

The divided town of Český Těšín/Cieszyn as the most integrated part of the Czech-Polish borderland: A life in the cross-border educational togetherness or side by side?

Hynek BÖHM ^{a,b,*} , Artur BOHÁČ ^b , Edyta NOWAK-ŻÓŁTY ^c , Anna SZAFRAŃSKA ^d

Abstract

The (non)contribution of schools towards cross-border integration in the divided town of Těšín/Cieszyn, located on the Czech-Polish border, is analysed in this article. The pandemic-related border closures revealed a substantial level of togetherness in this town, manifested by various social activities. Moreover, a part of these (during the pandemic restricted) cross-border social practices were those in education. We applied a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to diagnose the directions of cross-border educational flows, the approach of schools towards the identified joint cross-border social practices, and the possible level of togetherness. As a result, one-sidedness (Polish pupils attending schools in the Czech Republic) of cross-border flows was identified – which also follows the direction of a cross-border workforce. Except for the schools with Polish as the instruction language, located in the Czech part of the town, primarily serving Polish speakers living in the Czech Republic, we can mention hardly any mutually shared feeling of togetherness and an actual place-based approach towards educational governance in this divided town. We observe some ties in education between the autochthonous Polish minority in the Czech Republic and the Poles in Poland, without the involvement of pupils or teachers of Czech ethnicity, who do not reflect opportunities behind the border.

Keywords: cross-border integration; schools; Těšín/Cieszyn; barriers; functional integration; Poland; Czech Republic

Article history: Received 23 July 2023, Accepted 1 December 2023, Published 30 December 2023

1. Introduction

Around one-third of the EU citizens live in border areas. Borderlands are affected by plentiful negative phenomena linked to the border's barrier function (Scott, 2019). Cross-border cooperation (CBC) has therefore become a tool that strives to assist in removing those barriers and contributes to the quality of borderlands as living spaces (Dokoupil, 1999; Brunnet-Jailly, 2005; Klatt, 2019). CBC, implemented by public actors at sub-national levels, became one of the critical forms of micro-foreign policy/paradiplomacy (Duchacek, 1988), deliberately differentiated from other forms of cooperation that had been intensified at the nation-state level.

CBC has been the playground of actors representing local and regional administration bodies, which constructed the first CBC entities with various legal and administrative forms. Most of them named themselves "Euroregion", and this term became one of the most frequent keywords in border studies (Dura et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, local and regional actors' "monopolist" position in CBC has been eroded by other actors, who also decided to join their forces across national borders. In the areas of advanced cross-border integration (CBI), a cross-border multidimensional convergence process, mainly in the Upper Rhine Valley (French-German-Swiss border) and the Greater Region (French-German-Belgian-Luxembourg border), the cross-border associations gathering other actors started to appear in the 1970s (Decoville et al., 2013). The introduction of the INTERREG program was a significant incentive to engage in CBC for many non-profit actors, including schools.

In 1989, the wave of democratic revolutions brought along changes in the political organisation of Central and Eastern European states. They declared ambitions to return to Europe, which materialised in their EU accession after 2004. Public actors from this part of Europe, including schools, started to be involved in CBC too, which was eased by an extension of the Schengen zone in December 2007, when the post-communist EU members (except

^a Institute of Political and Administrative Sciences, University of Opole, Opole, Poland (*corresponding author: H. Böhm, e-mail: hynek.bohm@uni.opole.pl)

^b Department of Geography, Faculty of Science, Humanities and Education, Technical University of Liberec, Liberec, Czech Republic

^c WSB University, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Poland

^d Institute of Pedagogy, Silesian University of Katowice, Katowice, Poland

for Romania and Bulgaria) were involved in the Schengen space. Euroregions, EGTCs, divided towns, and other CBC actors started contributing to the higher level of CBI with massive INTERREG funding.

Given the long history of mutual CBC, advanced CBI can be observed in the “EU core”. Durand and Decoville (2020) studied CBI in the EU and observed six principal macroregional patterns. The highest one was found in so-called Rhineland countries, where a high level of cross-border flows in both directions was observed. The CBI in the new “EU” is, according to Durand and Decoville (2020), dependent on the INTERREG program, cross-border flows are not symmetrical, and the feeling of togetherness is weaker.

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, which led to restricted cross-border flows and protests of the inhabitants of border regions against these restrictions, highlighted that CBI seems to be relatively high also in the (generally considered to be the less integrated ones) Central and Eastern European borderlands – the German-Polish (Jańczak, 2020; Opiłowska, 2020) or Czech-Polish border can be mentioned here (Opiola & Böhm, 2021). This relatively new finding asks for further scholarship.

The divided town of Cieszyn/Český Těšín, situated on the east of the mutual Polish-Czech border, is considered to be the most integrated part of the entire border (cf. Pászto et al., 2019; Böhm, 2022). The pandemic-related restrictions revealed that many inhabitants of both parts of the divided town tend to understand it as a single living space, where the daily social practices ignore the border (Kasperek & Olszewski, 2020; Böhm, 2022; Kajta & Opiłowska, 2022). The survey conducted by the Euroregion (Olszewski, 2021) also pointed out that these border closures restricted their (or their children's) access to education on the other side of the border. This fact advised us that a cross-border dimension of education deserves further attention in this divided town.

It was an exciting finding, given that CBI in education in the EU is far behind the level of integration in other areas of human activities. The European Commission (2021) reflects on progress made in the last few years and assesses the challenges in these border regions. Numerous examples of good practice are recounted, presenting specific cases and evidence of tangible achievements across various policy areas. The report however ultimately finds that increased CBC is necessary to make these regions more resilient and help them harness their potential. The report explicitly states (p. 9):

“The present promoting training and job-seeking across the border is rarely done systematically, which makes it hard to maximise the potential of demand and supply available across the broader cross-border region.”

Hence, the aims of this paper, focusing on the divided Český Těšín/Cieszyn, are fourfold:

1. To analyse whether there are significant cross-border flows of pupils in the divided town, and (if yes) what is their direction;
2. If there are these cross-border flows, we will try to identify the reaction of local schools and other relevant actors in the field of education: how are these cross-border flows reflected, whether and how the schools prepare their pupils for future (professional) life on both sides of the border in the divided town;
3. We want to explore to what extent the schools and other education actors cooperate; and
4. Lastly, we plan to identify whether there are cross-border social practices among upper secondary school students from both parts of the divided town.

We hypothesise that there is a limited volume of cross-border flows of pupils in the studied divided town. Hypotheses are based on the literature and our long-term experience from Těšín/Cieszyn

Silesia. We expect that some pupils from the Polish part of the divided town attend the schools for the Polish minority in the Czech part (Gajdzica & Kubiczek, 2012; Böhm, 2017). Furthermore, given the high number of Poles working in the Czech part of the region (Kasperek & Olszewski, 2020), we expect that a certain level of cross-borderness could be partly observed in vocational schools on the Polish side of the border. Given the presence of schools with Polish as an instruction language in the Czech part of the studied territory, serving the Polish-speaking minority living there, we expect that these schools will be the drivers of CBC in the field of education.

