

SEARCHING FOR THE TERRITORIAL SHAPE OF A REGION IN REGIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS: THE ČESKÝ RÁJ (BOHEMIAN PARADISE), CZECH REPUBLIC

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Abstract

The concept of “region” as a social construction is discussed in this paper, as well as the question of how such a conceived region can be defined. The discourse of different territorial delimitations and mental maps of respondents are used in a case study of Český ráj (Bohemian Paradise). With these methods, we are able to prove the possibility of defining a region and its loose boundaries through exploring regional identity.

Shrnutí

Hledání územního tvaru regionu ve vědomí obyvatel na příkladu Českého ráje, Česká republika

Tato studie se zabývá konceptem regionu jako sociální konstrukce a klade si otázku, jak je možné takový region definovat. V případové studii regionu Český ráj využívá diskurzu různých územních vymezení a mentálních map respondentů. Použitím těchto metod prokazuje možnost vymezení regionu a jeho volných hranic prostřednictvím regionální identity.

Keywords: *new regionalism; boundaries; regional identity; cognitive maps; Český ráj (Bohemian Paradise), Czech Republic*

1. Introduction

In relation to the transformation of subject orientation in humanities-focused geographic studies, the topics of region, regional identity, and identity of region have been in the forefront of interest since the 1980s (e.g. Pred, 1984; Paasi, 1986; Allen, Massey, Cochrane, 1998; Raagmaa, 2001; Hampl, Dostál, Drbohlav, 2007). Czech social geography has thus far focused mainly on socio-geographic regionalization (Hampl, 2005).

Defining regions on the bases of the consciousness of belonging, or regional identity, has come to the forefront of interest for Czech geographers in recent years (Chromý, 2003b; Chromý, Janů, 2003; and in relation to border regions Siwek, Kaňok, 2000; Siwek, Bogdová, 2007; Chromý, Skála, 2010). Last but not least the contemporary literature focuses on the significance of regional identity for regional development (Raagmaa, 2002; Frisvoll, Rye, 2009). A strong feeling of belonging to a certain territory may provide significant activation to a local community and encourage regional development “from below”.

In this study we deal with the concept of region as a social construction and with the question of how such a conceived region can be defined and whether this is possible on the basis of self-identification and consciousness of belonging and community. In relation to regional development in the post-socialist period, methods for activating society are searched. Collective consciousness of belonging to a certain territory has a significant influence on activating society. In order to strengthen it, old regional identities, or modifications thereof, are used, which at the same time results in the development of entirely new identity. In the post-socialist Czechia, alternatives to regional development are constantly being sought. Recently in this regard there has been great emphasis on strengthening the regional identity of inhabitants as a tool for their activation. Very old identities whose traditions reach back to the 19th century are used for this purpose. For this case study we chose the Bohemian Paradise region. This region is culturally defined by strong regional identity and strong identity of region (Jeřábek, 2005; Semian, 2010).

The name “Bohemian Paradise” is used by many formal and informal bodies in the area. Thus, boundaries of the region are relatively vague and of rather zonal nature. The aim of this study is to compare the territorial delineation of the Bohemian Paradise based on the discourse analysis of academic and popular literature as well as on the analysis of the consciousness of the inhabitants. We are interested in the question whether these individual definitions correspond to each other and to what extent are the current definitions of the Bohemian Paradise reflected in the consciousness of its inhabitants. Considering the zonal nature of the region’s boundaries, it can be assumed that we will not be able to define a single boundary, but several wider and variously important “loose” boundaries instead. At the same time, it can be assumed that for mental maps the importance of each boundary definition further away from the historical core of the region will be lower, but that the discourse analysis does not necessarily have to yield the same results. We also make an assumption that in defining boundaries, formal boundaries will be above all reflected in the sense of Paasi (1986), as fully institutionalized regions bearing the name Bohemian Paradise; the longest functioning of these boundaries contains the Bohemian Paradise protected landscape area.

Furthermore, we will be interested in how the resulting mental maps of different types of respondents differ. It is our assumption that officials from the regional authority will include under the name Bohemian Paradise a larger area than other respondents, as it can be expected that in their mental maps of the Bohemian Paradise, the formal administrative borders will be reflected as in their line of work because they regularly deal with them.

