re-establishment of the Polish state in 1918, the question of Upper Silesia's proper place in the international state system became a crucial political issue. "The task of allocating the territories of Upper Silesia lasted nearly three years (1918-21), one of the most contentious episodes of boundary settlement in recent European history."

The Treaty of Versailles (1919)⁸ had determined in its article 88 the realization of a plebiscite in the region. Nonetheless, this project never saw the light of day due to the Bolshevik threat to Europe, according to Strauchold (2014, pp. 142-147). The results of the plebiscite were not favorable to the Poles that lost the plebiscite by a ratio of 40.35% (about 479,000 votes) to 59.65% (about 706,000 votes) who wanted the region to be annexed to the Weimar Republic (Strauchold, 2014, p. 146-147). After a third conflict in 1921 in reason of the unfavorable result for the Polish, peace was negotiated by the Commission of Allies, which announced on October 20, 1921, by the Council of Ambassadors, the favorable decision for Poland. The Second Republic of Poland won only 1/3 of the territory disputed in the plebiscite, but with the most important industrial areas, including 50% of the coal mines and 78% of the metallurgical industries of Upper Silesia. The Polish government thus formed the Province of Silesia, an autonomous region with its own Parliament and Treasury, which from 1926 onwards received a "Polonization" program and greater influence from the central authorities in Warsaw (Wiszewski, 2014, pp. 12-15).

After World War II, all of the former Prussian Silesia was annexed to the Polish People's Republic (1945-1989). Administratively Upper Silesia (Opole Regency) became the Province of Silesia (*Śląsko-Dąbrowskie*), which also encompassed some fragments of historical Lower Silesia (Nysa Region) and non-Silesian territories (Dąbrowskie Basin and Bielsko-Biała). Lower Silesia (Regencies of Wrocław and Legnica, except for the northern regions constituted the province of Wrocław (Heffner & Solga, 2011, p. 49).

Several administrative reforms followed between the years 1950 and 1999 in the Province of Silesia of Poland which was divided into an industrial part (Katowice Province) and an agricultural part (Opole Province). In the last administrative reform of 1999, almost all of Lower Silesia remained in the province of the same name with the capital in Wrocław and with few fragments that remained in the Province of Opole. The former Province of Katowice had its boundaries changed to the name of Province of Silesia, even though Upper Silesia constitutes

8 "In the portion of Upper Silesia included within the boundaries described below, the inhabitants will be called upon to indicate by a vote whether they wish to be attached to Germany or to Poland." (Treaty of Peace, 1919).

only 48 percent of its current territory, while the remainder is historical lands of Lesser Poland and fragments of Greater Poland (Heffner & Solga, 2011, p. 49).

3. Contemporaneous Upper Silesia: a cross-border region with intense urbanization

Part of the Polish Silesia Province is in the historical Upper Silesia region. The province is the second most densely inhabited and urbanized in Poland – 4,346,700 inhabitants – after Mazovia with 5,510,612 inhabitants (as June 30, 2022) and 87% of the population living in cities. Of the 40 most populous cities in Poland, 12 are in Silesia Province, and 19 of the cities in the province have the legal status of a city-county (or *powiat*). In total, there are 24 cities and 47 towns (2019) in a total area of 12,333.09 km² of the province (Statistics Poland, Katowice).

Another part of Upper Silesia region is located in Opole Province that was created as one of the 16 reorganized provinces in 1999 of Poland. It encompasses the former province (1975–1998) of Opole as well as a small portion of the former province of Częstochowa. Opole is one of the smallest and least-populous provinces of Poland, with 9,412 km² and 948.583 inhabitants (as in 2021). Even as an agricultural province, urban population is 503.092 (as December 31, 2021) in 36 towns reaching 53% of the total inhabitants (Statistics Poland, Opole). Nearly two-thirds of the land is used for agriculture (Britannica).

In its Czech portion, Upper Silesia region is composed of the regions (*kraje*) of Moravia-Silesia and a small stretch of Olomouc (in the district of Jeseník). Until the year 2000, the current regions did not exist as such but were organized as part of a larger administrative unit called the North Moravian Region (*Severomoravský kraj*), established in the year 1960.

According to recently published data, the total population of the Czech Republic is 10,526,937 inhabitants as September 30, 2022 (Czech Statistical Office, 2022a). The Moravian-Silesian region has a population of 1,213,311 inhabitants (Ceska Republika [a]) with 300 municipalities in an area of 5,427 km² (equivalent to 6.88% of the Czech Republic) in third position after the Central Bohemian region (1,386,824 inhabitants) and Prague (1,275,406 inhabitants). (Czech Statistical Office, 2022b). In its turn, the turistical mountainous district of Jeseníky (*okres Jeseník*) in the Olomouc rural region with approximately 36,752 inhabitants (Czech Statistical Office, 2022b) is the least populated district of the Czech Republic. The area called Jeseníky region is in the most northern bulge of Silesia and Moravia. It is closed by the border with Poland that passes westward through Rychleby Hills and crosses the Nysa Lowlands to Zlaté Hory. The town of Jeseník, an important crossing connection with Silesia, separated from Moravia

by the Hrubý Jeseník mountain range, is the cultural and economic center of the region (Mindat).

Table 1 presents the correspondence between the national political-administrative levels of Poland and Czech Republic and the territorial classification of the European Union according to NUTS 1, 2, 3 and Local Administrative Units (LAUs)⁹ of the Silesia and Opole provinces (Poland), Moravia-Silesia and Olomouc regions (Czech Republic).

Table 1. Correspondence between NUTS 1, 2, 3 and Local Administrative Units (LAUs) of the Silesia and Opole provinces (Poland), the Moravia-Silesia and Olomouc regions (Czech Republic)

COUNTRIES	NUTS 1	NUTS 2	NUTS 3	LAUs – LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES
POLAND	MACRORREGIONS	PROVINCES	DISTRICTS / COUNTIES	MAIN CITIES
	Southern Macrorregion (PL2)	Silesia (PL22)	Częstochowski (PL224)	Częstochowa
			Bielsko (PL225)	Bielsko-Biala
			Rybnik (PL 227)	Rybnik
			Bytom (PL228)	Bytom
			Gliwice (PL229)	Gliwice
			Katowice (PL22A)	Katowice
			Sosnowiec (PL22B)	Sosnowiec
	Southwest Macrorregion (PL5)	Opole (PL52)	Tychy (PL22C)	Tychy
			Nysa (PL523)	Nysa
Opole (PL524)			Opole	
CZECH REPUBLIC	MACRORREGIONS	COHESION REGIONS*	REGIONS	MAIN CITIES
	-	Moravia-Silesia (CZ 08)	Moravia-Silesia (CZ080)	Ostrava
	-	Central Moravia (CZ 07)	Olomouc (CZ 071)	Olomouc

Source: Eurostat, 2020, pp. 24-26, 106-110

9 NUTS - Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics: NUTS 1 - equivalent areas between 3 and 7 million inhabitants. NUTS 2 - equivalent areas between 800.00 and 3 million inhabitants. NUTS 3 - equivalent areas between 150.00 and 800.00 million inhabitants. For the purpose of the effective procurement of resources from the European Funds, cohesion regions that comprise one or more regions were created in the Czech Republic after 2004. Northwest, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, Central Bohemia, Central Moravia, and Moravia-Silesia (Dotaceeu).

3.1 The Silesian-Moravian Polycentric Metropolitan Area (PL – CZ)

The Silesian Metropolis Katowice-Gliwice-Tychy (PL) has 1,706,000 inhabitants on the Polish side (Demographia, 2021, p. 43), the second-largest urban concentration in Poland after Warsaw¹⁰ while the Ostrava Metropolitan Area, with about one million inhabitants, is the second-largest metropolitan area in the Czech Republic after Prague (see Figure 5). Both metropolises make up the Silesian-Moravian Polycentric Metropolitan Area (PL– CZ) with an estimated 5,300,000 inhabitants in the Upper Silesian Coal Basin: about 82% live in Poland and 18% in the Czech Republic (Espon, 2007, pp. 134, 241). The metropolises are connected by road and rail systems with intense flows of vehicles and loads, according to observations *in situ*.

