

Regional identity of inhabitants in the Czech part of Euroregion Nisa

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Abstract:

The regional identity of the inhabitants of the Czech part of the Nisa Euroregion is examined here by means of biographical narrations of the representatives from the grandparents' generation and the generation of grandchildren. The regional identity is perceived as one of the aspects of the human identity. Displacement of the German inhabitants after the year 1945 from the Czech (and Polish) part of the euroregion and arrival of the new settlers influenced the social structure, stability and regional identity of the current inhabitants. According to the analysis of the biographical statements of older generation members, most of them identify themselves with their current place of residence. They regard it as their home and the place, where they want to live forever. As for the younger generation, the regional attachment is even stronger. It is, however, especially for the people from smaller villages, disturbed by deteriorating economic conditions (lack of job opportunities), bad transport accessibility and insufficient civic amenities in the municipalities. The positive migration balance indicates the attractiveness of the Czech part of euroregion – especially however of its industrial and recreational centers. We may ask, whether the interest in living in the region centers associated with economic changes will remain preserved in the next years as well.

Key words: Regional identity, socio-cultural space, double home, lived space, biographical narration, old residents, migration

1 Introductory note

The issue we want to deal with here concerns the relationship between people and some place, usually the one they spend their live at. The question is, how people understand this place, how they identify with it, how (and how far) they define it (inclose) against the surroundings, how they utilize this space, how it becomes part of their inner world, how they organize it, change, improve etc. That is how they identify with this place. The way we understand some place is associated with the way we call it. It might be e.g. homeland, home, name of the village or region, country etc. As for the region, we understand it as an already more or less administratively defined territory, which has usually some organization structure as well and mostly has even a name. It might be for instance an administration entity such as a district, municipality or only a territory marked historically and traditionally, e.g. Chodsko, Šluknovsko etc. We understand the relationship of these people with the place specified in this way as the regional identity.

The second view of the regional identity concerns the questions, whether and possibly how the people living on the territory of a particular region are specific and whether they have any qualities differentiating them as a special entity. What is typical for them, whether and how they differ from other people or from people from another region, how deep these differences are or how the similarities are close. The regional identity in this case is understood not only as awareness of affiliation and self-identification with the respective territory, but also the social environment, group, family tradition, nation etc. living in this territory.

The regional identity is one of the aspects of the human identity. It has a plural character due to its complicatedness and complexity. Identity of a person lies in the people or subjects the person identifies with and whom (what) he/she defines himself/herself against as against another and external object. It develops in the sphere of social relations as self-awareness and capability of independent orientation and existence. With emphasis on the human behavior, the personal identity is somehow also defined according to the structurally functionalist traditions as adoption of certain roles essential for life in the society.¹ This nowadays rather more traditional perception of human identity corresponds with the period of the so-called modern (industrial) society. On the contrary, the post-modern situation, as it is pictured in the contemporary professional literature (compare e.g. Bauman 2002), is characterized by emphasizing the emancipation of an individual from the social relations, scilicet especially in the sense of his/her independence and responsibility for his/her own life. A. Touraine presumes that the concurrent life stage of the society means that the human being is no more defined as a social being. We can find the cultural and psychological uniqueness of a person only in the person itself, and not in the social institutions or some universalistic social principles (Touraine 1998). Z. Bauman, who calls the concurrent (post-modern) society "liquid modernity", says: "Unstablens of identities of inhabitants of liquid modernity appears, so to speak, in their eyes." (Bauman 2002) Unstablens should thus concern also the regional identity as one of many human identities. According to Bauman, territoriality (identity with the territory) is associated with the person's effort to become identical with the others and thus find certain security and feeling of the safety against "the others", the outside ones. At the same time, it is the association of identity and the space (territory), which hides the "genocide potential" and the desire to exclude "the others" from the "own" space. To the contrary, people's identity in the post-modern world is not so strongly attached to the territory but consists rather in having to be achieved again each day, through mutual encounter, debate, preference of particular lifestyles and self-identification with various people. It is a result of the jointly acting people. It is important that the identification integrity is a *result*; it is not given by any *a priori situation* or by a definition of e.g. state or political affiliation. According to these authors, life of the post-modern society is characterized by searching and the unity renewed permanently regardless on the space and the outer limiting assignment and traditions. Attachment