2. The conceptualization of region

The “region”, just like the concepts of “place” and “space”, is one of the basic concepts of geography. Most often regions are understood to be “areas or zones of indeterminate size on the surface of the Earth, whose diverse elements form a functional association; one such region as part of a system of regions covering the globe; or a portion of one feature of the Earth” (Gregory et al., 2009, p. 630).

Since the 1980s, there have been attempts in regional geography to shift away from such purely descriptive approaches to the study of “invisible” phenomena and connections. This movement in geography is often labelled as “new” regional geography (e.g. Paasi, 1986; Gilbert, 1988; Claval, 2007), or “new” regionalism (e.g. Fawn, 2009). The concept of regional homogeneity

is also questioned (Hampl, Ježek, Kühnl, 1978). In the 1990s, the discussions of “new” regional approaches were driven mainly by the processes of globalization and integration and the paradigm of the “Europe of regions” (Keating, 1998; 2004; Paasi, 2009). Therefore, many “new” concepts and understandings of region have appeared during this period. On the other hand, there is a common basis of these “new” concepts: understanding a region as a “social construction” (Paasi, 2010). This allows for the reproduction of social forms, the formulation of the biographies of individuals, and the transformation of natural and landscape components (Pred, 1984; Paasi, 1986; Allen, Massey, Cochrane, 1998; Heřmanová, Chromý et al., 2009). Whereas the regionalism of the 1990s was mainly connected with formal inter-state regional organizations focused on economic integration, the contemporary regionalism should go beyond these and try to emphasize social, political and cultural dimensions of the region as well (Claval, 1987; Paasi, 2009).

Following many other scholars, Fawn (2009) warns of the fragmentation and division within the “new” regionalism and states that a widely accepted definition of it is still missing, despite many scholars call for it in their papers. On the other hand, it is also possible to state that there is not only one regionalism, simply because approaches differ among sciences (geographers see the region typically as a sub-state category while political scientists and economists as a supra state; Paasi, 2009). Therefore, the effort should be turned to setting an order among the different approaches. Schmitt-Egner (2002) brings one such attempt and defines different types of regionalism through a combination of two regional dimension: region as an action unit (vertical division, typical for political scientists) and region as an action space (horizontal division, typical for geographers).

As mentioned above, the unifying basis of the “new” approaches is region as a “social construction”. Thus, regions connect individual and institutional spheres (Pred, 1984) and initiate civic activity and at the same time are created by the activities of the inhabitants. These activities may be of generative, reproductive or transformative nature, as long as they are in the consciousness of local or other inhabitants or as long as they play a role in public space or governance (Paasi, 2002). If regions stop existing in the consciousness of their inhabitants and stop playing a role in public life, they disappear even despite objective preconditions for their existence (Siwek, Bogdová, 2007; Chromý, Kučerová, Kučera, 2009). On the other hand, these regions should remain as residual or historical entity in the regional system (Paasi, 2010) and can be revitalized through the mobilization of identity. Regions therefore

do not last forever. Raagmaa (2001) outlines two forms of the development of regions (Fig. 1). The first form is constant renewal. This involves constant natural or artificial changes in the physical appearance of a territory (landscape, boundaries, etc.). These changes are reflected in constant transformations of symbolic and institutional shape. The second form is disappearance of a region. This form relates to fundamental intervention from without (e.g. invasion, war, etc.), which results in changes in the population with different values and ethos. This climaxes in significant changes in the regional institutional framework and in symbols, and thus a “new” region is formed, as the “old” disappears. Thus, regions are dynamic; they are a constantly changing element of the spatial structure of the society.

The process of the development of a region, wherein a region is created, exists for some period, changes and then disappears, can be called “the institutionalization of a region” (Paasi, 1986). The institutionalization of a region is a historically contiguous process (Paasi, 1986), which means that once a region acquires a place in the regional system and the regional consciousness it becomes a part of the reproductive and transformative process of society. Regions thus influence and are at the same time influenced by political, economic, social and cultural processes, i.e. by the basic mechanisms of all societal changes. Paasi (1986) defines four phases of the process of the institutionalization of regions (Fig. 1) as follows:

1. The assumption of the territorial shape of a region,
2. The development of the symbolic shape of a region,
3. The development of regional institutions (institutional shape), and
4. The establishment of region as a part of a regional system.