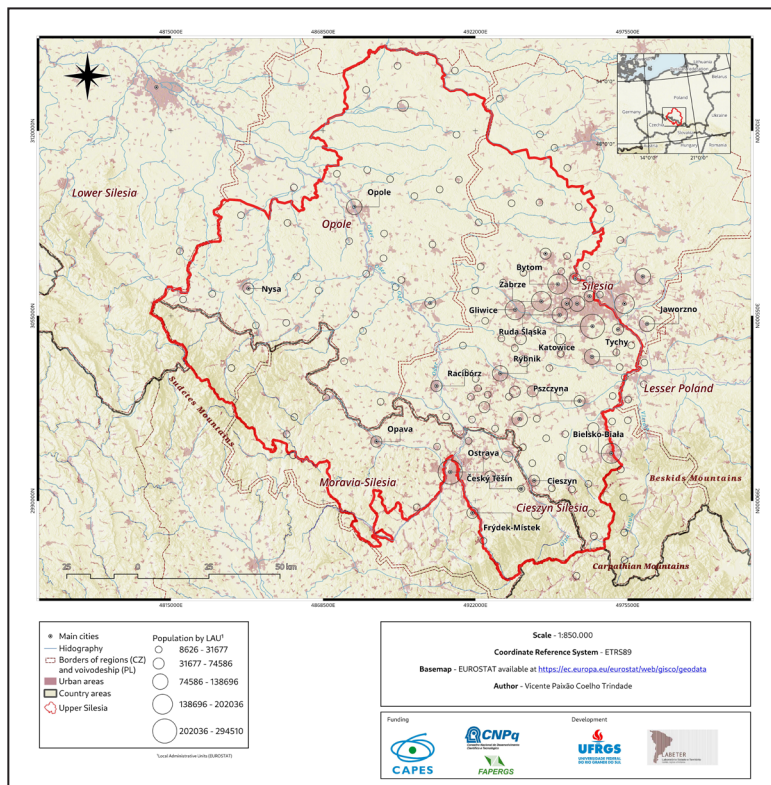


Figure 5. Upper Silesia with its main urban centers

Source: author, 2021

¹⁰ The cities of Katowice and Ostrava-city, as regional capitals, have, respectively, 281,400 as for December 2022 and 279,791 inhabitants as for January 2022, respectively. Ostrava district has 312,104 inhabitants (Katowice; Czech Statistical Office, 2022b).

The Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia and Dąbrowa Basin¹¹ (the first metropolitan area in Poland created in 2017) represents politically for management purposes the highly conurbated area around Katowice and 12 other metropolitan cities (Metropoliagzm, n.d.)¹². Figure 6 shows the 41 municipalities of the Association classified in 13 metropolitan cities, and 28 outer localities in the metropolitan area and Figure 7 shows an urban section of Katowice on one of the road axes that connect several cities in the Silesian Metropolis.

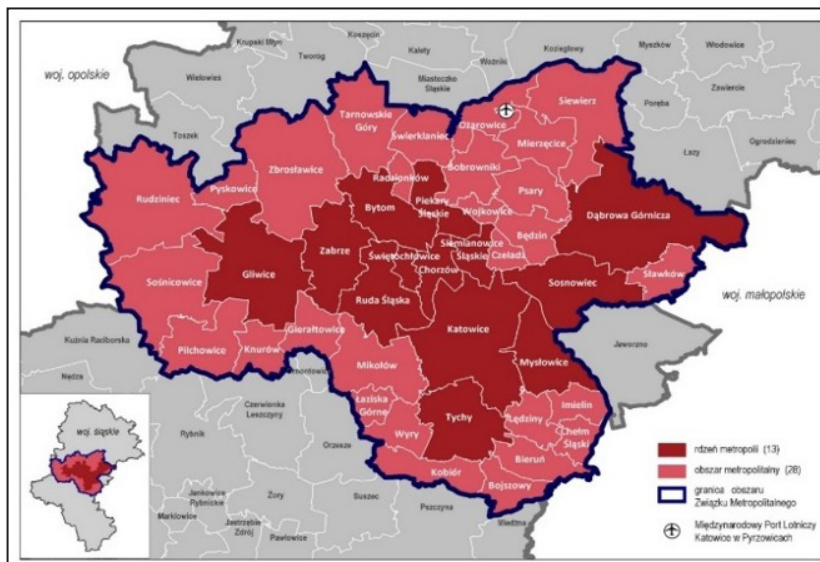


Figure 6. Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia and Zagłębie in Poland (reproduction)

Source: Infogzm

11 The Dąbrowa Basin (also, Dąbrowa Coal Basin) or Zagłębie Dąbrowskie is a geographical and historical region in southern Poland. It forms the western part of Lesser Poland, though it shares some cultural and historical features with the neighbouring Upper Silesia. It is part of the Upper Silesian Coal Basin, the largest of the Polish coalfields and one of the largest in Europe, along with Industrial areas of Upper Silesian industrial Region, Rybnik Coal Area and Ostrava-Karviná Coal Area (Wikipedia; Grzegorz, 2017).

12 The 41 municipalities are divided between Upper Silesia and Dąbrowa Basin as follows:

Upper Silesia: Bieruń, Bojszowy, Bytom, Chełm Śląski, Chorzów, Gierałtowiec, Gliwice, Imielin, Katowice, Knurów, Kobiór, Łędziny, Łaziska Górne, Mikołów, Mysłowice, Piekary Śląskie, Pilchowice, Pyskowice, Radzionków, Ruda Śląska, Rudziniec, Siemianowice Śląskie, Sońnicowice, Świerklaniec, Świętochłowice, Tarnowskie Góry, Tychy, Wry, Zabrze, Zbrosławice.

Dąbrowa Basin: Będzin, Bobrowniki, Czeladź, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Mierzęcice, Ożarówce, Psary, Siewierz, Sławków, Sosnowiec, Wojkowice (Infogzm).

Dąbrowa Górnicza, with an urban population of 118,170 inhabitants (Population of Cities, 2021) is one of the most important cities of the Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia and Dąbrowa Basin and part of the Silesian-Moravian Polycentric Metropolitan Area PL-CZ. The city has a long tradition of coal mining, but most of the mines are closed. Dąbrowa Górnicza is currently home to the branch of the main steel producer of Poland, ArcelorMittal Poland, which replaced the former state-owned Huta Katowice. As known, the multinational company ArcelorMittal, which was originated in India, has its headquarters in Luxembourg and branches in 160 countries, including Brazil. It employs more than 10,000 people in six plants in Silesia, Lesser Poland and Opole Provinces (Arcelormittal).

Other important cities of the Silesian-Moravian Polycentric Metropolitan Area PL-CZ are business, industry, or academic centers. In Upper Silesia region Gliwice, for example, is a center of heavy industry located on the Wrocław-Kraków rail line with important economic activities including chemical production, food processing, and automobile manufacturing. Bytom is one of the oldest and largest industrial cities in the Upper Silesia coal region, and Sosnowiec in the Dąbrowa Basin in the beginnings of years 2000s increased its industrial activities with commercial and service-oriented businesses (Britannica).



Figure 7. View of Rozdzieńskiego Avenue, Katowice, Poland

Source: author, 2019

Cities like Bielsko-Biala, the twin city of Cieszyn (Poland) - Český Těšín (Czechia) and Ostrava, the capital city of the Czech Moravian-Silesian Region were also visited during the field observations. Bielsko-Biala is located on the

east perimeter line of the Upper Silesia cultural-historical region, close to the border between the Polish provinces of Silesia and Lesser Poland. The population of Bielsko-Biała is 176,515 inhabitants (Population of Cities, 2023), being the headquarters of the Urban Agglomeration of Bielsko, with 325,000 inhabitants, an automotive, industrial center and tourism activities (Polskawliczbach, Europaproperty; see Figure 8).

Bielsko and Biała were, originally, two separated cities. Bielsko, divided by the river Biała (separating for centuries the cultural-historical Upper Silesia from Lesser Poland), from Biała, belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire between 1526 and 1918. It was located at the eastern end of the former Duchy of Cieszyn while Biała was also annexed to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1772 in the course of the First Partition of Poland, and incorporated into the crownland of Galicia and Lodomeria (currently in part of Poland and Ukraine). After World War I, in 1918 with the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bielsko and Biała existed as two separated cities under the Republic of Poland; they became only one city officially recognized in 1951 (Bielsko-Biała; Britannica).



Figure 8. View of 3 Maja Street in Bielsko-Biała, Poland

Source: author, 2019

The former seat city of the medieval County of Cieszyn today is the divided twin city of Cieszyn-Český Těšín since 1920 (with 33,958 and 23,468 inhabitants respectively) (Poland, 2021; Czech Statistical Office, 2022b) by the international borderline of the Olza River between Poland and the Czech Republic. Both sides of the twin city are connected by the Friendship Bridge (the main bridge aside other ones), opened to free flows in 2007 when

both countries were admitted to European Union and to Schengen Area (see Figure 9).