¹ Compare G. H. Mead: *Mind, self and society* (1965); J. Habermas: *Der Universalitätsanspruch der Hermeneutik*, in: *Dialektik und Hermeneutik*, H.-G. Gadamer. (1970). Goffman, E. (1969) *Wir alle spielen Theater*, Piper Verlag, München To the issue of identification and roles see: T. Parsons: *The position of identity in the general theory action*, in: Ch. Gordon/K Gergen: *The self in social interaction* (1968)

of people to the territory analyzed in this light is also a certain possibility how to judge and consider "modernity" of the examined population.

In this contribution, we will deal with the regional identity of inhabitants in the Czech part of Euroregion NISA² rather only from the point of view of their relationship with the given territory. We will address also the connection between this relationship and the population stability. This problem corresponds with the search for answers to the questions related to the migration in the world of open frontiers forming a post-modern space, especially then in connection with the expected entry of CR to the European Union. We know about the fears of EU member states of inrush of labor forces in the moment, when the administration restrictions run out. Migration for work is however only one aspect of the possible population movement. The possibility of settling permanently anywhere in the EU countries and even elsewhere is another issue, which is related to the regional identity of inhabitants.

Migration of labor forces across the frontier is not only necessary but also useful up to a certain extent with regard to the construction of necessary networks of civil relationships, which should gradually supplement the relationships among states, which are mostly defined only abstractedly in the form of various political agreements. There is also the question about what is the desirable and undesirable rate of migration and thus, on the other side, what is the desirable and undesirable stability of the population and what role the regional identity plays in it. What stability of the population is possible in the expanding conditions of the post-modern, open world. It is important to know how – in spite of these new situations – important is the need to "belong somewhere", identify with something. "To be settled" so far meant certain sureness and confirmation of the own solidarity with the social whole and the extent of the own self-determination.

For examination of the regional identity, we want to use a slightly non-traditional source of empirical findings. We shall deduce the matter of regional identity from the biographies of the inhabitants of the given region. We dispose of about 60 biographical interviews.³ These are respondents from the generation of "grandfathers" and their "grandsons". The narrative biographies mostly contain spontaneous stories about life, experiences, problems and ways of their solution. They contain almost always an explanation or appraisal related to the place or region, which allow assuming the contents and strength of the regional identity in the context with the whole rest of the biography. The research narrative interviews were realized in the years 2000 and 2002.

Understanding of the regional identity is significant for us because it is a frontier region, which had been severely affected by several fatal historical events in the last century.

² Nisa Euroregion consists of the districts in the present Liberec region (Semily, Česká Lípa, Liberec and Jablonec). The number of inhabitants in the year 2001 was 430 769 according to the census. It further includes the northern part of the Děčín district (Šluknov jut) with about 50 thousands inhabitants. The Děčín district is part of the administration entity Ústecký kraj (Usti nad Labem region). Territories of euroregions in ČR do not overlap with the territorial structure.

³ Part of the empirical material was acquired upon working on the granted task GA CR 403/02/1332 "Regional identity of inhabitant in the NISA Euroregion". This research continues in the international Czech-German-Polish project "Biographical identity of inhabitants in the NISA Euroregion" (1999–2002), realized under Sociology Institute AV CR along with Göttingen University and Wrocław University.

The post-war period was characterised by a great migration of the population and changes in all areas of economic and social life. For this reason it is extremely difficult to provide an exact overview of the socio-economic situation during the active time of life of the 'grandparents'. The situation was above all influenced by the disruption of the economy, technology, and transportation, brought on by the war, but also by interpersonal relationships and national and political conflicts. The borderland of the former Czechoslovak Republic without a doubt most strongly influenced by the post-war transfer of Sudeten Germans and by the influx of new Czech inhabitants from the inland and from Slovakia, and partly also from locations outside the former CSR.