The article is organised as follows: the next section provides an overview of the leading research directions in border studies, with attention dedicated to divided cities' scholarship and scholarship on CBI in education. The third section outlines the methodology and the primary materials analysed in the article. The fourth section presents and discusses the research findings, based on the work with the statistics, analysis of implemented CBC projects in the field of education in the 2014–2020 programming period, conducted survey, mental mapping and focus group meeting. The final section draws conclusions, highlights the principal elements of CBI in education in the studied territory, and identifies further possible research directions.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Research directions in border studies

Freedom of movement of EU citizens across borders in Europe is a cornerstone of the EU and has become an object of continuous scholarly attention. Free border crossing and the developed CBC became one of the principal EU narratives (Scott, 2016). Multi-level governance, EU regional cohesion policies, the Europe of Regions discourse, and an increase in paradiplomatic activities of sub-national state authorities supported a consensus on rescaling Europe with an increasing influence of regional and local actors from a cross-border perspective (Hooghe & Marks, 1993; Keating, 1998; Scott, 1999; Warleigh-Lack et al., 2011; Klatt, 2019). The CBC belongs, next to the Erasmus, to the most tangible successes of the European integration process, which is based on mutual interdependence (Scott, 2016).

In the last 20 years, the number of CBC structures has exploded in Europe (Zumbusch & Scherer, 2019). Researching CBC presents a cornerstone of border studies as a specific sub-discipline, which is based on studying the interplay of:

1. Market forces and trade flows;
2. Policy activities of multiple levels of governments on adjacent borders;
3. The particular political clout of borderland communities; and
4. Their specific culture (Brunnet-Jailly, 2005).

Böhm (2023) argues that CBC has five principal roles:

1. Multi-level governance role;
2. Regional development tool;
3. Paradiplomacy;
4. Reconciliation; and
5. Europe-building role.

While (at least in the EU) research on debordering has dominated border studies in the EU until recently, the rebordering tendencies have been researched there for at least two decades, too.

Manifold barriers have complicated CBI, however. They range from legal and administrative barriers to cultural and mental ones (Klatt, 2019). A combination of those factors has contributed to the long-lasting tendency to overlook the possibilities which might be offered in neighbouring regions behind the national borders

(van Houtum, 1999; Van Houtum & Van der Velde, 2004; Van der Velde & Naerssen, 2011). In the post-communist EU, it is believed that the level of CBI and cross/border trust is generally weaker than in the “old EU” (Durand & Decoville, 2020).

Moreover, border crossing and CBC significantly differ in various parts of Europe. So far, only (!) Eurobarometer poll (2015) explicitly addressing border regions revealed very different levels of cross-border practices and mutual social trust among border region residents in the EU, which is much higher in the EU core than between new member states, except the Czech-Slovak border (Eurobarometer, 2015). A difference between CBI in various parts of European patterns was primarily caused by a longer tradition of CBC in the “EU core”. With a certain level of simplification, we can still observe differences in the cross-border social practices in the “old-old EU, old-new EU, and new-new EU” borderlands.

The Czech-Polish border is almost 800 kilometers long, and CBC there has become an object of scholarship. Lewkowicz (2019) sees the Polish-Czech border as one of the better-integrated ones, using the comparative perspective of all Polish borders. Dozblasz (2015), Böhm and Šmída (2019) and Vaishar et al. (2013) underlined the importance of cross-border tourism for joint CBC initiatives. The social and cultural dimensions of the Polish-Czech borderland were studied in the work of Śliz and Szczepański (2016), Dębicki (2010), Dozblasz (2013; 2016), Czepil and Opiola (2013).

Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia, with its Polish minority living on the Czech side, is, according to many scholars, the most integrated part of the borderland with a high volume of multiple cross-border flows (Pászto et al., 2019; Opiola & Böhm, 2022), where the CBC contributed to the mutual post-conflict reconciliation (Böhm, 2023). Wróblewski and Kasperek (2019) analysed cross-border cultural cooperation, and also observed its highest intensity in Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia.

Divided towns have become one of the symbols of European integration, as the borders have gradually been losing their separation function, and these “bridge towns” started to head toward gradually higher togetherness (Joenniemi & Sergunin, 2011). They became a model of post-conflict reconciliation in many European border regions (*cf.* Böhm, 2023).

There is no single agreement on the level of CBI in divided towns. Dębicki and Tamáska (2014) claimed that interactions are mainly reduced to nonpersonal actions. They argue that divided twin towns are far from integrated and “reunited” urban structures. On the other hand, Joenniemi and Sergunin (2011, p. 128) have argued that:

“...the twin city concept has enabled several cities to use their location to opt for new forms of being and acting. The providing of a new and broader twist to the concept of the twin city and reproducing it in a trans-border context constitutes one specific aspect of an increasingly integrated political landscape.”

Kaisto (2017, p. 464) argues that

“individuals are likely to identify with the twin city if their spatial perceptions of and lived experiences in the twin city correspond with the associations they have of the concept.”

She recommends paying more attention to how local citizens understand twin cities as concepts and spaces for everyday life.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the comeback of physical borders in the Schengen space. The border scholars focused on the effect of this “covidfencing” (Medeiros et al., 2021) in various parts of Europe. They agreed that the pandemic challenged the fundamental freedoms of the EU in a very complex way (Hennig, 2020; Jańczak, 2020; Unfried, 2020; Medeiros et al., 2021). The pandemic showed how resilient and meaningful national borders remain (Castan Pinos & Radil, 2020).

The reintroduction of physical borders has also demonstrated the high level of CBI in certain border regions, however, especially in divided towns (Jańczak, 2020; Opiłowska, 2021; Böhm, 2022, 2023; Opiola & Böhm, 2022; Kajta et al., 2023). Hennig (2020) highlighted the significance of civil society actors in times of crisis, who could lobby for a less restrictive border management response and help to hold bilateral relations together. Böhm (2023) even advised understanding covidfencing as a possible new “fuel” for CBC actors.

2.2 Cross-border integration in the field of education

Whereas the (general) CBI has become a repeated object of scientific attention, as shortly sketched in the upper paragraphs, the research of CBC in the field of education in the EU has been much more modest. We identified several articles analysing the contribution of schools toward CBI, however. Still, their results were very similar: the existing school curricula primarily cover historical and cultural issues that enforce the “national” interpretation of history and a homogenous national culture (Pasięka, 2015). McCall (2012) underlines the roles of schools in post-conflict reconciliation, using the example of Irish “post-troubles” reconciliation.