Figure 9. Friendship Bridge over Olza river, the international border between Poland and the Czech Republic in Cieszyn - Český Těšín

Source: author, 2019

The seat city of the autonomous duchy of Cieszyn originated in the 11th century from a castle to defend the southern border of the Polish Empire, during the struggles between it and the kingdom of Bohemia in dispute over the territory of Silesia (Cieszyn, 2018, pp. 2-3). At the end of World War I, after conflicts between Czech and Polish forces for control of the territory of the former duchy and former capital of Austrian Silesia, the dispute over the territory of Cieszyn came to an end with pressure from the victorious allies of World War I, the area having been placed under international control. At the conclusion of the question at the conference in Spa, Belgium, on July 28, 1920, the Council of Ambassadors arbitrated the division of Cieszyn Silesia and its capital city between the two countries, establishing the international border line by the Olza river, a tributary of the right bank of the Oder. The Polish part covered an area of 1,002 km² (i.e. 44%) of the former county and the Czechoslovak part an area 1,280 km² (i.e. 56%) with about 140,000 Poles,

113,000 Czechs and 34,000 Germans (Openairmuseum; Wiszewski, 2014, p. 12; Buttin, 2006).

In the Czech Republic, the city of Ostrava¹³ is located in the far west of the Silesian-Moravian Polycentric Metropolitan Area, 15 km from the international border. The city is divided into two parts by the Ostravice River, a tributary of the Oder River, between the historical areas of Ostrava Moravia (*Moravská Ostrava*) and Ostrava Silesia (*Slezská Ostrava*; see figures 10 and 11).

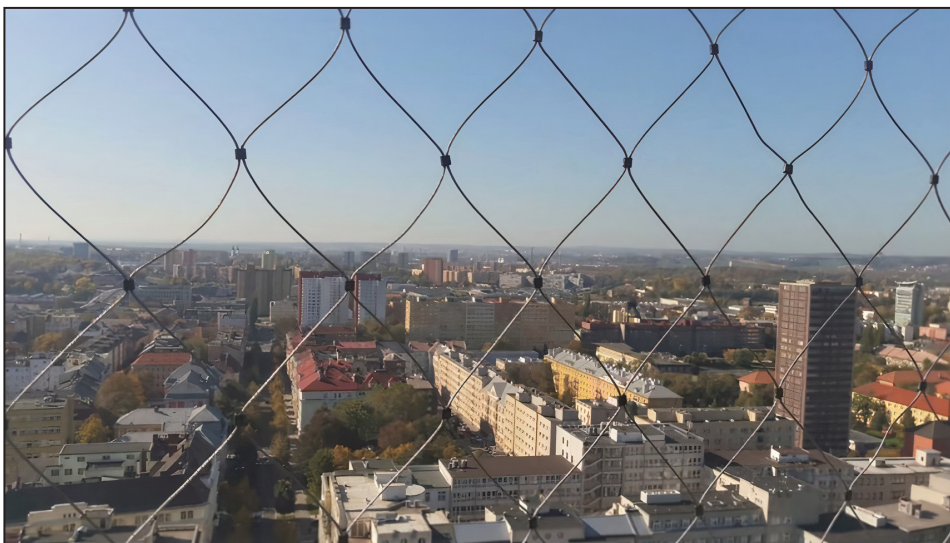


Figure 10. Ostrava, capital of the Silesia-Moravia Region, Czech Republic, seen from the top of the City Hall Tower in the Ostrava Moravia district (*Moravská Ostrava*)

Source: author, 2019

As the capital of the Silesia-Moravia Region, a former coal-metallurgical industrial center from the era of the Austro-Hungarian empire – the “Steel Heart of the Czech Republic” – it is the third largest city in the Czech Republic in terms of urban population of 279,791 and with 312,104 inhabitants in its district (as mentioned above), after Prague, the capital with 1,275,406 and Brno (capital of the South Moravian Region) with 379,466 inhabitants (Czech Statistical Office 2022b). The photo of Ostrava, taken from the top of the central tower of the City Hall¹⁴,

¹³ The urban district of Ostrava (Okres Ostrava-město – District of Ostrava city) is composed of thirteen municipalities, including the host city (Czech Statistical Office, 2022b).

¹⁴ The complete 360° view of the city of Ostrava can be viewed on Youtube, <https://www>.

illustrates the urban scene, once highly polluted by steel mills and coal mines, with housing projects built in the Soviet era.



Figure 11. View of the Ostravice River dividing the districts of Ostrava Moravia (*Moravská Ostrava*, left) and Ostrava Silesia (*Slezská Ostrava*, right)

Source: author, 2019

All three cities mentioned above are examples of divided cities, Ostrava and Bielsko-Biała historical ones, while Cieszyn-Český Těšín is a current example. The formation of international borders between present-day Poland and the Czech Republic dates back to the end of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in the region (as described in the first part of this report), when the two parts of Ostrava (Moravian-Ostrava and Silesian-Ostrava) were united; the town of Cieszyn was divided between Poland and the Czech Republic, and Bielsko and Biała were united, as described above. In the case of Ostrava, the entire city was transferred to the new Czechoslovak Republic after the Conference of Spa, Belgium, on July 28, 1920. The two parts were united in 1941, during the Nazi occupation, to form the districts of Ostrava Moravia (*Moravská Ostrava*) and Ostrava Silesia (*Slezská Ostrava*), as they still exist today.

4. “Peripheral regionalism”: beyond the European Dorsal in Upper Silesia?

Didelon et al. (2011, p. 83) state that a center should not be understood as a geographic location, but as the presence of a series of structural aspects: strong population and activity densities, great prosperity, the concentration of

management activities, and technological matrices. On the contrary, they say, the European peripheries are described by lower population densities, less intensive agriculture, weaker specialization in agricultural and industrial activities with lower added value, and rarity of strategic functions, such as the headquarters of large multinational companies.

The definition of what is a center or a periphery is a complex task. A region away from the main centers, in turn, can become its center from the perspective of “peripheral regionalism” (Kornilov, 2020, p. 648). This seems to be the case of Upper Silesia, given its industrial importance in Poland – although the region is facing problems in reconverting its coal-based production – as well as for its extra-regional, cross-border, and international relations life.

Despite the general description of what can be understood by center or periphery, the case of the Upper Silesian region imposes some reflections on these definitions, since the region could be considered a sort of “Heartland” between Poland and the Czech Republic on medium-regional scale. The concept is used here not in the literal sense defined by McKinder (1904; 1919), but as a space that, even without access to the sea, geographically situated between the former empires of Austria-Hungary, Prussia, and Russia, was highly strategic for their industrial production from coal mines. Nowadays the term is commonly used in Upper Silesia, mainly by companies seeking to demonstrate the economic importance of the region, despite the relative decline of coal mining and steelmaking.

For the concept, albeit preliminary, of Upper Silesia as “a sort of Heartland”, in addition to the already mentioned Pierre Denis’ “political peninsula” (Dumas 1922) and Hartshorne’s “politically central region” (1933), McKinder’s proposals of Pivot Area and Heartland (1904, 1919) are considered as a background for the case of landlocked countries or central regions in circumstances considered as peripheral. Adaptations of McKinder’s concepts were developed for other contexts such as South America¹⁵. Currently, Bolivia, a landlocked country with vast gas and lithium deposits, for example, is considered a strategic “South American Heartland” in the integration process (Pfrimer, 2011). So, by analogy with the

15 In Brazil, for example, the geopolitician Mário Travassos (1935) pioneered a geostrategic thinking related to the Amazon and La Plata hydrographic basins, and the Andes. This geostrategic thinking was later taken up by the Brazilian geopolitician Golbery do Couto e Silva (1981) who defined the “Heartland of South America” as a Continental Connecting Area - a space extending between the center-west of Brazil, and the neighboring countries of Paraguay and Bolivia. These strategic thoughts have influenced the foreign policy of many Brazilian governments. This approach can be also found in the Initiative for the Integration of South American Regional Infrastructure (IIRSA) during the last years, promoting supranational projects to connect the Atlantic and the Pacific through the hinterland of South America, even connecting the Amazon region to Peruvian ports.

adaptations of McKinder's theories in South America, Upper Silesia is here denominated, preliminary, as a "sort of Heartland".

For Szajnowska-Wysocka and Zuzanska-Żyśko (2013, pp. 111–124) the new center of Poland shaped across Europe is the Axis of Development in the 21st century: Paris-Berlin-Poznan-Warsaw-Minsk-Moscow. Upper Silesia, after losing its sense of a central region in post-communism, it was only with the accession to the EU that re-inspired economic activities aiming at the creation of a great urban system ("Silesia") of the Upper Silesian conurbation, i.e. the Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia and Zagłębie.