The order of these phases is purely theoretical. In practice, these phases can take place simultaneously or in a different order, which varies according to the different purpose (type) of region (Schmitt-Egner, 2002; for more about the individual phases see e.g. Chromý, 2003a).

The fourth phase gives the power to the region to reproduce „itself“ (Paasi, 2010). The most formal manifestation of the fourth phase is when a region gains an administrative function in the system. Acquiring an administrative function does not necessarily have to be the most important and most effective step towards renewal of a region. The acknowledgement of the region in the regional consciousness of its inhabitants is a more important manifestation. Thus it is the fourth phase that combines the institutional and individual spheres of the region. In this respect it takes place in all phases, and is created by them and at the same time contributes to their formation. According to Paasi (1986), it is this fourth phase that de facto gives the region an identity. Acquiring a regional identity is thus an essential condition for the existence of a region.

In this study we recognize regional identity as two connected parts: identity of region and regional consciousness of inhabitants (Paasi, 1986). The first one can be understood as a region image projected both inside and outside the region. The regional consciousness of inhabitants is collective sense of belonging to region (regional community). Thus, regional identity contains natural, cultural and historical as well as emotional, social and cognitive dimensions. Together these dimensions constitute the potential of region in the context of regional development (Schmitt-Egner, 2002). That is why the

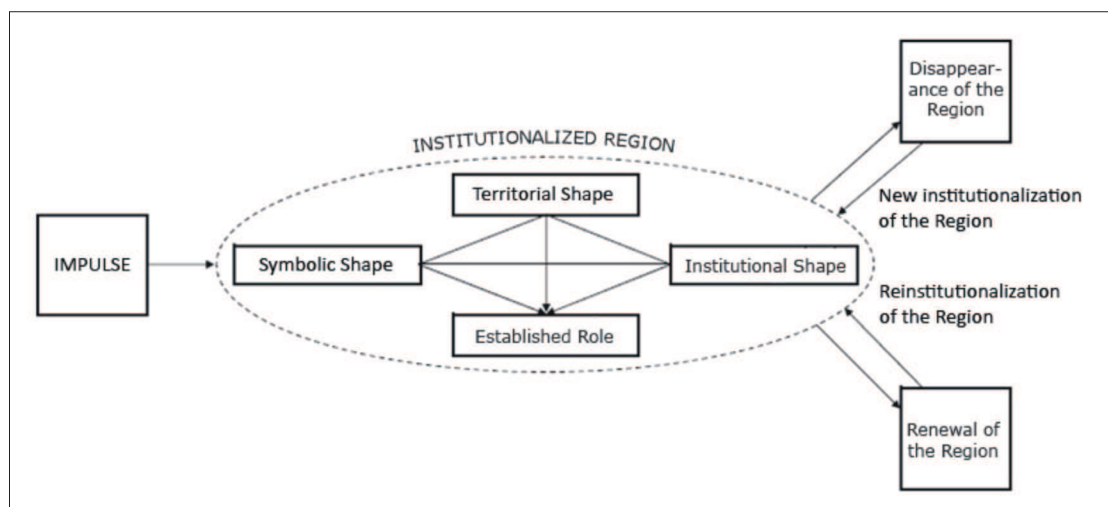


Fig. 1: The process of the institutionalization and reinstitutionalization of a region

Source: according to Paasi (1986) and Raagmaa (2001)

Note: The strength and nature of the impulse lead to whether a region is renewed or disappears.

regional identity is nowadays often connected with regional marketing strategies and misused by them too (Hospers, 2011). Generally, these strategies reduce regional identity only to a commodified image and sell this image outside the region. What they miss is the shared vision of such an image by inhabitants within of the region. As stated by Antonsich (2010), it is not important for the very existence of the region to have both components of regional identity. Therefore, region without regional consciousness of inhabitants can exist, but such a region is not fully developed and in long-term reproduction can disappear more easily.