The area occupied by Germany after 1938 following the division of Czechoslovakia does not correspond with this definition of the borderland. On the occupied territory, there lived 3 562 232 inhabitants (according to the census in 1930), which represented 20.5% Czechs and 79.1% Germans. With respect to the Czech part of the NISA Euroregion, there were 504 987 inhabitants living in communities occupied by Germany (according to the 1930 census). Out of this figure approximately 10% were Czech citizens. Today, the territory of the Czech part of the NISA Euroregion also includes land that was not occupied by the German Reich (mainly a part of the Semily region, where most of the population were Czechs – approximately 97%).

The arrival of new immigrants had a fundamental influence on the social and cultural characteristics of the post-war borderland inhabitants. According to the 1947 registration, in the entire Czech borderland (as defined according to the actual German occupation of towns in 1938) only 32.7% of the region's population were original inhabitants (the population present May 1, 1945), while 61.2% were new settlers, 0.5% were settlers who had come from foreign armies, and 5.3% were those who had been born since 1945.⁴ The new settlers came from varied cultural backgrounds, and only subsequently created local socio-cultural systems. Both the original Czech inhabitants and those Germans who had not been transferred, each in their own way, participated in these formation processes. The processes of gradual co-existence and the forming of local communities were factors that had a considerable impact on the mentality of today's generation of grandparents in particular.

As for the German part of the current NISA Euroregion, the major share is naturally presented by the original inhabitants with traditional local culture and strong regional identity. However, part of them is the displaced people from the Czech borderland and Polish territories. In the year 1949, there were 25.94 % of the displaced people living in the area of east Saxony. In the German part of euroregion, there is a numerous group of Wends (around 60 thousands people) living there with their own culture and identity next to the Germans.

The Polish territory of euroregion and the whole west borderland of Poland went through a similar process as the Czech territory. After displacing the Germans, Poles mostly living in the eastern part of Poland, which was taken over by the Soviet Union,

⁴ Population, economic and national development of the cantons of SR from 1930 till 2010, Ministry of construction and civil engineering CSR, Prague, 1989, pg.11.

were moved here. It meant almost total interruption of the local culture, traditions and dramatic creation of new structures both for the Czech borderland and the new Polish territories. New population of the Czech borderland proceeded spontaneously to the large extent and had a considerably individual and random character, and of course, it was supported by the state authorities.⁵ In the Polish case, it was a more controlled migration both as for the initial locality and the place of settlement. In this regard, the new inhabitants in the Czech borderland were more heterogeneous than the Polish inhabitants, which might have affected the processes of domestication or migration in the following decades.

Particularly younger settlers moved to the borderland, many of them lodged families and followed the improvement of their economic situation. The influx of young people became evident in the higher birth rate in the borderland regions. For example, the average birth rate between 1961–1970 in the borderland was still 6.9, whereas inland only it was only 0.8. The birth rate in the borderland was still higher in 1981–1985, at 3.1, but inland it had reached a negative –0.6.

It is currently –1.0. Inhabitants in the borderland are still slightly younger in the average. The natural increment was even slightly higher in the year 1962 in the Polish part of euroregion (when regarding the whole Wroclaw dukedom, it was 14.9%).⁶ However, in the year 2001, this increment was already also negative and it was –0.53 in the districts of the Polish part of Euroregion Nisa.⁷ In the German part, the natural increment of inhabitants in the year 2000 was again negative (–3.9%).⁸

On the other hand, the population of the borderland regions showed higher migration than the inland population. Particularly as a result of the socialisation of agriculture and the establishment communal enterprises, a vast remigration inland occurred. In the years 1961–1970, the number of immigrants to the borderland was on average 22.7 and emigrants 26.7 per 1000 inhabitants. Only in the 1980s did migration become stabilised.⁹ At present, we however register some increment of the population through immigration +1.3. There are however significant differences between the region districts. The highest (positive increment of inhabitants through migration is in the district Česká Lípa, +3.1.)