Brunet's choremes pointed in the years 1990s to potential changes in Central-Eastern Europe which could be understood under the structural transformations after the end of the 20th century Cold War, such as privatization, the attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI), and investments of the Territorial Cohesion Policy funds of EU. The choremes were built in a time when there were many expectations about the kind of changes that would happen in the ancient communist countries shifting to capitalist regimes and the opening of new markets for the western companies. Figure 12, reproduced and adapted from the original forms, follow below.

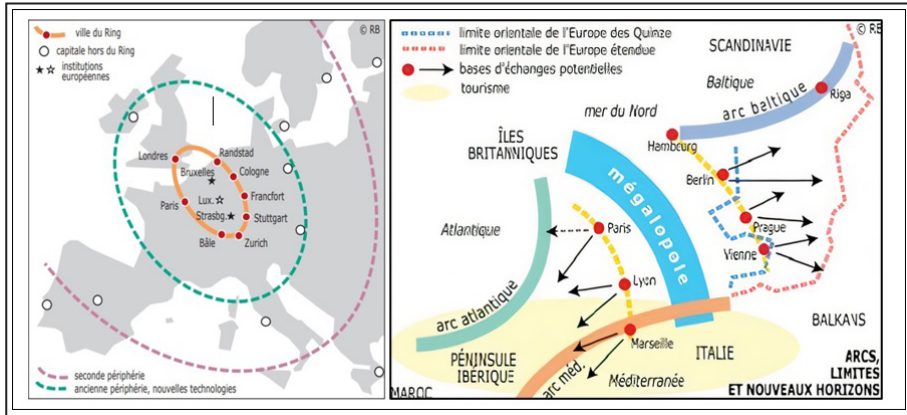


Figure 12. The Ring, its peripheries, the megalopolis and new arches (reproduction).

Source: Brunet, 2002, pp. 16, 19.

From 1989 onwards, the work of preparing candidate countries for accession to the EU, its principles, and fundings, "in favor of accelerated integration, intensified east of the Oder (river)" as stated by Drevet:

... landscape degradation, air, water, and soil pollution, nuclear safety problems, and management of disaster areas. The maps of the damaged areas, published for certain countries, give an idea of the enormity of the task to be carried out. If air pollution has partially disappeared with the slowdown in industrial activity and the closure of the most dangerous factories and plants, water and soil pollution remains, and its elimination will require years of costly effort (2008, p. 191, author's translation).

Among the reforms aimed at macroeconomic stabilization and liberalization of economic activities, the privatization of state-owned companies – which constituted around 90% of industrial capital in Central Europe – would have been the most difficult. In Poland, for example, 81.7% of production and 71.5% of jobs were located in 3,177 state-owned industries in 1985 (Lipton & Sachs, 1990, pp. 293-341). Despite the importance attributed to privatizations, at the beginning of the 1990s they were still incipient in Poland since among 8,228 state-owned companies only 1,194 (14.5%) had been privatized (Berg, 1994, p. 173). Among them was the steel company Huta Katowice in Upper Silesia above mentioned.

Together with the privatization processes of state-owned companies, the attraction of FDI became an instrument of economic policy to dynamize the productive, the services base and promote competitiveness between markets. In Poland, half of the investments of US\$ 19.9 billion in the industrial sector between the years 1990 and 1998 were mainly concentrated in three provinces: Central Mazovia and Greater Poland as well as in the industrialized south, Silesia. Domanski (2003, pp. 105 - 106) pointed out that FDI reinforced an uneven distribution in the country, with emphasis on the strongest and most developed regions, concentrating on metropolitan areas, such as Katowice, Krakow, and Wroclaw.

With the global financial crisis of 2008 and 2009, the return of the importance of the State with a more active role in driving the economy, and an important domestic market with demand for products produced in the country, Poland was the only member country of EU that did not fall into recession with a GDP growth of 2,8% in 2009 (World Bank). On the other hand, estimates showed that in the same period the 1,500 largest non-financial companies were still controlled by the State, which shows that privatizations in Poland were incomplete and unequal (Kozarzewski & Battowski, 2016, pp. 21-22).

The Czech Republic, in its turn, is considered one of the most successful cases of transformation among the members of the former Soviet bloc. In the mid-2000s, the country had reached more than US\$ 60 billion in FDIs, then considered the highest in the Central-Eastern region of Europe. Among the

main source countries of FDI, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Austria, and France have been since then highlighted, concentrating on finance and insurance (Deichmann, 2010, pp. 249–272).

The “Poland National Development Strategy” for the period 2007-2015 (Poland, 2006) was elaborated considering the Lisbon Strategy, based on the knowledge economy and innovation, which would mean changing production patterns paradigms. Furthermore, the influence of the Territorial Cohesion Policy of EU on the elaboration of the Strategy since several of its documents guided its construction was observed.

According to information from the European Commission for the period 2014-2020, the European Union’s Cohesion Policy allocated Euros 77.6 billion to Poland (Cohesion [a] n.d.). The majority (65.9%) was directed to all provinces – including Silesia – while the capital province of Warsaw, Mazowieckie, received an amount of Euros 2.2 billion. Smaller amounts, for example, were earmarked for European Territorial Cooperation and the Youth Employment Initiative.

For the Czech Republic, the Territorial Cohesion Policy of the EU allocated the amount of Euros 22 billion for the period 2014-2020 (Cohesion [b], n.d.). The priority (70%) was for less developed regions – i.e., all of them, except for the metropolitan region of Prague. According to the Czech National Government’s Strategy (Czech Republic, [n.d.]), the structurally affected regions are in the northwest such as Ústí nad Labem and Karlovy Vary while in the east it is the case of Moravia-Silesia region. In all three regions, the legacy of the mining, manufacturing, and chemical industry largely impacts their current position.

5. Productive reconversions in Upper Silesia and Moravia-Silesia

The current productive reconversions in Upper Silesia are understood as the closure of coal mines and steel mills considered unproductive; the peripheral integration into core-based macroregional production networks of the automotive industry, new advance technologies, a gradual adaptation to the Paris Agreement and the search for a service-based economy, mainly historical and ecological tourism.

5.1. Coal mining and steel production

Coal mining and steel production are in process of productive reconversion and relative decline after a long tradition and accelerated growth in the aftermath of World War II when Upper Silesia followed the path of Soviet-style

forced industrialization. The Upper Silesian region, by the end of the 20th century, was one of the biggest regional problems in ecological, structural, social, and political terms of Europe, according to Gorzelak (2008, p. 192). In his terms:

... the problems of Katowice and its neighboring became a matter of national interest, and the success of Upper Silesia's regional transformation was regarded as one of the prerequisites for the success of Poland's political and economic reform and the fulfillment of Poland's aspirations to join the EU (p. 193).

The environmental impacts of mining complexes traditionally include, in addition to the mines themselves, industrial facilities for smelting, power generation, coke production, and chemicals. In the early 1980s, studies in the province of Silesia indicated that pollution levels related not only to air but also to the occurrence of lead, zinc, and cadmium in soils that were higher than in other provinces of Poland (Gzyl, 1990, pp. 199-208). Furthermore, in the late 1990s, the size of brownfields in Poland was estimated at 5,976 hectares, of which 1,210 were in the Province of Silesia, with a considerable percentage of these areas having been created in mining areas (Cala et al., n.d.).

Recently, the European Commission, having created the "Fund for a Just Transition" to face the challenges of this process to a climate-neutral economy by 2050, identified 108 European NUTS 2 regions with coal resources and around 237,000 jobs (Espon, 2020, p. 3). The Upper Silesian coal basin remains the most important in Poland and one of the largest mining regions in EU (European Commission, 2020). However, Espon reports that, around 2025, the provinces of Silesia and Małopolskie, the Czech regions of Karlovy Vary, Ústí nad Labem and Moravskoslezský, the German states of Brandenburg and Nordrhein-Westfalen are projected to record the loss of more than 2,000 jobs each (Espon, 2020, p. 4).

According to Skoczkowski et al. (2020, pp. 1-5), the recently proposed EU budget for 2021–2028 foresees that the fight for the climate must come closer to regional integration and energy policies. Although the phasing out of the coal industry has its national dimension, in regional and local communities there are more vulnerable groups. This is the case of Silesia Province, which continues to produce approximately 80% of Poland's total production of hard coal with 82,700 people directly employed in a total of 139,100 miners in mining sector across the country.