3. Conceptualizing regional boundaries

The concept of region as a social construction means that regional boundaries cannot just be taken as lines on the map, because relationships creating regions reach beyond such boundaries. Based on the level of these relationships, geographers can differentiate boundaries based on their "scope" as either being linear or zonal (Jeřábek, Dokoupil, Havlíček et al., 2004). A typical example of the second type of boundary is represented by ethnic boundaries between territories populated by different ethnicities (Siwek, 1996). The "scope" of the boundaries however does not influence the objective appearance of a given phenomenon, but subjective factors are also important such as the position from which the observer is looking at the boundaries, i.e. centre vs. periphery (Siwek, 1999). Boundaries are social, cultural, and political constructions, created and used by people in the process of the institutionalization of regions (Paasi, 2001). For creating regional identity, boundaries have two immediate roles. First of all they determine the "inhabitants" of a region, i.e. people who belong to a region, and secondly they define the "others" who do not belong to a region (Massey, Jess, 1995). The principle of the relationship between "us" and "them" and its expression in boundaries is what makes up the essence of regional identity. In the relationship between those on the "inside" and those on the "outside", boundaries can have either a barrier function or a contact function (Dokoupil, 2000). If boundaries lose their function, but their reflection is preserved in the consciousness of the population, a historical geographic boundary is formed (Chromý, 2000; Kučerová-Kuldová, 2008).

Massey and Jess (1995) summarize the basic principles of understanding boundaries into four points:

1. Boundaries do not represent an eternal truth about a territory, but instead are social constructions serving specific purposes.
2. Boundaries must inevitably intersect with other social relationships creating the social space. No bordered territory can be "pure".

3. Boundaries are determined by human potential and thus in this case are one of the elements responsible for organizing the social space. Thus, they may become a part of the process of "creating a place".
4. Creating boundaries is always an act of force.

It is clear that regions determined for various purposes may mutually spatially overlap or supplement each other. In a territory there may be multiple formal and informal regions bearing the same name (Semian, 2012). All of these regions have different functions and meanings, but exist concurrently. They all have their own boundaries, which mutually overlap territorially. Assuming that we consider the fourth phase of the institutionalization of a region as essential for the existence of a region in the regional system, we can determine the general boundaries of a region on the basis of the confrontation between individual boundaries with the analysis of the territorial shape of the region in the consciousness of its inhabitants.

4. Methodology

Methods used in the research for this article can be broken into two parts. In the first part we focus on the discourse analysis of the territorial shape of the Bohemian Paradise and on defining boundaries of the Bohemian Paradise based on the heuristics of academic and popular literature available in the library of the Museum of the Bohemian Paradise in Turnov and in the geography library of the Faculty of Science at Charles University in Prague. Sources for the discourse analysis are literature and other sources published since the 19th century, mainly focused on tourism (guidebooks, photographic books, etc.). We have based this part on previous papers (Semian, 2010; 2012).

The critical part of the paper is the analysis of mental maps collected during field research in 2009 and 2010 focused on the identity of the inhabitants of the Bohemian Paradise. This method was chosen as the most suitable for determining thoughts of the inhabitants in the study area about the territorial shape of the Bohemian Paradise and, at the same time to find out to what extent various definitions of the Bohemian Paradise are reflected in the consciousness of its inhabitants. Due to the fact that the construction and evaluation of mental maps is relatively difficult, only three groups of actors in forming regional identity were selected for the research: teachers, mayors, and officials from the regional authorities. These actors influence the regional consciousness of inhabitants either through the process of education or by contributing to the creation of the regional identity of each municipality or the entire region. We are aware

of the restrictions on the validity of the results related to the selected targeted actors. It can be assumed that thanks to greater levels of awareness and a greater overview of the links between actors in the territory, the resulting definition will be somewhat broader than if all respondents were included. Mental maps were a crucial part of the questionnaires distributed to mayors and elementary school teachers, and they were also included in interviews held with officials from the regional authorities (Semian, 2010). In total we worked with 126 completed mental maps. Of these, 99 mental maps were from elementary school teachers, 23 maps from mayors and 4 maps from officials from the regional authorities.