In the Polish part, the negative migration balance prevails. It is quite unbalanced, though. In the year 1962 e.g. the increment in the district Zgorzelec was +24.6, whereas the other districts (e.g. Jelenia Góra) showed negative increment. In the year 2001, the migration balance value was negative for all districts belonging under the Polish part of euroregion.¹⁰ Migration increment (calculated for the districts, which are part of euroregion) in the German part is negative as well, and it was –3.8 for the whole east Saxony. There are however significant differences among the individual places. E.g. Hoyerswerda – the town has the increment (decrement) value –36.4, and on the other hand, the district Kamenz has only –1.2.¹¹

⁵ Schlachciowa (1999)

⁶ Statistical Yearbook of voivodship of Wroclaw 1963, internet page of GUS www.stat.gov.pl

⁷ Szlachciowa, Domecka, Mrozowski (2002)

⁸ Bast-Haider (2002, p. 153)

⁹ Population, economic and national development of the cantons of CSR from 1930 till 2010, Ministry of construction and civil engineering CSR, Prague, 1989, p. 4.

¹⁰ Szlachciowa at all (2002, p. 115)

¹¹ Kertin Bast-Haider (2002, p. 149)

The stated facts show the differences in the population development among the individual national parts of euroregion. In the current time, the data show higher migration in the Polish and German part compared to the Czech part. This moment is caused especially by the different character of these territories. The Czech part is not burdened with the effects of long-term orientation on the mining and energy industry as the Polish and German territory and thus is not so affected by the consequences of the decline in these sectors after the year 1989. Under the Czech conditions, this situation is similar in the northwest Bohemia (Most, Sokolov districts), or Ostrava district. We may expect that the relatively favorable situation in the Czech part of euroregion Nisa, which has impacts on significantly lower unemployment rate as well, will influence positively the regional identity of the inhabitants.

3 Czech part of the Euroregion NISA

As we have already stated, the Czech and Polish part of the Euroregion Nisa differs from the German part especially due to the consequences of the post-war population exchange. The Czech borderland is rather differentiated in this regard here. Larger part of it was originally populated mostly by German inhabitants. The Czechs lived often one by one here, in mixed marriages; some of them were brought here after creation of ČSR as state officers. German settlements bordered (in some cases merged continuously) with areas with a majority of Czech inhabitants or with Czech inhabitants only, for example Českodubsko (a part of the present-day Liberec region, a large part of the Semily region and some border parts of the Česká Lípa region). These circumstances surface in the analysed biographies as a specific relationship of the older generation of respondents towards places, fellow-citizens and also towards wartime and post-war events. From this point of view it is useful to divide the inhabitants of the Euroregion NISA into the following groups:

- a) Pre-war long-term residents (Czechs, Germans, mixed marriages) living in regions which were (up to 1945) inhabited mainly by Germans. In terms of quantity this group represents approximately 5–8% of the current inhabitants.
- b) Pre-war residents living in regions with a majority of Czech inhabitants (up to 1945) (mainly Czechs and approximately 15% of the current inhabitants of the euroregion).
- c) Post-war settlers who form the majority of the current population. Some of them arrived in the first years after war, and in their statements they express a stronger relationship to place (home). A portion of these inhabitants arrived later in connection with the industrialisation of the region, or, particularly in the region of Česká Lípa, in connection with uranium mining.

From a demographic point of view the following general characteristics, concerning the whole Czech-German borderland, are very important:

- Comparing with the post-war number of inhabitants, there live less people in the region today (comparing with the census from 1930 – approximately 75%).
- Uneven settlement, especially the concentration of people in bigger settlements (extinction of many small villages and hamlets) and industrial regions. Some parts of

the borderland (mountains and foothills) are typical for the small number of permanent inhabitants and for high percentage of seasonal habitation (recreational).¹² The uneven settlement was even deepened in the nineties due to the decrease of agricultural production and concentration of small business activities along boarder crossings.