In 2020, for the first time, Polish mining unions and the national government signed an agreement setting an end date – the year 2049 – to finish coal mining, but climate experts say it would be too late and Brussels would not

agree with state aid plans. This is the first time that Poland has set a timetable to phase out coal, which accounts for around 75% of the country's electricity generation (Farand, 2020). In 2005, approximately 14.2 billion cubic meters of natural gas were consumed in Poland while consumption increased to 21.6 billion cubic meters in 2020, which represented 0.6% of the world's total natural gas utilization in that year. In 2020, purchases of 171.8 TWh (terawatt-hours) of gas from Russia, for the most part, were supplemented with 41.8 TWh of gas of Polish origin. Imports were carried out between the Polish company PGNiG S.A. and Russia's Gazprom, the world's largest natural gas exporter. The Czech Republic, in turn, depended up to 90% on the purchase of Russian gas in 2019 (Statista; Aljazeera). The imports of gas had strong changes in 2022 after Russia aggression on Ukraine. News informs state that deliveries of gas to Poland from outside the European Union – excluding liquefied natural gas (LNG) – decreased by 91.5% year-on-year in the second quarter of 2022, after Russia cut off supplies in April (Notes from Poland).

5.2 *Automotive industry: shifts in the core-periphery relationships*

Domanski et al. (2008), Kurekova (2018), and Pavlínek (2020) raised the issue of integrating peripheral regions such as Central Europe into core-based macroregional production networks, especially since the 1990s in the automotive industry. Kurekova (2018, p. 2) mentions that the development of the Visegrad Group¹⁶ region before the 2008-2009 crisis was based on uniquely high levels of foreign direct investment and complex restructuring of the economy after the demise of state socialism.

Domanski et al. (2008, p. 15), in line with the mainstream, had earlier raised the question of whether, for example, Poland could be placed in the category of “integrated peripheral markets,” i.e. integration into the EU automotive industry with comparative advantages in assembly and manufacturing of labor-intensive subcontracted parts. This integration would imply a shift in the core-periphery relationship, because “... the former post-communist periphery has gone a long

16 “The Visegrad Group was formed on 15th February 1991 at a meeting of the President of the Czechoslovak Republic, Václav Havel, the President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Wałęsa, and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Hungary, József Antall. ... The formation of the Visegrad Group was motivated by four factors of decisive relevance: the desire to eliminate the remnants of the communist bloc in Central Europe; the desire to overcome historic animosities between Central European countries; the belief that through joint efforts it will be easier to achieve the set goals, i.e. to successfully accomplish social transformation and join in the European integration process; and the proximity of ideas of the then ruling political elites”(Visegrad Group).

way from its initial situation in the early 1990s, especially in terms of manufacturing capabilities and competences.”

Factors such as a relatively well-educated and cheap labor force, industrial tradition of Central Europe and its geographical position to Western European TCNs – multinationals, especially from Germany – as well as favorable policies to attract foreign direct investment have made the region a major automotive cluster, with most leading brands present and a rich supplier network covering the Czech Republic, northwestern Hungary, western Slovakia, and southwestern Poland (Kurekova, 2018, p. 4).

Foreign direct investments and production plants are present in Poland from many leading transnational corporations from the automotive industry – among other countries from Japan, Germany, Sweden, USA or Italy. The most important automotive industry whose plants operate in Upper Silesia, mainly in the highly urbanized Silesian Metropolis Katowice-Gliwice-Tychy and surroundings include car assemblers and suppliers of well-known trademarks. Some examples are Fiat Chrysler Automobiles¹⁷ (factory in Tychy); factory of engines in Bielsko-Biała; Magnetti Marelli plants in Sosnowiec and Bielsko-Biała producing car lighting, exhaust systems, suspensions, shock-absorbers, fuel supply systems, dashboards and bumpers; General Motors (Opel car factory in Gliwice); production of metal constructions and metal aluminum connections for the body and chassis by Kirchoff Automotive’s three factories located in Gliwice and other regions of Poland; safety seat belts and air bags in Częstochowa, steering systems in Bielsko-Biała, control systems in Czechowice-Dziedzice and Pruszków and braking systems in Gliwice, etc. (Folfas, 2017).

Multinational car assemblers and suppliers networks have received tax exemptions as an attraction of FDI in the Visegrad Group. In Poland, one of the policies has been the creation of 14 Special Economic Zones to provide space and infrastructure for multinational and Polish companies. The Economic Zone Katowice¹⁸ for example, was established in 1996. It covers a total area of 2,750 ha and is in the Silesian and Opole Voivodeships. The SEZ has a wide selection of investment plots, production facilities, warehouses and office space and provides

17 Since 2021, the vehicle assemblers Chrysler, Citroen, Fiat, Jeep, Opel, Peugeot and others are part of Stellantis, a Dutch-domiciled multinational automotive manufacturing corporation, headquartered in Amsterdam, formed in 2021 on the basis of a merger between Fiat Chrysler Automobiles and PSA Group (Peugeot S.A). Stellantis employs about 300,000 people and has factories in 30 countries worldwide (Stellantis Gliwice; Eurofound) including Brazil.

18 It is almost 20 years since the establishment of Special Economic Zones, the Act of the 10th May 2018 amended the instruments of income tax exemption (CIT or PIT) in order to adjust the provisions to the current market situation and entrepreneur’s needs (PAIH).

consultancy in public aid. The total amount of capital expenditure incurred by all companies operating in the Zone is 44 billion PLN, according to its website. The total employment is approximately 90,000 jobs in the leading sectors as automotive, glass products, steel, wood processing, food and construction (PAIH).

The Economic Zone Gliwice subzone of SEZ Katowice covers a total area of 678 hectares, of which over 380 hectares have already been sold according to its website. The buyers consist of both Polish and foreign companies. Some of these companies have already built their plants, including General Motors Manufacturing Poland, the biggest company in the subzone. Other companies from the automotive industry are the Italian Autorobot Zone, Plastal, the German HP Polska and Sils Center in Gliwice, the American TRW and Tenneco Automotive, and the Polish JMS and NGK Ceramics (a Polish-Japanese manufacturer of ceramic filter cartridges for diesel engines). Construction companies are the Italian Mapei (manufacturers of construction chemicals), the Spanish Roca (producers of ceramic bathroom products), and the Austrian Semmelrock Stein + Design (producers of concrete paving blocks; Gliwice).

In 1996 General Motors Manufacturing Poland decided to build its plant in Gliwice and diesel engines for use in various Opel/Vauxhall and Chevrolet products in Tychy. In a commemorative meeting in 2016, the mayor Frankiewicz said so:

General Motors' investment in Gliwice is proof that the automotive industry is the flywheel of the economy and has also become the flywheel of Gliwice. The Opel¹⁹ factory paved the way for the city's development based on modern industry and new technologies. Twenty years ago, we were one of the poorest cities in the former Katowice Voivodeship, today we are one of the richest in Poland (Gliwicka fabryka...; author's translation).

In the aftermath of the pandemic, announcements for the establishment of new industrial plants have come to light in Silesia Province. The company HT &L Fitting Polska, which operates in the automotive sector and is based in Bielsko-Biala, decided to invest in Gliwice, with commissioning scheduled for December 2021 in the Diamond Business Park Gliwice, in the Katowice Special Economic Zone (Kolejna firma... author's translation).

19 Opel Manufacturing Poland Sp. (formerly General Motors Manufacturing Poland Sp.) is an automobile manufacturer in Poland. It assembles light commercial vehicles in a factory in Gliwice and builds engines in Tychy. Opel Manufacturing Poland is a subsidiary of Opel Automobile GmbH in Rüsselsheim, Germany which in turn is a subsidiary of Stellantis (Wikipedia).

In the Czech Republic the tradition in automobile assemblers²⁰ is also very relevant, like Skoda and many other companies that have been important to attract FDI in this productive network system, like Hyundai and Toyota Peugeot Citroën Automobile. According to the source Czechinvest (n.d., p. 5) when Hyundai decided to build a plant in the Czech Republic (in Nošovice, Nižní Lhoty), the information had the force of a lightning bolt when it was officially announced in Ostrava back in September 2005. Hyundai decided to follow in the footsteps of its sister company Kia, which had started building a plant in Žilina, Slovakia, one year earlier. “In the nick of time”, as the source mentions, the offer of the company at the time was to create about 3,500 jobs and to invest more than EUR 1 billion since the region suffered from high unemployment resulting from painful restructuring processes in the region’s traditional industries – coal, steel and heavy engineering. As mentioned by Misak:

Moravian-Silesian region is currently in process of transformation from the previous region of coal and steel to the region of new advanced technologies (Industry 4.0). A similar transformation is at present in progress in the Gliwice-Katowice region across the Polish border. Universities of both countries have a long tradition of mutual successful cooperation (Misak, no date).