While incorporating the construction of mental maps into field research we worked with the geographical concept of mental maps as with a “graphical (cartographical or schematic) expression of people’s ideas about the geographical space, most frequently about its quality or arrangement” (Drbohlav, 1991, p. 164). Respondents were given a small map on which all important settlements in the model area were drawn. The respondents had to record their visualization of the territorial definition of the Bohemian Paradise on this map. Each of these drawings was evaluated using a grid network, where the side of each square represented 5 km in reality. If an entire square fell into the territory defined on the mental map as belonging to the Bohemian Paradise, the square was allocated two points. If it was only partially within it, such “bordering” squares were allocated just one point. Then we added up the values of each square and ascertained their relative abundance in the mental maps of the respondents. On the basis of relative abundance in the resulting mental map we subsequently defined several broader definitions of the Bohemian Paradise and retrospectively drew their boundaries into the original map. In conclusion, we compared the resulting mental map with the discourse on the Bohemian Paradise.

5. Brief characteristics of the model territory

The Bohemian Paradise is located nearly 100 kilometres northeast of the capital of Prague, in between the towns of Mladá Boleslav, Hodkovice nad Mohelkou, Semily, Nová Paka, and Kopidlno. The territory of the Bohemian Paradise is included in three of 14 administrative regions (NUTS III): Hradec Králové (Eastern Bohemia), Liberec (Northern Bohemia), and the Central Bohemian Region. With its position in the regional system of settlement, the Bohemian Paradise can be defined as being within the inner macro-regional periphery of Prague (Musil, Müller, 2008). The name Bohemian Paradise is used by many formal and informal regions, each of which

has its own boundaries, institutions and significance. In its maximum defined size, the Bohemian Paradise is more than 1,400 km², and has more than 200,000 inhabitants.

The roots of the name “Bohemian Paradise” can be found in the late Romantic period of the National Revival (in the 1870s), when the Czech intelligentsia surrounding the director of the spa at Sedmihorky, Dr. Antonín Šlechta, started using the name Bohemian Paradise to refer to the rocky landscape immediately surrounding the spa (Prýl, 1887; for alternative theory see Zylinskyj, 2005). Since then, the area known as Bohemian Paradise has gradually expanded. This further addition of territory took place mainly based on association with similar landscapes. The identity of the region was mainly created by its visitors. The name however quickly found its way into the consciousness of local inhabitants. The Bohemian Paradise is a cultural region institutionalized mainly on the basis of tourism (Nováková, Strída, 2002).

From the landscape perspective, the Bohemian Paradise is a transition zone between the lowland of Polabí (Elbe River Basin) in the south and the Jizerské Mts. and Krkonoše Mts. including their foothills in the north. The “heart” of the region is the Bohemian Paradise protected landscape area. Sandstone rock cities, volcanic knobs and many ponds as well as a large concentration of historical and cultural monuments are typical of the Bohemian Paradise landscape. Historical and cultural monuments are frequently landscape landmarks. Together they create a varied landscape character, which makes the Bohemian Paradise unique. According to Jeřábek (2005), the central part of the Bohemian Paradise has characteristically highly stable population and strong Bohemian Paradise identity.

6. Discourse on the definition of the Bohemian Paradise

The discourse analysis of the territorial shape of the Bohemian Paradise indicates a plurality of approaches to defining the region. An overview of the discourse defining the Bohemian Paradise is given in Fig. 2 (see cover p. 2). A more detailed description of each definition is beyond the scope of this article; we have dealt with it in earlier papers (Semian, 2010; 2012). From Fig. 2 it is clear that the discourse on the territorial shape of the Bohemian Paradise is relatively heterogeneous. In general we can define three boundaries in the region. The first delineation is the “core” of the Bohemian Paradise. We do not necessarily have to understand this to mean the “historical” core (Hruboskalsko – Fig. 3 – see cover p. 2), but it can also be described as a triangular area connecting the main rock areas: Maloskalsko in the

north, Příhrazské Rocks in the west and Prachovské Rocks in the east. This area essentially corresponds to the connected territory of the Bohemian Paradise protected landscape area and from the perspective of nature, landscape and cultural history, it is the most valuable. The middle demarcation is bordered by the towns of Mnichovo Hradiště, Sobotka, Jičín, Lomnice nad Popelkou, and Železný Brod, Kopanina Hill and the Sychrov Chateau. This variant adds the surrounding towns to the core rock area. It is attractive for tourists, too and broadens the interest in the region mainly with its cultural and historical offerings. The last, broadest delineation includes the area joining the towns of Mladá Boleslav, Kopydlno, Nová Paka, Semily, Hodkovice nad Mohelkou, and Mnichovo Hradiště. This is a very broad and diverse area, which is supposed to serve as an alternative to the tourist core, and which can at least partly profit from the good name of the region for its own development.