- relatively higher migration can be observed here as a consequence of the agriculture transformation and therefore lack of job opportunities
- The problem of low qualification of the borderland inhabitants, sometimes mentioned in relation with the revitalization, is just relative. The structure of education corresponds with average of Czech inland. (it is necessary to compare with the inland except Prague, which has a high education potential, typical for the cultural and administrative centre)¹³

The level of education of the borderland population is a little bit lower than the level of education in the whole Czech Rep. Quantitative development of secondary and higher education took place in the nineties – especially the level of Bachelor and MA. The number of people with a college degree increased. The exact data are not available though, because they were not monitored at the census in 2001.

Table 1 The structure of education of the population (according to the census from the year 2001, data in %, population older than 15 years)

Indicator	Region						
	Liberec	Jablonec n. N.	Česká Lípa	Semily	Liberec county	Prague	Czech Republic
Education:							
Basic	23.1	24.0	27.2	23.6	24.3	14.6	23.4
lower secondary	38.6	39.7	42.3	40.6	40.1	28.9	37.9
higher secondary (leaving exam)	28.0	27.7	24.1	28.0	26.9	38.9	28.4
university	8.5	7.0	5.3	6.5	7.0	18.8	8.9

¹² According to the census in 2001 there were 27 396 not inhabited flats and houses in the whole Liberec county, from which 46.8% are recreational buildings. Most of them in Semily and Č. Lípa counties.

¹³ Compare: Zich and collective (1996, s. 56).

Socio-cultural space

To identify the “*milieu*” – the environment – of social groups, we begin with the concept of socio-cultural space, defined by the dimension (axis) of the sum of all capital (economic, cultural, social, political) and the dimension that is given by the ratio of cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu 1998).

On the basis of a consideration of information on a specific historical situation in the post-war period, the socio-cultural space in Czech society may be characterised as follows.

After 1945, in connection with the transfer of Germans, some fundamental changes began to take place in the borderland territory, even with respect to the socio-cultural space. New settlers, mostly from inland, brought with them their own sub-culture and