Universities and tertiary education providers are the most active ones in implementing CBC in the field of education, both in the EU – where even the cross-border association of universities – the University of the Greater Region and the Association of the Upper Rhine Valley Universities (Böhm et al., 2021), as well as outside of it (e.g. Ermakova and Nikulina, 2019). The symbolic importance of French-German cooperation overshadows other bilateral borders in Europe. This symbolical importance is underlined by the existence of the French-German University, a financial tool supporting the collaboration of tertiary education providers in both countries.

The lack of research on CBC of elementary schools, however, does not mean the absence of such cooperation. There are even more or less formalised cross-border associations of schools: Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS) gathering 34 colleges of education, university education departments, teaching councils, curriculum councils, education trade unions and education centres on the island of Ireland with a responsibility for and interest in teacher education; the Swiss-French-German association TRISCHOLA attempted to promote bilingualism in the Upper Rhine Valley; the trilateral Schkola Association operates in the German-Czech-Polish Euroregion Neisse-Nisa-Nysa, intending to develop togetherness further (SCHKOLA, 2023) in this tripartite region.

We identified certain pieces of research which at least partially touched on the issue of CBC in the field of education in the Czech-Polish borderland. In works focused on the more “western” part of the Czech-Polish borderline, the lower level of cross-border trust results also in inadequate mental preparedness of students to study in the country of the neighbour, as evidenced by a survey with the target group of high school students (Böhm et al., 2019). Böhm (2017) analysed the use of microprojects in the field of education in all Czech-Polish Euroregions. Despite the high level of CBI in the Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion, the number of educational projects was low. The CBC of schools is surprisingly more intense in different border transects, mainly in the Euroregions Silesia and Neisse-Nisa-Nysa. Szafrńska (2017) indicated that the prevailing pattern of most of the teachers from the Euroregion Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia, named after the divided Cieszyn/Český Těšín, is non-cooperation across the border. We also found other works focusing on stereotypes and prejudices *vis-à-vis* neighbour in the schools (Ogrodzka-Mazur, 2004), the perception of Czechs by Polish teachers in the divided town (Szafrńska, 2018), or roles of the Polish minority living in the Czech Republic, involving schools with Polish as an instruction language (Gajdzica & Kubiczek, 2012; Böhm, 2017).

Research on textbooks, especially potentially conflicting interpretations of often disputed joint history, could also shed light on the studied matter. When the mutual pictures of neighbours in Polish and Czech textbooks were analysed, however, in the eponymous book in major detail (cf. Gracová et al., 2014), no room was dedicated to the possible contributions of schools towards the creation a joint “living and working space”, except for accent on intercultural understanding.

Since there was a lack of scientific focus on the roles of schools in preparing students for cross-border opportunities in the labour market, we were advised to explore the connections between educational governance and local territorial strategies. One perspective emphasises coordinating educational institutions within a specific area, forming what is known as local educational landscapes. The other viewpoint, rooted in a place-based approach, regards educational institutions as integral to a location's identity and cultural heritage. Researchers studying territorial education governance tend to adopt this place-based approach, giving significant consideration to the interactions between educational institutions, actors, and the unique territory in which they are situated (Jahnke, 2019). Despite this place-based approach being primarily tested to explore the ideal governance of schooling in rural areas, it could be applied when looking at the eventual educational administration of cross-border regions.

3. Methodology

3.1 Regional context – divided town of Český Těšín/Cieszyn

The studied towns Cieszyn and Český Těšín were created in 1920 after an armed conflict between newly forming Czechoslovakia and Poland over the Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia with significant Polish presence and the Spa Conference of ambassadors of world powers. The originally integral city Těšín/Cieszyn/Teschen split into two parts, and the Olza River became a national border. Then, the town experienced several rebordering and debordering periods in the last 100 years of turbulent history (Boháč, 2017). One hundred years later, approximately one-fifth of the entire population living in the Czech part of the territory still uses Polish as its mother tongue, and 3,297 of the total 23,436 Český Těšín inhabitants declare Polish ethnicity (CZSO, 2023). Poles in Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia have run their schools with Polish as the instruction language under the auspices of Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic since 1920. No Czech minority is present among 34,297 inhabitants of Cieszyn, according to official statistics (Statistics Poland, 2023). Figure 1 depicts the current map of Cieszyn and Český Těšín and the surrounding region.

Cross-border contacts were maintained in the region after its division. After the wave of democratic revolutions, the two towns started to cooperate more closely. In 1993, regional cooperation between both Cieszyn and Český Těšín was formalised through their mutual agreement. Their successful collaboration contributed to establishing the Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion in 1998. Cooperation in the divided town is vital for the operations of the Euroregion (Böhm, 2021).

After the EU enlargement, the EU funds provided a financial incentive for joint development. In 2007, the Schengen area enlargement helped to strengthen cross-border ties in the divided town further. Cross-border commuting started to occur more frequently because the Poles began to take advantage of the higher earnings and available job vacancies on the Czech side of the border (Opiola & Böhm, 2022). The everyday cross-borderness was significantly damaged when free border crossing was restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, the massive protests against the border closures showed that the locals considered crossing the border and having activities on both sides normal and desirable. The research revealed that the actual level of CBI, mainly in the cross-

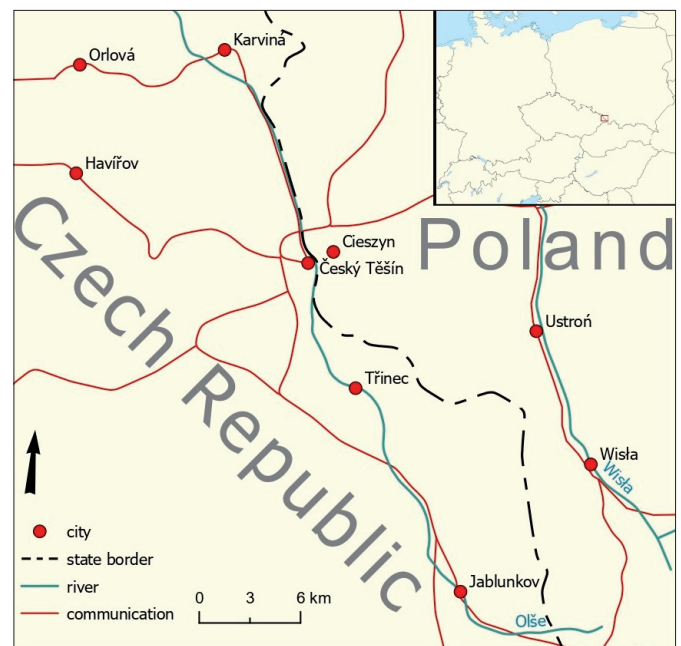


Fig. 1: Location of Český Těšín/Cieszyn at the Czech-Polish border
Source: authors' elaboration

border labour market, is higher than it was generally considered (Böhm, 2021; Kajta & Opiłowska, 2021; Olszewski, 2021). The papers mentioned above also pointed at a different form of observed cross-border flows/practices: generally speaking, Czechs come to Poland to benefit from the lower prices of goods and services, whereas the Poles cross the border for work and study purposes.