From the discourse on the territorial shape of the Bohemian Paradise, the Bohemian Paradise region is most often defined using the second definition. The boundaries of the second definition have a zonal character. The discourse defines the north and west boundaries most distinctly. On the contrary, the south and east boundaries are the most open and poorly definable. The south the boundary is loose, most likely due to the absence of a clearly institutionalized neighbour, and as a result, the Bohemian Paradise area expands into “no man’s” territory. The east boundary relatively clearly borders with the “Podkrkonoší” region, whose landscape character is very similar to the eastern part of the Bohemian Paradise. Thus, in the literature these two regions are often joined.

7. Mental maps of the Bohemian Paradise

The analysis of mental maps of the Bohemian Paradise took place in several steps. First we categorized the breadth of mental maps based on the percentage of grid squares contained therein. We worked with values calculated from all mental maps. In Fig. 4, which depicts individual values of squares in the graph, certain value clusters are clear. The first cluster is between 80% and 100%. The second is between 40% and 66%. These two clusters can be considered to indicate the first two categories for defining the Bohemian Paradise. Values between these clusters can be left as transitional. A further cluster is found approximately between 15% and 25%. This cluster however is not enough for a further definition. Together with other values they create the third category of definitions of the Bohemian Paradise. For this category we removed isolated definitions that were too broad. The lower boundary of the third category is made up of values in the range

from 3% to 5.5%, which is not sufficiently clear from Fig. 4. Not to leave out too many values, we chose another transitional category between 2.5% and 5.5%. An accurate overview of definitions is included in Fig. 5, which also serves as a legend for other mental maps. The boundaries could not be redrawn accurately according to the categories of squares, nor using a ratio; it was necessary to take into account the surrounding values instead. Therefore, we have to emphasize that the resulting boundaries are just a possible “sharp” record of otherwise “loose” boundaries.

In the regional consciousness of the inhabitants we could identify three variously broad definitions of the Bohemian Paradise region (Fig. 6). The majority of respondents included the narrowest definition of the Bohemian Paradise in their mental maps. Thus, we shall name this definition as the “core” of the Bohemian Paradise. This definition includes the entire territory of the Bohemian Paradise as described by Prýl (1887), and is narrower than the definition of the core area acquired based on the discourse analysis (Fig. 2). The difference is mainly in the northern part of the protected landscape area surrounding the municipality of Malá Skála and Kozákov Hill, which is not included in the mental map, in contrast to the results of the discourse analysis.

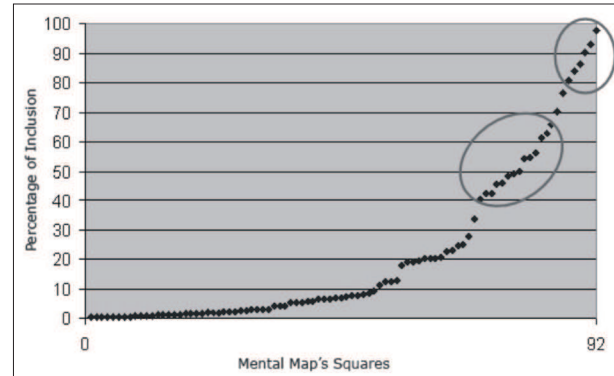


Fig. 4: Clusters of mental map squares by percentage of inclusion. Source: Semian (2010)

Category	
< 2,50	Exclude
2,50 – 5,49	1 st transitional
5,50 – 24,99	Outer
25,00 – 39,99	2 nd transitional
40,00 – 65,99	Middle
66,00 – 79,99	3 rd transitional
80,00 +	Core

Fig. 5: Categories for evaluating mental maps (% of inclusion). Source: Semian (2010)

The middle definition contains areas that were included in mental maps about half of the time. This can be described as a triangular region between the municipalities of Mnichovo Hradiště, Jičín, and Malá Skála. This definition significantly corresponds with the second definition from the discourse analysis of the Bohemian Paradise, which found this definition to be the most frequent. The region thus defined best describes the Bohemian Paradise as a region. According to Semian (2010), it is this area, which the inhabitants most often identify as the Bohemian Paradise. The third and most “loose” definition corresponds approximately to the outer definition from the discourse (Fig. 2). Only in the southern part (around the town of Kopidlno) is this outer definition somewhat narrower.