In Moravia-Silesia, during 2021, the Czech Invest business and investment support agency supported a total of 53 projects worth more than CZK 25 billion. Most of them went to the Moravian-Silesian and South Moravian regions, eight projects each, informs the source (Invest More, 8 April 2022). Compared to 2020, which was strongly affected by the coronavirus pandemic, there was a twofold increase in investment projects. The city of Ostrava has become a popular base for numerous international companies thanks to a number of key factors. The combination of low labor costs, a highly qualified workforce, R&D expertise, and a strategic geographical location means that Ostrava will continue to offer strong potential for growth in the upcoming years (Economic potential).

20 List of current automobile manufacturers of the Czech Republic: Praga (1907-present); Škoda Auto (1925-present); Kaipan (1992-present); Gordon Roadster (1997-present); MWM (2017-present); Sigma Motor (2018-present); Foreign manufacturers building in the Czech Republic; Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Czech (2008-present); Toyota Peugeot Citroën Automobile Czech (2002-present) (Wikipedia).

5.3 *The search for a services-based economy, mainly historical and environmental tourism*

According to the terms of Lamparska (2019), Europe experiences the development of post-industrial tourism by documenting the history of the growth of traditional coal basins as the Upper Silesian coal basin in the side of Poland. Similar processes, albeit to a lesser extent, occur in the Czech Republic, especially in the Moravian-Silesian portion around the regional capital Ostrava. The author has recently proposed a cross-border roadmap to link the areas of the Upper Silesian Coal Basin between the Province of Silesia and the Moravia-Silesia region to connect landscapes and sites that have marked European industrial history in this part of Europe and in the basin.

Poland has 1,621 cataloged historical objects, 149 of which are registered as monuments. The Route of Industrial Monuments of the Province of Silesia comprises 36 facilities associated with the traditions of mining and metallurgy, electricity generation, railways, communications, water, and food industry managed by the Department for Promotion, Tourism and Sport of the Self-Government of the Silesian Province (Staszewska & Żemła, 2013, p. 42)²¹.

The cross-border post-industrial heritage of Upper Silesia since the 17th century is the subject of a tourist project by the Association for Development and Regional Cooperation “Olza” (an organization that is part of Euroregion Cieszyn Silesia, as will be seen below). The Cross-border Tourist Route project, called the Coal and Steel Route, will link the Technotrasa Tourist Route (Czech Republic) with the Route of Industrial Monuments in Poland (Olza). One of the most notable examples of the Industrial Monuments Route of the Province of Silesia is the new Katowice Cultural Zone in the city center, an important landmark for Poland in the renovation of degraded urban spaces, built in the former Katowice coal mine area, which was opened in 1823 and closed in 1999 after producing 120 million tons in 176 years (see Figure 13).

The beginning of the Cultural Zone dates to 1971 when the sports and entertainment stadium Spodek²² was inaugurated. Its expansion began after the 2010s with the building of the Silesian Museum composed of underground exhibitions and equipment from the old mine preserved on the surface, the International Convention Center²³, and the headquarters of the Polish National Symphony Radio Orchestra (see Figure 14).

21 For more details see: <https://www.zabytkitechniki.pl/>.

22 For more details, see: <http://www.spodekkatowice.pl/en/>.

23 For more details see: <http://www.mckkatowice.pl/en/culture-zone/94/>; <https://muzeumslaskie.pl/pl/>.

On the Czech side of the Upper Silesian Coal Basin, in turn, the facilities of the Dolní Vítkovice mine and steelworks are in Ostrava. Built in the year of 1828 and closed in 1998, the mine and steel mill became the landmark of industrial production then located in the Austrian Empire. Currently, Dolní Vítkovice facilities are intended for education, culture, and a social center²⁴, part of the Technotrasa Tourist Route.

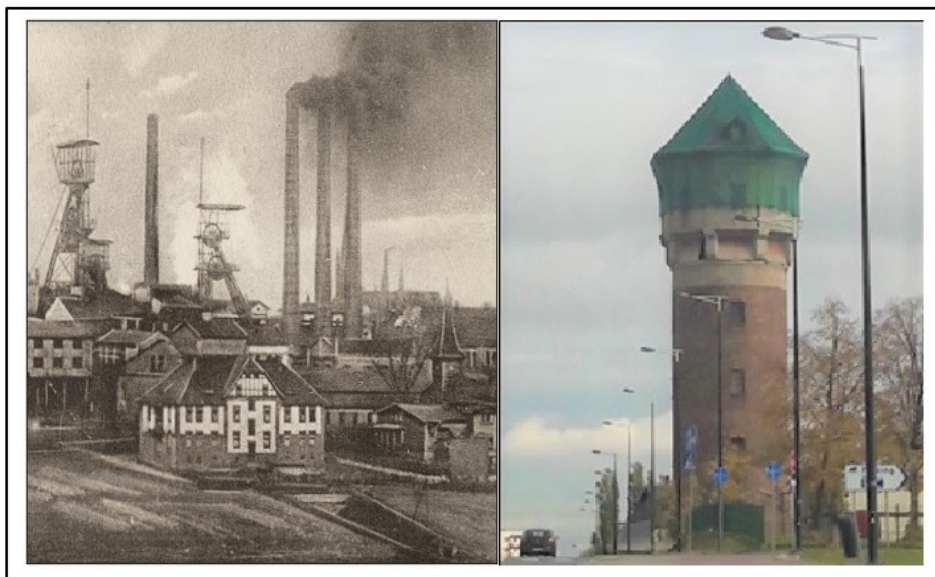


Figure 13. Katowice coal mine active at the beginning of the XXth century and the water tower preserved

Source: muzeumslaskie.pl; author, 2019

6. Cross-border management in Upper Silesia

Cross-border management in Upper Silesia can be understood by some of the main actions of the three Euroregions that overlap, roughly speaking, its historical perimeter. They are: Praded (1997), Silesia (1998) Cieszyn Silesia (1998). In addition, EGTC Tritia and functional urban areas (FUAS) are examined.

6.1 Euroregions and EGTC Tritia

As mentioned by Wassenberg and Reitel (2015, p. 14) the link between European integration and cross-border cooperation intensified with the geopolitical

²⁴ For more details see <https://www.dolnivitkovice.cz/en/>

upheaval Europe experienced after 1989. A new pan-European dimension (east-west) opened up in cross-border cooperation, giving it a role to play in the reunification of the European continent. Poland and Czech Republic declared their intention to join the western co-operation structures and decided upon intensification of mutual regional co-operation when establishing the regional Visegrad group in 1991. The 1990s also brought the creation of cross-border co-operation mechanisms at the lower levels of public administration in all countries of the ex-Soviet block, i.e. creation of Euroregions on local levels (Böhm & Opiola, 2019, p. 5). According to these authors:

Initially, Euroregions were created between municipalities representing the Western or Eastern part of Europe (such as the trilateral Czech–Polish–German Euroregion Nisa-Nysa-Neisse founded in 1991); later on they were also founded between countries of the former Eastern block themselves, including the Czech–Polish borderline (Euroregion Glacensis in 1996, Praded 1997, Silesia and Tešín/Cieszyn Silesia in 1998 and Beskydy in 2000). Currently, there are six Euroregions along the entire length of the Czech–Polish border (Böhm & Opiola, 2019, p. 5).



Figure 14. Katowice International Convention Center. A post-industrial space for conventions

Source: author, 2019

It should be noted that the main priorities of the three Euroregions, which roughly correspond to Upper Silesia, are focused on similar objectives by the Interreg programs from 2017 to the future 2027, i.e. transport, environmental protection and cross-border tourism, in addition to others such as improving relations between municipalities, promoting the economy, etc. Euroregion Cieszyn Silesia, for example, is supported by two municipal associations, namely the Association for Regional Development and Cooperation “Olza” and the Regional Association for Territorial Cooperation of Těšín Silesia. One of its most important projects is tourism without borders, focusing on the already mentioned cross-border tourist route Coal and Steel (Euroregion-silesia.eu; Euregio-teschinensis.eu; Euroregion-praded.cz).

The six Euroregions along the Czech-Polish border are visualized on Figure 15. Upper Silesia region corresponds, approximately to Silesia, Cieszyn Silesia and Praded Euroregions. Silesia has its offices in Racibórz (PL) and Opava (CZ); Cieszyn Silesia's are located in the twin city Cieszyn (P) and Cesky Tesin (CZ) and Praded's are in Prudnik (PL) and Vrbno pod Pradědem (CZ).