3.2 Methods and data

The research was based on a methodological mix. After the literature review phase, we tried to identify the number of elementary school pupils from one side of the border attending the school on the other side. By doing that, we identified a significant lack of reliable and mainly comparable cross-border statistical data because the Polish authorities responsible for the administration of the school network do not distinguish the nationality of their pupils, while the Czech do. This difference made the acquisition of relevant data rather lengthy (we had to telephone all schools to identify the numbers of Czech/Polish pupils on the other side of the border).

The INTERREG program has helped to initiate thousands of cross-border partnerships. Durand and Decoville (2020) state that its use is a dominant feature for CBC in the “new” Europe. Hence, we analysed the use of the INTERREG program for the partnership of schools and educational institutions in the studied divided town. Special attention was dedicated to using the Small Project Funds, an instrument designed specifically to support “soft” non-investment people-to-people projects.

Initially, we planned to analyse the curricular documents' content (cf. Neuendorf, 2017) of all elementary schools in the divided town, focusing on cross-borderness and perception of the neighbouring country. It turned out, however, that both education systems differ, as every single Czech school must have its curricular document (*Školní vzdělávací program, ŠVP*) following the content of the national curricular document (*Rámcový vzdělávací program, RVP*), whereas the Polish national curriculum (*Podstawa programowa*) has to be followed by each school in Poland directly – without a need to elaborate its school curriculum, as is the case in the Czech Republic. Hence, we decided to analyse the curricula of schools on the Czech side of the divided town, and the analogical findings regarding schools on the Polish side were obtained in a phase during the focus group meeting.

In the later phase, we designed a questionnaire for the teachers of elementary and high schools from both sides of the divided town (and their immediately neighbouring municipalities). We decided to use the computer-assisted web interview (CAWI), which is part of a methodology based on a questionnaire provided to respondents with a link. Despite initial problems, we gathered 99 responses from the Polish and 55 from the Czech side of the border, which is ca 25% of elementary and high school teachers from both parts of the divided town. We consider this sample to be sufficient for the needs of our research. We believe that the opinions of “non-answering” 75% would not differ substantially.

We also tried to capture whether students of high schools from both parts of the divided town have at least a portion of their social practices on the other side of the border. We did this by means of simplified mental maps (Gould & White, 1968): we prepared a simplified bilingual (Czech and Polish) version of a map of the neighbourhood of the divided town with a set of questions which tried to address various social practices of high school students. We attempted to work with a comparable sample of students. Hence, we attended three comparable schools: one in the Polish part of the divided town (26 students) and two schools in the Czech part: one for the Polish minority in its Czech part, where Polish is the instruction language (24 students), and one with the Czech language of instruction (17 students). In all these schools, we worked with comparable sizes of students. High school students were chosen for this task instead of lower-level pupils because they behave more independently and have more exact ideas about their future.

To obtain as complex picture as possible, we organised a focus group meeting (composed of teachers from elementary and high schools from both sides of the divided town) to verify and complement the validity of the data obtained in the previous research steps. The focus group meeting was attended by 22 teachers and lasted one and a half days.

We organised our work in two phases: during 2022, after the literature review, we worked with the statistics and analysed cross-border projects. We also organised our quantitative survey. In February 2023, we organised a focus group, which led us to the decision to look for further border-crossing patterns, which was done in May and June 2023 in three high schools of the divided town.

4. Results

According to the official statistics (CZSO, 2023; Statistics Poland, 2023), there are six elementary schools in Český Těšín (two of them with the Polish language of instruction in the Czech part) and 10 in Cieszyn. The cross-border flows of pupils are clearly demonstrated in Table 1. It depicts the flow of children between both parts of the divided town. It informs us of several phenomena: there is a clear one-sided residential/study flow in the studied divided town, as the Poles send their children to the schools on the other side of the border – at least 44 children living on the Polish part of the town attend the elementary school in Český Těšín – whereas only one child from the Czech side of the border attends elementary school in (Polish) Cieszyn. During the focus group, participants explained the motivation of such parents:

"In the Czech part of the town in the school with Polish as an instruction language, Polish children benefit from the better quality of education, from the smaller study groups and, moreover,

they learn the Czech language as a bonus, which can help them with later employment in the Czech Republic significantly."

The focus group participants also pointed out that Polish parents generally appreciate the “community approach” in the schools with Polish as an instruction language in the Czech part of the town. This “community approach” is given by the fact that these minority schools are relatively coherent. Moreover, they offer a wide range of extracurricular activities, which last until 5 PM. Moreover, the Polish parents also appreciate the absence of religion in schools in the Czech part of the border.

In the 2020–2021 school year, there were 1,534 pupils according to the last accurate statistics (Statistics Poland, 2023). Given that there were some 1,600 pupils aged 7–15 living in Cieszyn, 44 of them attending the school on the other side of the border still constitute merely 2.75% of the total number. In addition to the pupils, there are also one-way cross-border flows of teachers from the Polish part of the town in the schools with Polish as the instruction language in the Czech part of the town (up to 10 in total, which is ca 4% of all teachers teaching in schools in Český Těšín). These flows are caused primarily by higher salaries in the Czech Republic, but teachers also appreciate better school equipment and organisation of study there.

Additionally, Table 1 demonstrates that some Polish families permanently live on the Czech side of the border. According to the opinions of participants of the focus group, this phenomenon is caused by the better “value for money” of apartments in the Czech part of the divided town.

As mentioned earlier, the introduction of the INTERREG program caused a significant increase in cross-border entities, initiatives and projects. Durand and Decoville (2020) stressed that this CBC incentive is significant in post-communist Europe. Hence, we attempted to analyse whether (and if yes, how big part) INTERREG-funded projects implemented in the studied territory support the CBC in the field of education. We analysed the INTERREG-funded projects in the 2014–2020 programming period, funded in the framework of the Microprojects Scheme in the Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion. The Czech-Polish INTERREG program, as is the case for many other INTERREG programs, supports two types of projects:

1. the “major projects” (generally over 40,000 EUR), distributed by the Joint Technical Secretariat in Olomouc; and
2. microprojects (generally up to 40,000 EUR, in the cases of the small infrastructure projects up to 60,000 EUR), distributed by six Euroregions operating in the Czech-Polish borderland – the Euroregion Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia is one of them.