From comparing the mental maps of the groups of actors (Figs. 7–9) it is clear that officials from the regional authority define the Bohemian Paradise most broadly, as expected. They have a certain distance from the Bohemian Paradise area, and therefore define it based on information they have gained. Therefore, in this case we can talk about two types of the Bohemian Paradise: first, the core delineation including the entire Bohemian Paradise protected landscape area, and the second wider Bohemian Paradise tourism region. These two territorial definitions are based on the most important institutions of the Bohemian Paradise (Semian, 2010).

The mental maps of mayors and elementary school teachers are in relative correspondence, and the categories of the Bohemian Paradise are defined

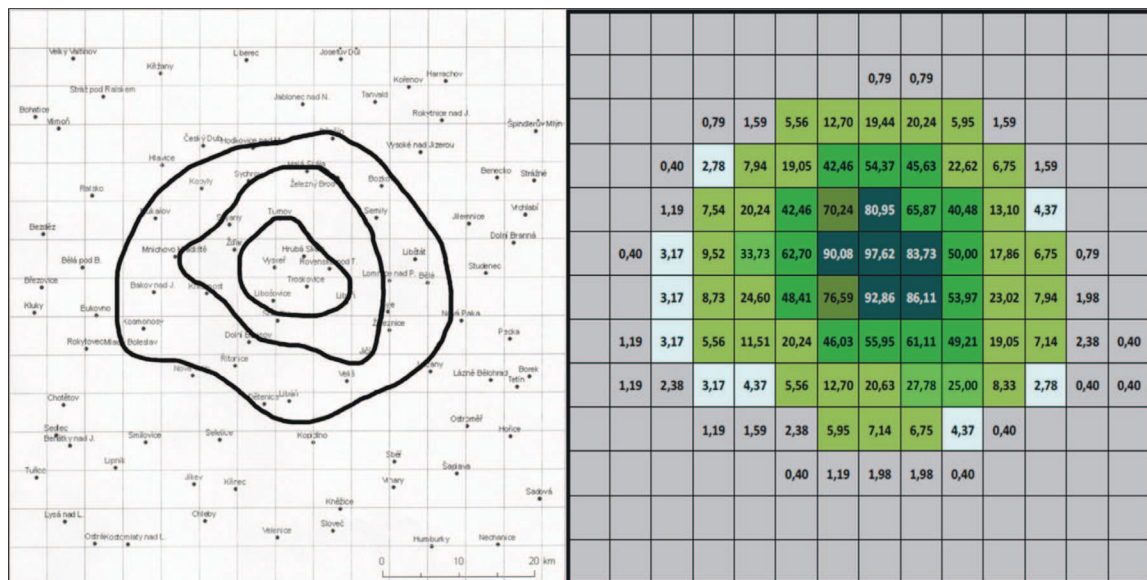


Fig. 6: Mental map of the Bohemian Paradise (N = 126). Source: Semian (2010)