EGTCs are designed to facilitate and promote territorial cooperation (cross-border, transnational, and interregional cooperation) in view of strengthening the economic and social cohesion of the European Union (cor.europa.eu/). EGTC Tritia, according to its website, is the first grouping of its kind at the area of Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic with regional governments as its members.

Territory where EGTC Tritia works includes Moravian-Silesian Region from Czech Republic, Silesian Voivodeship from Poland and Žilina Self-governing Region from Slovak Republic (see Figure 16). EGTC TRITIA “has an area of 24 566,09 km² and a population of 6,5 mln people. There are two cities with more than 300 thousand inhabitants – Katowice (PL) and Ostrava (CZ). These conurbations together with other important city of Žilina (SK) is tied by intensive socio - economic relations” (egtctritia.eu).

According to Böhm (2014, p. 13) the EGTC is the biggest cross-border region, based on heavy industries, in Europe. According to the author:

There is a major concentration of heavy industry – coal mining and steel production – mainly in Silesian Voivodship and the Moravian-Silesian Region. All of the regions involved have been undergoing economic reconstruction, not yet complete. In all the regions manufacturing industry, mainly automotive, has newly emerged. Seven public universities and numerous private tertiary education institutions reinforce regional innovation potential.

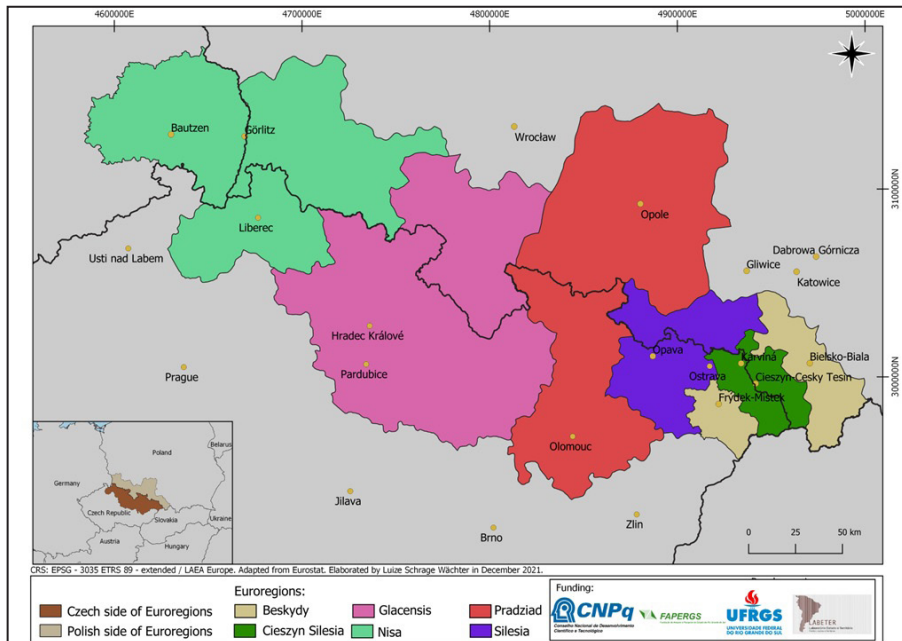


Figure 15. Euroregions on the Polish-Czech-Slovakia border

Source: author, 2021

The concern with the recovery of the environment is also recurrent in the EGTC Tritia, as corroborated by Böhm (2015, p. 9):

... all CBC initiatives we have been dealing with mention environment and its protection as one of key priorities. EGTC TRITIA has environment and its protection in one four core co-operation priorities (other three are transport, economic co-operation, and tourism ...

Industrial pollution on the Katowice-Ostrava axis is present, for example in the AIR Tritia project. According to Tritia's website the main objective of the project is to create effective international air quality management through development of joint information database, management and prediction tools and air quality strategies. Joint regional approach to this issue is the main change brought by this project through "evidence-based policy" and "result based management". Five FUAS (Ostrava, Opava, Zilina, Opole, Rybnik), and regions of three countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland) were involved in the project

partnership and they would take active part in creation of a local FUA and regional strategy (TRITIA). The duration of this project was from June 2017 to May 2020, with support from Interreg Central Europe financed by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The lead partner organization was VSB - Technical University of Ostrava (one of our visited institutions)²⁵ that has many projects directed do clean energy and environment²⁶.

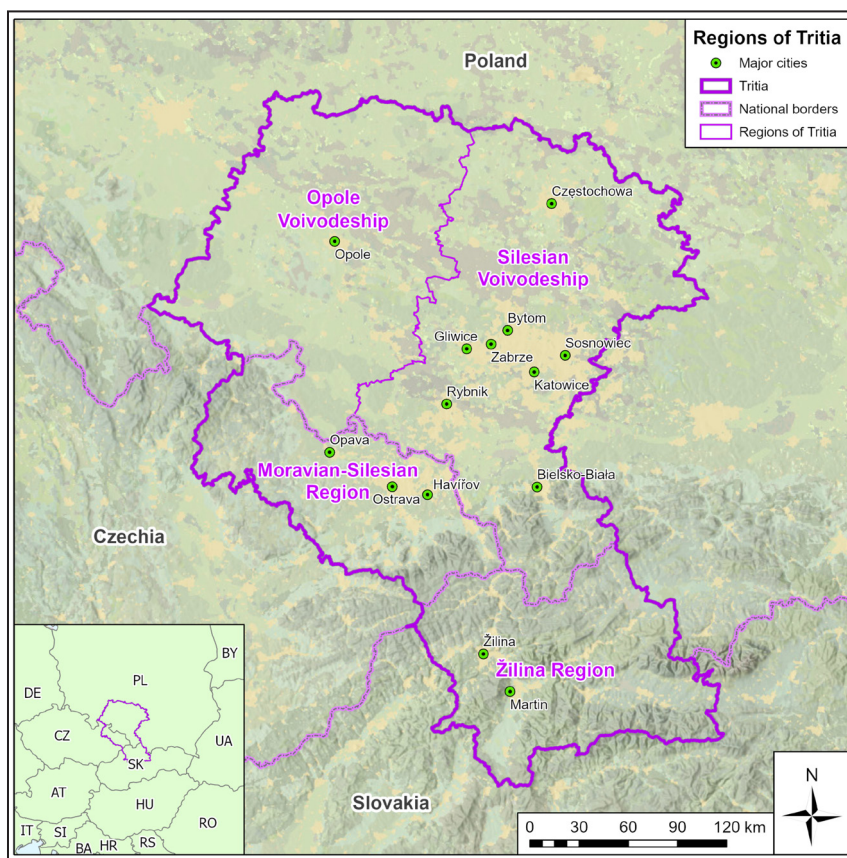


Figure 16. Limits and regions of the EGTC TRITIA

Source: Svozilík, 2021

²⁵ For more details of VSB University, see: <https://www.vsb.cz/en/university/>

²⁶ With a budget of 2 190 130 EUR, the project partners were: VŠB – Technical University of Ostrava; ACCENDO – Center for Science and Research, Institute (CZ); Central Mining Institute (PL); European grouping of territorial cooperation TRITIA, Ltd. (PL); Institute of Meteorology and Water Management National Research Institute (PL); University of Zilina (SK); City of Rybnik (PL); City of Opava (CZ); City of Zilina (SK); City of Opole (PL); City of Ostrava (CZ); Moravian-Silesian Region (CZ); Žilina self-governing region (SK); Opole Voivodeship (PL); Silesian Voivodeship (PL) (egtctritia.eu).

6.2 Functional urban areas (FUAS) across countries

OECD and European Commission (Chilla et al., 2010) jointly developed a methodology to define functional urban areas (FUAS) across countries. The objective of the approach is to create a harmonized definition of cities and their areas of influence for international comparisons, as well as for policy analysis on topics related to urban development (OECD, n.d.). Figure 17 shows the Functional Urban Areas of Upper Silesia in Poland and the Czech Republic.

Among the main cities located in the Silesian-Moravian Polycentric Metropolitan Area (PL-CZ) and their respective FUAS, the Silesian Metropolis of Katowice-Gliwice-Tychy (PL) stands out, as aforementioned. The Metropolis has a concentric spatial structure and some areas can be identified according to Rykiel (2002, p. 346) as (1) the city of Katowice as a regional and supra-regional center; (2) the agglomeration of a dozen cities and towns as a morphologically homogeneous core of the region and an explicit supralocal labor market; (3) a slightly more extensive urban agglomeration around the conurbation; (4) a more extensive daily urban system (DUS), defined by everyday socio-spatial relationships, and (5) the urban region, defined by the annual socio-spatial index of relationships, slightly more spatially extensive than the respective DUS.