A closer look at the implemented projects showed that education and cooperation of schools are underrepresented topics. In the 2014–2020 period, 226 microprojects were implemented in the Euroregion Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia: 74 of them in the priority axis “Developing the potential of natural and cultural resources”, 145 in the priority axis “Cooperation of institutions and communities” and only 7 (!) in the priority axis “Education and qualifications”. As the priority axis “Cooperation of institutions and communities” also offers a space for cooperation and networking of schools/education institutions, we analysed the list of 145 projects implemented under this priority more closely. It turned out that only 5 out of those projects targetted cooperation

Number of children living in Český Těšín which attend elementary schools in Cieszyn			Number of children living in Cieszyn which attend elementary schools in the Czech Republic
Total	of Polish citizenship	of Czech citizenship	Total
6	5	1	44

Tab. 1: Overview of the number of pupils crossing the border

Source: authors' elaboration based on the data provided by the cities of Český Těšín and Cieszyn

in the field of education. At least one of the project partners was from the other side of the divided town (and immediately adjacent Czech town Třinec).

The above-mentioned overview showed that the most active actors involved in implementing CBC in education are universities (there are two tertiary education providers in the Polish part of the divided town), NGOs, and the Pedagogical Center for Polish Minority Education in the Czech Republic, based in the Czech part of the divided town. The direct involvement of elementary schools (which are represented by municipalities and districts in Poland, as they cannot submit projects on their own, contrary to the Czech Republic) in these projects is minor – only two elementary schools from the Czech part of the divided town, which to an entire or substantial extent teach the Polish minority students living in the Czech Republic, have been involved in more than one project.

The analysis of school curricula on the Czech side of the divided town revealed a striking ignorance of the existence of its Polish side (no mention of the existence of the Polish part of Cieszyn in all researched schools with Czech as the instruction language). The only unsurprising exceptions were schools with Polish as the instruction language with pupils from the Polish part of the divided town, as shown in Table 1. When trying to obtain analogical information about the schools in Cieszyn, we must have relied on testimonies obtained during the focus group. Its Polish participants from vocational schools claimed that they repeatedly work with future employers from the Czech side of the divided town, mainly through visits of representatives of these Czech employers to their schools. Moreover, one of the vocational schools in the Polish part of the divided town concluded an agreement envisaging regular cross-border internships for their apprentices in one of the companies in the Czech Republic, Třinec Iron and Steel Works (Třinecké železářny).

During the focus group, it turned out that there is no institutionalised cooperation in education between both parts of the divided town – which has annually organised many joint sessions of municipal councils, which also implemented joint investment projects and developed many elements of common cross-border leisure-time infrastructure.

“Many years ago, there were two meetings of directors of all schools from both parts of the town, which were aimed at beginning the cooperation... As they were organised formally, it resulted in a purely formalistic exchange, which phased out shortly.”

In the Google-based survey, the teachers were asked whether living in borderlands impacts the formation of attitudes and behaviours of young people. Whereas more than 65% of Polish teachers admitted that this (borderlands) location substantially (and 33% of all respondents claim that it matters to some extent), the teachers from the Czech side answered slightly differently: 40% of them consider living in the borderlands being a critical aspect forming attitudes and behaviours of young people, the majority of respondents, over 58% believe that this impact is limited.

Another explored area focused on the possibility of working and earning on the other side of the border and offered remarkably different answers from both sides. More than half (56%) of Polish teachers say Polish youth often consider working in the Czech Republic. The Polish labour market does not seem attractive to Czech youth, as more than 70% of Czech teachers said that their students rarely choose the opportunity to work in Poland. Hence, we decided to explore this area by looking for important indications of the possible choice of work by young people on both sides of the border.

The results in Table 2 indicate fundamental differences in the perception of several indications regarding the decision to work on the other side of the border. Respondents say higher earnings in the Czech Republic and better social care are important for Polish youth. The physical proximity and accessibility of well-paid jobs are essential pull factors.

The answers of Czech teachers indicate the one-way cross-border flows in the studied region – from Poland to the Czech Republic. The only two answers admitted a possibility of working on the other side of the border: the proximity of the workplace and knowledge of the neighbour's language – given the presence of a Polish minority living in the Czech Republic.

In the final phase of our research, we distributed mental maps to three comprehensive upper secondary schools in a divided town (gymnázium/liceum) – we worked with the same comparable

Motivating factor	Polish teachers	Czech teachers
	(%)	(%)
Higher earnings	92.9	10.9
Better social protection	62.2	0.0
A calmer pace of work and life	42.2	1.8
Desire to get to know other cultures	8.2	27.3
Proximity and accessibility of workplaces	69.4	43.6
Knowledge of the language due to growing up in the border area	18.8	40.0

Tab. 2: Factors determining the decision to take up work in the neighbouring country as reported by elementary and high school teachers. Notes: Multiple choice question. Polish teachers (N = 98), Czech teachers (N = 55)

Source: authors' survey

Type of social practice (place, where a person...)	Share (%) of all respondents who spend at least a part of their social practice in a neighbouring country (CZ or PL only)		
	Cieszyn	Český Těšín (Polish minority)	Český Těšín
Does shopping	0	42	12
Spends a free-time	0	25	0
Feels well	11.1	28	0
Has friends	5.36	25	0
Makes trips	6	50	12
Wants to have a future work	0 (desire to work abroad indicated, without closer specification)	19 (all in Kraków)	0
Wants to have tertiary studies	0	48 (only 10% of respondents have PL as the only opportunity)	0

Tab. 3: Cross-border social practices of high school students from the analysed divided town

Source: authors' survey

type of schools, which prepare their students for future tertiary education. Two of these schools cater to the majority population, while the third focuses on instructing the Polish minority residing in the Czech part of the region. The sample of students included in the study was comparable in terms of size (ranging from 17 to 24 students), age (between 15 and 18), and type of schools, as all three institutions prepare students for tertiary education. Table 3 in our research findings provides information about the extent of the students' cross-border social practices within the neighboring country covered by this study.

The mapping results unequivocally demonstrate that Polish minority upper secondary school students from the Czech part of the divided town engage in a significant portion of their social practices on both sides of the border. In contrast, Czech students attending secondary schools with Czech language instruction limit their cross-border social practices, as expected, to shopping and trips. We initially anticipated that Polish students, particularly those from the Polish Cieszyn area, where many residents work in the Czech Republic, would express willingness to work there. Despite several Polish students expressing plans to seek employment abroad, however, none of them specifically mentioned the Czech Republic as a potential working destination.

7. Discussion and conclusions

(Difficultly compiled) statistics confirmed our hypothesis that cross-border flows of elementary school pupils exist but are asymmetric. The total number of commuting pupils corresponds to the size of two school classes. The flow from Cieszyn to Český Těšín is dominant. In contrast, the opposite flow involves only a few individuals and only one pupil of Czech citizenship who is from a mixed marriage. It should be noted that commuting pupils from the Polish part of the divided town attend schools with the Polish language of instruction in the Czech territory. This cross-border school attendance is the case of approximately 3% of all pupils aged 6/7–15 living in the Polish part of the divided town. Although this cross-border (elementary) schooling is not the mainstream pattern in education in the divided town, it cannot be entirely ignored. The parents of involved children are motivated by the perceived better quality of the schools on the other side of the border, smaller numbers of pupils in class, and the chance to master the Czech language too. Interestingly, there are also cross-border flows of Polish teachers employed in (Polish-speaking) schools in the Czech part of the divided town.