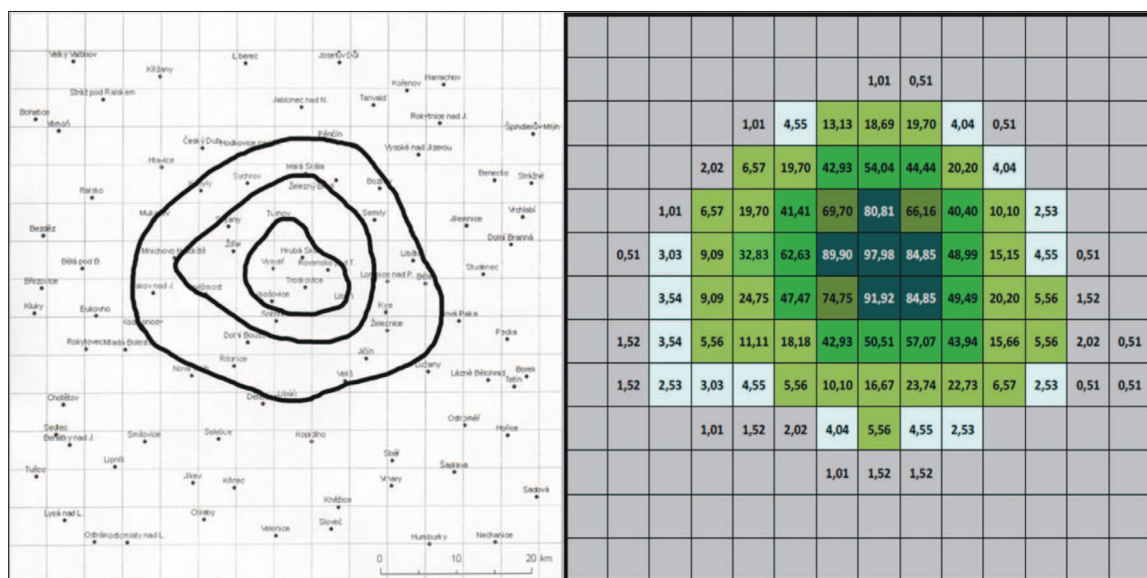


Fig. 7: Mental map of the Bohemian Paradise according to elementary school teachers (N = 99)

(Fig. 2, Fig. 6). The definitions of core, middle and outer zones based on the discourse analysis and on the analysis of mental maps corresponded relatively well. The largest differences are found in the definitions of the core zone. Whereas in the consciousness of the inhabitants this definition approaches the historical core of the region and almost 100% of respondents included it in their mental maps of the Bohemian Paradise, based on the analysis of literature, this definition is broader and includes the entire area of the Bohemian Paradise protected landscape area; it is spatially smaller, but at the same time, it is the most well-known formal region titled Bohemian Paradise. In contrast to mental maps, the most frequent definition of the Bohemian Paradise in the discourse was the middle zone, which includes the protected landscape area and the towns immediately surrounding it.

The middle definition seems to be the view of the Bohemian Paradise that best describes the region, as it is very similar in both the discourse analysis and in the analysis of the consciousness of the inhabitants. In the discourse analysis, this definition was the most frequent; roughly 40% to 66% of respondents included it as part of the Bohemian Paradise in mental maps. This definition includes not only the historical core, but also the entire territory of the Bohemian Paradise protected landscape area. Besides this, the middle definition also includes towns that function as service centres for most of the territory of the middle definition of the Bohemian Paradise (Hampl, 2005).

The assumption that formalized wholes will most often be reflected in the definitions proved to be correct. In particular, the Bohemian Paradise protected landscape area and to a lesser extent the Bohemian Paradise tourist region served as reference categories with which authors of the literature or mental map interviewees compared their view of the Bohemian Paradise. Whereas the boundaries of

the protected landscape area can be characterized in the discourse as the core definition, the boundaries of the tourist region on the other hand make up the broadest definition of the Bohemian Paradise, whose boundaries are reached only really in the discourse and from mental map interviewees.

We were able to confirm the assumption that officials from the regional authorities would define the Bohemian Paradise most broadly. In the mental maps of officials from the regional authorities the boundaries of the two most important institutional units are reflected in particular: the Bohemian Paradise protected landscape area and the Bohemian Paradise tourist region. The mental maps of mayors and elementary school teachers are very similar.

Using the Bohemian Paradise as an example we wanted to show that there is sense in monitoring the territorial regionalization in relation to the regional identity. We are aware of the restrictions of selecting the model territory and the groups of respondents. Despite this it is correct to assume that through the regional identity general loose regional boundaries can be defined in a territory, and that the regional consciousness of inhabitants can be a vehicle for connecting purely functional socio-geographic regionalization with geo-social regionalization. For regions that are not only functional but whose inhabitants feel a great sense of belonging to, we can assume a strong activation of local actors, which has the potential to be a significant tool for the regional development of the territory.

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