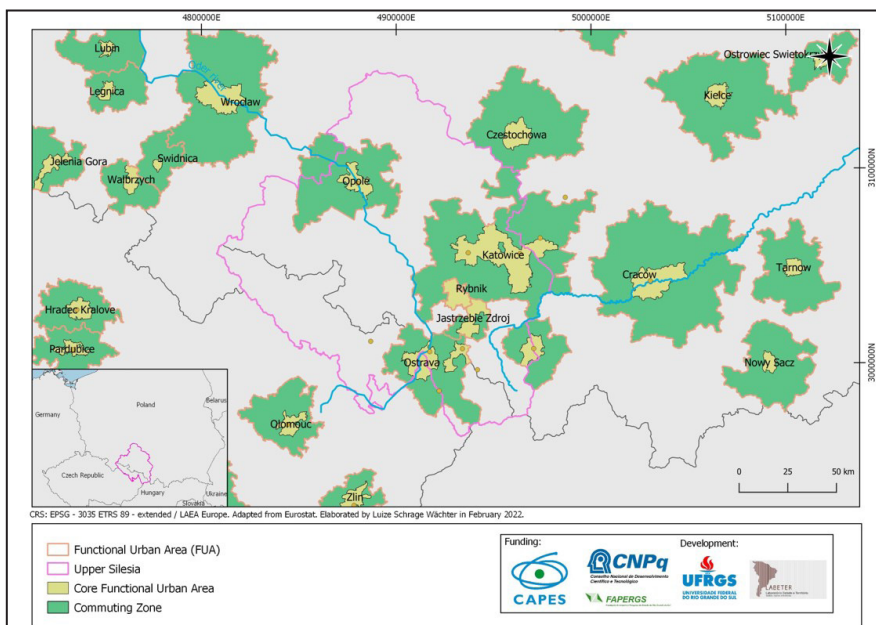


Figure 17. Functional Urban Areas of Upper Silesia in Poland and the Czech Republic

Source: author, 2021

Commuting flows between the Silesian Metropolis of Katowice-Gliwice-Tychy (PL) and the Ostrava Metropolitan Area (CZ) are supported by the urban axis that extends between the two metropolises, i.e. the national motorway of Poland A1 officially named Amber Highway (Polish: *Autostrada Bursztynowa*) that runs in the country from north to south. The Polish axis interconnects with the Czech highway D1 (Czech: *Dálnice D1*), the main and busiest highway of the Czech Republic that currently connects the two biggest Czech cities²⁷.

Discussion

As already mentioned in the Methodology, there were two main guiding issues held in mind during the field works. The first, whether some specificities of regions located outside of the European Dorsal, especially the cross-border ones, might define non-centralities or supposed peripheries. The second is whether these regions located outside the Dorsal would be endowed with some important polycentric centralities in their respective national and supranational contexts in cross-border integration processes.

Among the specificities of the Upper Silesia cross-border region, the fieldwork revealed to the observer an enormous territorial complexity. In addition to being a part of the medieval cultural-historical Silesia the cross-border medium-scale region is heir to a long geopolitical history since the High Middle Ages and a strategic center between the former Austro-Hungarian empires, Prussia and Russia until World War I. As it is a region with coal production since the 14th century, Silesia, and Upper Silesia in particular was the object of post-World War I conflict in the establishment of borders between the nascent Czechoslovak Republic and the Republic of Poland as well as during and after World War II.

A medium-scale cross-border region, a sort of “Heartland”, in Upper Silesia was revealed to the author by the most industrialized region of Poland and the Moravian-Silesian Region (CZ). The Silesian Metropolis of Katowice-Gliwice-Tychy (PL) / Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia and Dąbrowa Basin are connected to the Ostrava Metropolitan Area forming an intense cross-border corridor, i.e. the Silesian-Moravian Polycentric Metropolitan Area (Poland-Czech

27 Both national roads, the A1 in Poland and the D1 in the Czech Republic, form part of the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor, one of the nine corridors of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) project. The corridor runs from the Baltic seaports of Gdansk, Gdynia, Szczecin and Świnoujście in the north, to the Adriatic ports of Koper, Trieste, Venice and Ravenna in the south, taking in the industrial regions of Central and Southern Poland. The TEN-T project aims to finance circulation infrastructure works to eliminate cross-border bottlenecks and connect central and peripheral regions (European Commission, 2013).

Republic). In this corridor, functional cross-border urban areas (FUAS) have been identified between the two countries, which may reveal, to some extent, the re-functionalization of the role of urban centers across borders whose national states are part of European Union.

Would Upper Silesia be endowed with some important polycentric centralities in their respective national and supranational contexts? This second guiding question revealed that the cross-border “Heartland” of Upper Silesia is just the opposite of what could be understood by a periphery: it is a central cross-border polycentric region with the highest industrialization in Poland and some parts of the eastern region of the Czech Republic.

Despite the relative decline of Upper Silesia with the closure of several mines and steel mills after privatization and the relocation of main economic activities to the Paris-Berlin-Poznan-Warsaw-Minsk-Moscow axis, it seemed that there are new alternatives in this cross-border “Heartland”. Several universities and research institutes like the visited Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the VSB Technological University of Ostrava-Poruba, Czech Republic, are dedicated to the problems of industrial reconversion in the coal and metallurgical region. The main concern of the industrial reconversion is with adaptation to the climate Agenda of the 2016 Paris Agreement, the economy of knowledge and cultural services like new touristic/cultural/educational and their spaces.

The concept of periphery for regions outside the European Dorsal would lose its meaning when defined generically as spaces with low population and industrial density or with little dynamic agricultural activities. It must, therefore, be concluded that the concept of periphery could not be suitable for Upper Silesia and, to some extent, for the whole of cultural-historical Silesia. These are centralities that have been recognized a long time ago by Pierre Denis and Richard Hartshorne. Nowadays these regions may acquire some new aspects under New Regionalism that seeks to leverage polycentric regions with development problems through regional and local development policies (place-based policies).

The expansion of the automotive industry into peripheral regions adjacent to core areas and their integration into macro-regional production networks is, no doubt, a central issue, as mentioned above by Pavlínek (2020), based on territorial divisions of labor and territorial specializations. This is generally the view of center-periphery relations in many continents. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that there is a public discomfort in the peripheral regions, expressed by citizens and governments on many levels, because of their history, traditions, institutions and social values in each territory.

Maybe one should adopt the understanding that certain regions named as peripheral – like Upper Silesia – have specific centralities, as well as a long-lasting industrial tradition, research centers and national, regional and local public policies associated with European Union. Such long-lasting cross-border regions on medium-regional scale, like Upper Silesia, are connected to all geographical corners, independent of their condition of “land-locked regions” by all kinds of flows, on earth, air and, mainly, by global online networks. Productive reconversions towards Industry 4.0 with high technology, the generation of knowledge and innovations as well “peripheral regionalism” are important assets present in the territorial formation of Upper Silesia cross-border region. New centralities are, nowadays, connected in multi-scale networks, and this is also an analytical challenge.

Post Scriptum

A few words here in the sense of a *Post Scriptum* are necessary.

Fieldwork in the Upper Silesia region after the first bibliographic explorations and during the technical-scientific mission in the region in October 2019. Since then, during the pandemic, online academic exchanges went on with international seminars and now there are new perspectives after the main events of the pandemic are almost part of the past. Even a technical mission of Polish researchers happened in October 2022 took place in Brazil, specifically in Porto Alegre, the southernmost state capital of Rio Grande do Sul, close to Argentina and Uruguay, as well as a visit to the Iguazu Triple Cross-Border region, between Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina, one of the most important supra-national regions in South America.

The current state of the art in cross-border integration processes seems to point to the uncertainties of nationalisms and difficulties of integration processes and productive reconversions. The partial Russian gas shut off sale to European markets, for example, could undergo transformations affecting the climate Agenda of the Paris Agreement, and possibly delaying the closure of coal mines in Europe, especially in the Central European region.

As well known, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the partial occupation of the Eastern Donbass region has been destabilizing the relative guarded peace by NATO between states in Europe. This should create a scenario of prolonged crisis, including changing the role of European Union, that defends the peace of markets. Due to geopolitical instability, EU assumed the defense of Ukraine and its population, including imposing sanctions on Russia. As a result,

to some extent, in a pessimistic view of regional integrations, it is to be assumed that cross-border processes may even undergo transformations and suffer from solutions of continuity. Thus, progressively one should adopt the comprehension that cross-border regions are, above all, “borderings - deborderings - reborderings” processes during long-lasting historical processes of territorial formations.

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