This one-sidedness (Poles attending or working in schools in the Czech Republic) of cross-border flows is also reflected in schools' approaches from both parts of the divided town towards their neighbours. Generally speaking, (Czech language) schools and teachers from the Czech part of the border do not reflect their school's unique location in the divided town and still perceive the border as a barrier. It is not the case for the schools with Polish as the instruction language, located in the Czech part of the town, as these schools were established to serve Polish speakers living in the Czech Republic (not only Český Těšín but also surrounding settlements) who self-identify as Poles with Czech passports. Moreover, these schools have pupils from Poland. Despite their curricula reflecting their "Polishness" and the region's cross-border nature, we failed to identify formally anchored measures preparing the pupils of those schools to exploit the labour market in the Polish part of the town. Schools with Polish as the instruction language in the Czech Republic cannot be considered drivers of CBC in education in the region (see next paragraph), which contradicts the second hypothesis. Given the higher salary level in the Czech Republic, it can be stated that the teachers of Polish schools showed more willingness to prepare their pupils for eventual later employment in the Czech Republic. Cooperation attempts are visible between vocational schools from Cieszyn and

Czech industrial companies. These activities are related to the greater willingness of Poles to work in blue-collar positions in the Czech Republic, which are not so popular among Czechs.

We can hardly mention any highly developed feelings of togetherness. In general (maybe for the time being only), schools are significantly less active in CBC in the Euroregion Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia than they should/could be due to the advanced CBI of the entire region. If they already started cross-border projects, they engage in "light" meeting projects. The schools have not yet entered deeper cooperation regarding adapting educational curricula/subjects, although they are located in a relatively well-integrated cross-border region with significant cross-border interactions – including those in the labour market. We also failed to identify any systemic study offer of the language of the neighbour – with the exception of schools with Polish as the instruction language in the Czech Republic.

Despite the town's image of an almost united Czech-Polish territory and the successful laboratory of European integration in Central-Eastern Europe, students and teachers rarely interact with each other. How is this discrepancy possible, given that the studied territory is perceived to be so strongly intertwined and yet we find the opposite in the reality of education? The reasons are manifold, yet the main ones can be seen in the already mentioned one-sidedness of cross-border flows. The current "pragmatic" educational flows reflect the still-existing economic disproportion between Poland and the Czech Republic and the presence of the autochthonous Polish minority on the Czech territory. Such a situation prevents deeper mutual integration (cf. Durand & Decoville, 2020). Another partial reason can be seen in the slight language barrier (especially among ethnic Czechs who fail to understand Polish and even local Silesian dialect), persisting national stereotypes (Hřebíčková & Graf, 2014) exacerbated by the Czech-Polish war Seven-Day War in 1919 (Boháč, 2017), and insufficient public transport cross-border connection between Český Těšín and Cieszyn.

Moreover, it seems that not only schools but also their founders (both municipalities run elementary schools; secondary schools are managed by (the Polish) Cieszyn district and the (Czech) Moravian-Silesian Region) ignore specificities of the divided town and prefer national matters to "place-based expected" cross-border ties in the governance of education – with one exception, the legally-binding existence of Polish minority education in the Czech Republic.

The Polish minority living in the Czech part of the divided town acts as a cooperation bridge (Klatt, 2018). Also, the mental mapping results left no doubt that upper secondary school students belonging to the Polish minority in the Czech part of the divided town actively participate in a considerable amount in their social activities on both sides of the border, confirming that minorities have the "bridge" function (Klatt, 2018).

The Pedagogical Centre for Polish Minority Education in the Czech Republic is the public institution, promoting the mutual CBC in the field of education in the divided town, by the means of organising joint training activities and projects. Except for the Centre, we failed to identify any other (public) institution actively contributing to the CBC of schools. Without the Centre – which was established by the Czech Ministry of Education, with the aim of meeting the needs of schools with Polish language instruction in the Czech Republic, as well as fostering the further development of educational professionals in these institutions – thus not for CBC primarily – the level of CBC would probably be much lower. Despite the Euroregion trying to promote it actively, education is just one of the many fields it covers – and according to the number of projects focusing on the CBC in the education field, a marginal one. Both municipal administrations seem to be relatively inefficient/passive in promoting CBC in the education field.

This text showed that CBC of schools could be a topic that deserves more attention than it has received. Existing cross-border linkages play a vital role in enhancing local resilience of cross-border links, whether it is the movement of labour across borders, which contributes to regional stability and resilience development (Koch, 2021; Laine, 2021), or the expansion of one's "cognitive space" by engaging with the other side to understand the essence of being "local" (Svensson & Balogh, 2021). To this end, further research involving stakeholders responsible for cross-border school cooperation and cross-border education governance is needed.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the National Science Centre, Poland, as part of the project 'Analysis of the Cross-border Cooperation in V4 Countries', grant No. 2020/37/B/HS5/02445. We wish to thank our reviewers for their valuable insights.

References:

- Boháč, A. (2017). Těšín optikou geografického výzkumu rozdělených měst. *ACC Journal*, 23(3), 167–180.
- Böhm, H. (2017). Polish minority in the Czech part of Těšín Silesia in 2017: can accent on schools prevent the entire assimilation? *Masarykova univerzita*.
- Böhm, H., Opiola, W., & Drosik, A. (2019). Cross-border Social Capital. An Analysis of Selected Elements as Exemplified by the Praděd Euroregion. In J. Jańczak (Ed.), *Old Borders – New Challenges, New Borders – Old Challenges. De-Bordering and Re-Bordering in Contemporary Europe*. Thematicon, Bd. 34 (pp. 99–113). Logos Verlag.
- Böhm, H., & Šmída, J. (2019). Borders on the Old Maps of Jizera Mountains. *Miscellanea Geographica – Regional Studies on Development*, 23(4), 199–209. <https://doi.org/10.2478/mgrsd-2019-0021>
- Böhm, H., Drápela, E., & Potyatynik, B. (2021). Cross-border integration of universities as a possible research topic in border studies. *Border and Regional Studies*, 9(4), 253–267. <https://doi.org/10.25167/brs4598>
- Böhm, H. (2021). The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Czech-Polish cross-border cooperation: from debordering to rebordering? *Moravian Geographical Reports*, 29(2), 137–148. <https://doi.org/10.2478/mgr-2021-0007>
- Böhm, H. (2022). Challenges of Pandemic-related Border Closures for Everyday Lives of Poles and Czechs in the Divided Town of Cieszyn/Český Těšín: Integrated Functional Space or Re-emergence of Animosities? *Nationalities Papers*, 50(1), 130–144. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2021.51>
- Böhm, H. (2023). Five roles of cross-border cooperation against rebordering. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 38(3), 487–506. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2021.1948900>
- Brunet-Jailly, E. (2005). Theorizing borders: An interdisciplinary perspective. *Geopolitics*, 10(4), 633–649. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040500318449>
- Castan Pinos, J., & Radil, S. M. (2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has shattered the myth of a borderless Europe. *LSE European Politics and Policy Blog* [online]. https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/105426/1/europpblog_2020_06_12_the_covid_19_pandemic_has_shattered_the_myth_of.pdf
- Czepil, B., & Opiola, W. (2013). O znaczeniu kategorii pogranicza w polskiej politologii. *Pogranicze. Polish Borderlands Studies*, 1(1), 58–63.
- CZSO (Czech Statistical Office) (2023). Public database [online]. <https://vdb.czso.cz/vdbvo2/faces/cs/index.jsf?page=home>
- Debicki, M., & Tamáska, M. (2014). Divided twin towns in the Visegrad countries and Germany. *Socio.hu Társadalomtudományi Szemle*, 4(S12), 1–20.
- Dębicki, M. (2010). Stereotypy Czechów wobec Polaków na pograniczu – regionalne zróżnicowanie oraz determinanty stanu rzeczy. *Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego*.
- Decoville, A., Durand, F., Sohn, C., & Wather, O. (2013). Comparing cross-border metropolitan integration in Europe: towards a functional typology. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 28(2), 221–237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2013.854654>
- Dolzbłasz, S. (2013). Cross-border cooperation in the Euroregions at the Polish-Czech and Polish-Slovak borders. *European Countryside*, 5(2), 102–114. <https://doi.org/10.2478/euco-2013-0007>
- Dolzbłasz, S. (2015). Symmetry or asymmetry? Crossborder openness of service providers in Polish-Czech and Polish-German border towns. *Moravian Geographical Reports*, 23(1), 2–12. <https://doi.org/10.1515/mgr-2015-0001>
- Dolzbłasz, S. (2016). Sieć współpracy transgranicznej na pograniczu polsko-czeskim. *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne*, 66(4), 62–78.
- Duchacek, I. D. (1988). Multicommunal and Bicomunal Politics and their International Relations. In I. D. Duchacek, D. Latouche, & G. Stevenson (Eds.), *Perforated Sovereignties and International Relations: Trans-Sovereign Contacts of Subnational Governments* (pp. 12–13). Greenwood Press.
- Dura, A., Camonita, F., Berzi, M., & Noferini, A. (2020). Euroregions, Excellence and Innovation across EU Borders. *A Catalogue of Good Practices*.
- Durand, F., & Decoville, A. (2020). A multidimensional measurement of the integration between European border regions. *Journal of European Integration*, 42(2), 163–178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2019.1657857>
- Ermakova, Z. A., & Nikulina, Y. N. (2019). Export of Educational Services from a Border Region. *Economy of Region*, 15(1), 191–204.
- Eurobarometer (2015). Cross-border Cooperation in the EU. Flash Eurobarometer 422. Aggregate report [online]. <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/67980>
- European Commission (2021). Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. *EU Border Regions: Living labs of European integration*. COM/2021/393 final. EU Commission. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0393&andrid=1>
- Gajdzica, A., & Kubiczek, B. (2012). Wspieranie nauczycieli w środowisku mniejszościowym – na przykładzie działalności Centrum Pedagogicznego dla Szkolnictwa Narodowościowego w Czeskim Cieszynie. In T. Lewowicki, A. Różańska, & G. Piechaczek-Ogierman (Eds.), *Wielokulturowość i problemy edukacji* (pp. 181–200). Wydział Etnologii i Nauk o Edukacji Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna ZNP w Warszawie, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Stowarzyszenie Wspierania Edukacji Międzykulturowej.
- Gould, P. R., & White, R. R. (1968). The mental maps of British school leavers. *Regional studies*, 2(2), 161–182.
- Gracová, B., Labischová, D., & Szymczek, J. (Eds.) (2014). *Mutual image of the neighbour in Polish and Czech school textbooks*. University of Ostrava.
- Hennig, B. D. (2020). COVID-19's Spread Across the World. *Political Insight*, 11(2), 20–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20419058209333>
- Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2003). Unraveling the Central State, but How? Types of Multi-Level Governance. *The American Political Science Review*, 97(2), 233–243.
- Hřebíčková, M., & Graf, S. (2014). Accuracy of National Stereotypes in Central Europe: Outgroups are not Better than Ingroup in considering Personality Traits of Real People. *European Journal of Personality*, 28(1), 60–72. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.1904>
- Jahnke, H. (2019). Territorial Governance of Schooling and Education in Rural Areas: Case Studies from Northern Germany. In H. Jahnke, C. Kramer, & P. Meusburger (Eds.), *Geographies of Schooling. Knowledge and Space*, vol. 14 (pp. 19–33). Springer.
- Jańczak, J. (2020). The German-Polish border, re-bordering and the pandemic: centers vs. peripheries? [online]. <https://bordersinmotion-coronablog.com/2020/06/09/the-german-polish-border-re-bordering-and-the-pandemic-centers-vs-peripheries>
- Joenniemi, P., & Sergunin, A. (2011). When Two Aspire to Become One: City-Twinning in Northern Europe. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 26(2), 231–242. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2011.641323>
- Kaisto, V. (2017). City Twinning from a Grassroots Perspective: Introducing a Spatial Framework to the Study of Twin Cities. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 32(4), 459–475. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2016.1238315>
- Kajta, J., & Opiłowska, E. (2022). The Impact of Covid-19 on Structure and Agency in a Borderland. The Case of Two Twin Towns in Central Europe. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 37(4), 699–721. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2021.1996259>
- Kajta, J., Makaro, J., & Dębicki, M. (2023). Divided Towns, Integration and Cross-border Cooperation. The Cases of Cieszyn/Český Těšín

- and Ślubice/Frankfurt (Oder). *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2023.2174502>
- Kasperek, B., & Olszewski, M. (2020). Społeczno-gospodarcze skutki zamknięcia polsko-czeskiej granicy dla pracowników transgranicznych w Euroregionie Śląsk Cieszyński w związku z pandemią COVID-19. Olza Association website [online]. <http://www.olza.pl/pl/pliki-do-pobrania>
- Keating, M. (1998). The new regionalism in Western Europe: Territorial restructuring and political change. E. Elgar.
- Klatt, M. (2018). Minorities as secondary foreign policy agents in peace-building and reconciliation? The case of Denmark and Germany. In M. Klatt, & B. Wassenberg. (Eds.), *Secondary Foreign Policy in Local International Relations*. Routledge.
- Klatt, M. (2019). Border Regions as living spaces facing re-bordering trends in Europe. Technical document serving as a project proposal under the COST Action.
- Koch, K. (2021). Brexit and its Impact on Irish-Northern Irish University Cross-Border Cooperation. In D. J. Andersen, & E. K. Prokkola (Eds.), *Borderlands resilience: Transitions, adaptation and resistance at borders* (pp. 37–53). Routledge.
- Laine, J. P. (2021). Epilogue: Borderland resilience: thriving in adversity? In D. J. Andersen & E. K. Prokkola (Eds.), *Borderlands resilience: Transitions, adaptation and resistance at borders* (pp. 182–192). Routledge.
- Lewkowicz, L. (2019). Uwarunkowania i formy instytucjonalnej polsko-czeskiej współpracy transgranicznej. *Przegląd Geograficzny*, 91(4), 511–530. <https://doi.org/10.7163/PrzG.2019.4.4>
- McCall, C. (2012). De-bordering and Re-bordering the United Kingdom. In H. Donnan, & T. M. Wilson (Eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Border Studies* (pp. 214–229). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Medeiros, E., Ramírez, M. G., Ocskay, G., & Peyrony, J. (2021). Covidfencing effects on cross-border deterritorialism: the case of Europe. *European Planning Studies*, 29(5), 962–982. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2020.1818185>
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2017). *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. Sage.
- Ogrodzka-Mazur, E. (2004). Stereotypy i uprzedzenia etniczne u dzieci w wieku wczesnoszkolnym – próba modyfikacji na przykładzie uczniów ze Śląska Cieszyńskiego. In A. Pasko (Ed.), *Edukacja międzykulturowa w Polsce na przełomie XX i XXI wieku* (pp. 69–79). Wojewódzka Biblioteka Publiczna w Krakowie.
- Olszewski, M. (2021). Model komunikacji w sytuacjach kryzysowych Model krizové komunikace. Olza.
- Opilowska, E. (2020). The Covid-19 crisis: the end of a borderless Europe? *European Societies*, 23(S1), 589–600. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2020.1833065>
- Opiola, W., & Böhm, H. (2022). Euroregion as political actor: managing the border policies in the time of COVID-19 in Polish borderlands. *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 10(6), 896–916. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2021.2017339>
- Pasieka, A. (2015). Multireligious and Multiethnic Public Schooling in the Polish-Ukrainian Borderland. In J. Beglund, T. Lundén, & P. Strandbrink (Eds.), *Crossings and Crosses – Borders Educations, and Religions in Northern Europe* (pp. 47–62). De Gruyter.
- Pászto, V., Burian, K., Pánek, J., & Tuček, J. (2019). Capturing cross-border continuity: The case of the Czech-Polish borderland. *Moravian Geographical Reports*, 27(2), 122–138. <https://doi.org/10.2478/mgr-2019-0010>
- SCHKOLA (2023). Schkola group [online]. <https://schkola.de/die-schkola/schkola-schulverbund>
- Scott, J. W. (1999). European and North American Contexts for Cross-border Regionalism. *Regional Studies*, 33(7), 605–617. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343409950078657>
- Scott, J. W. (2016). Border politics in Central Europe: Hungary and the role of national scale and nation-building. *Geographia Polonica*, 91(1), 17–32. <https://doi.org/10.7163/GPol.0101>
- Scott, J. W. (2019). Border Regions. In A. M. Orum (Ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Studies* (pp. 149–153). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Śliz, A., & Szczepański, M. S. (2016). Pogranicze polsko-czeskie w perspektywie socjologicznej. Kontekst kulturowy. *Pogranicze. Studia Społeczne*, 27(1), 47–59.
- Statistics Poland (2023). Basic data [online]. <https://stat.gov.pl/en/basic-data>
- Svensson, S., & Balogh, P. (2021). Resilience at Hungary's borders. In D. J. Andersen, & E. K. Prokkola (Eds.), *Borderlands resilience: Transitions, adaptation and resistance at borders* (pp. 73–89). Routledge.
- Szafrńska, A. (2017). Pogranicze polsko-czeskie jako przestrzeń budowania współpracy transgranicznej z perspektywy nauczycieli. *Edukacja Międzykulturowa*, 6(2), 130–142.
- Szafrńska, A. (2018). The different – a close or distant one? The collaboration with Czechs and the image of neighbours from the teachers' perspective. In T. Lewowicki, E. Ogrodzka-Mazur, B. Chojnacka-Synaszko, & U. Klajmon-Lech (Eds.), *Spheres of Spiritual Life: A Study on Permanence and Changeability of Identity Behaviours in Borderland Communities* (pp. 164–174). LINCOM GmbH.
- Unfried, M. (2020). Cross-border governance in times of crisis, First experiences from the Euroregion Meuse-Rhine. *The Journal of Cross Border Studies in Ireland*, 15(1), 87–97.
- Vaishar, A., Dvořák, P., Hubačková, V., & Zapletalová, J. (2013). Contemporary development of peripheral parts of the Czech-Polish borderland: Case study of the Javorník area. *Geographia Polonica*, 86(3), 237–253. <https://doi.org/doi.org/GPol.2013.21>
- Van der Velde, M., & van Naerssen, T. (2011). People, Borders, Trajectories: An Approach to Cross-Border Mobility and Immobility in and to the European Union. *Area*, 43(1), 218–224. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4762.2010.00974.x>
- Van Houtum, H. (1999). Internationalisation and Mental Borders. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 90(3), 329–335. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9663.00074>
- Van Houtum, H., & Van der Velde, M. (2004). The Power of Cross-Border Labour Market Immobility. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 95(1), 100–107. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0040-747X.2004.00296.x>
- Warleigh-Lack, A., Robinson, N., & Rosamond, B. (Eds.) (2011). *New Regionalism and the European Union: Dialogues, Comparisons and New Research Directions*. Routledge.
- Wróblewski, Ł., & Kasperek, A. (2019). Euroregion as an Entity Stimulating the Sustainable Development of the Cross-Border Market for Cultural Services in a City Divided by a Border. *Sustainability*, 2019(11), 2232. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11082232>
- Zumbusch, K., & Scherer, R. (2019). Cross-border cooperation and political science. In J. Beck (Ed.), *Transdisciplinary Discourses on Cross-Border Cooperation in Europe* (pp. 29–58). Peter Lang.

Please cite this article as:

Böhm, H., Boháč, A., Nowak-Żółty, E., & Szafrńska, A. (2023). The divided town of Český Těšín/Cieszyn as the most integrated part of the Czech-Polish borderland: A life in the cross-border educational togetherness or side by side? *Moravian Geographical Reports*, 31(4), 194–202. <https://doi.org/10.2478/mgr-2023-0018>