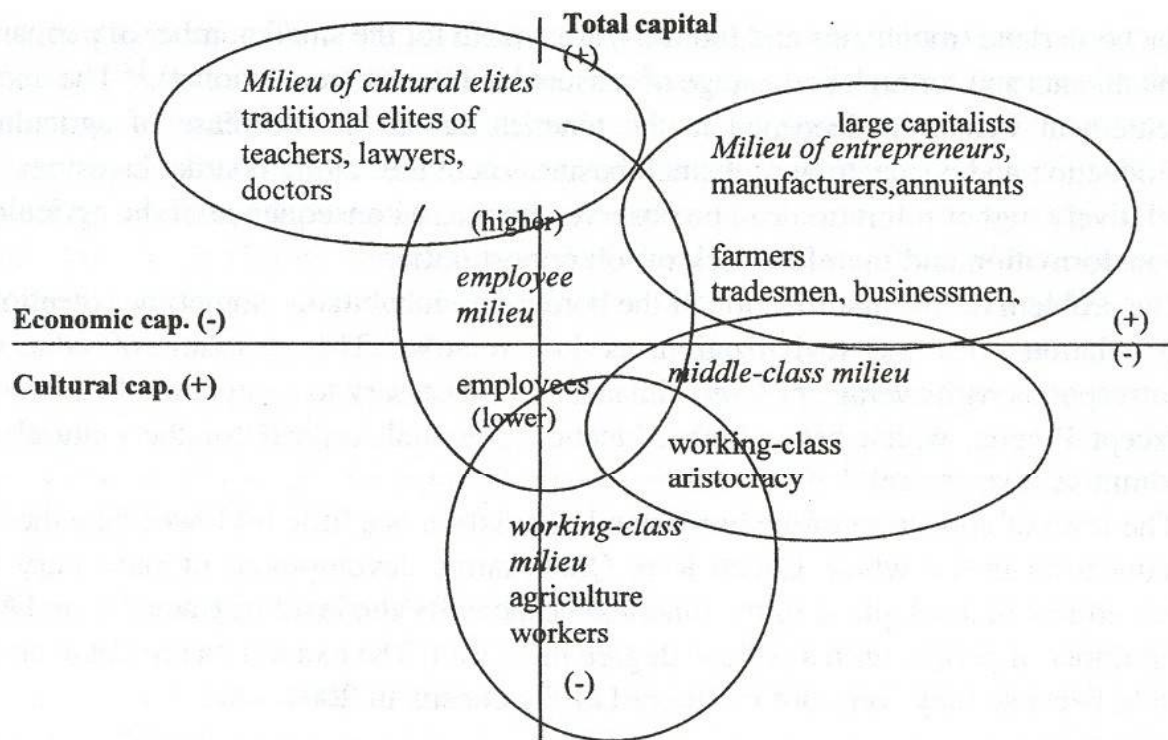


Diagram No.1 The socio-cultural space of Czech society in the post-war years 1945-48 (the generation of grandparents)

thus also a specific habitus of behavior (way of making a living, habits, entertainment, dialect etc.), which had corresponded to the environment and space in which they had lived up until that time.

With their arrival in the borderland most of the new inhabitants experienced a rise in status (especially with respect to the economic dimension of the construction of status. It was usually poor people who migrated to the borderlands, where they acquired some property (through trustees), frequently gained a higher position at work, and were able to apply their qualifications. For example, agricultural workers and small farmers (farming factory- workers) from inland applied for agriculture settlements, and in the borderland they became independent farmers. Quite often it later became evident that independent farming also requires certain special qualifications, which these people, who were used to following orders, were lacking. Similarly, people who had worked inland as wage-labourers, shop assistants, sales help, labourers, etc., began working in trades (shops, trades). But this was also true for specific groups of employees; for example, a postman could become a postmaster etc. From the perspective of social stratification these people for the most part experienced a step up in social mobility. Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of behaviour habitus and mentality, they remained, at least at the beginning, in the position and culture that they had had in the initial social environment. (In stratification terminology, this situation is called status incongruence). Only gradually were new structures of behaviour created, and a new behaviour habitus was formed in response to the actual social and cultural circumstances. In these processes, a comparison and confrontation of different habits, sub-cultures and even languages take place. This of course did not happen without partial excesses, in the form of inappropriate (uncultured) behaviour, which is typical for example for nouveau riches.

Alongside these people, the borderland was settled by many new people whose status position never changed and who matched the relevant 'standard type' of behavior. This applies especially to qualified specialists (elite); in terms of quantity this meant the majority of workers.

If we wish to depict the very complicated dynamics of the post-war social change in the borderlands through a diagram of the socio-cultural space, we would have to take into consideration the on the whole lower level of cultural capital in relation to the economic upturn.

Events following the year 1948 (the assumption of power by the communists in February of that year) had a significant impact on the social structure of the society. The program of building the foundations of socialistic society, based on the ideology of class struggle, was achieved through the consistent expropriation and collectivisation of production resources. In practical terms this meant above all the economic liquidation of small businessmen, tradesmen, and gradually also independent farmers. The first step led to the expropriation of all factories, the nationalisation of trade, and the ensuing creating of agrarian co-operatives or state farms, and the creation of production co-operatives and collective enterprises. Given the fact that even the co-operative sector operated as a part of the planned economy under state administration, the members of the co-operatives had little chance of asserting their own interests or freely applying their own ideas. As employees, tradesmen and farmers worked for wages. At the same time, however, they naturally maintained their original behaviour habitus (and their cultural and social capital) even in their new status positions. The socialist regime of the 1950s (working relations, conditions of the organisation of work, the opportunities for achievement, the level of democracy, the organisation of the civic sphere, etc.) purposefully aimed at creating an almost general – 'employee' – status, and demanded for this a corresponding way of life and behaviour habitus. This approximately was the position of the fathers of our grandchildren (see Diagram 2).

The employee behaviour habitus (with predominantly organisational features and contexts) that was created after 1948 and during the 40-year existence of the one-party political system features many specifics. However it incorporates in itself at least some aspects of behaviour stemming from the former period, albeit considerably modified under the influence of the ideological, administrative and repressive impact of the state. The habitus was significantly influenced in practical terms by the employee-status (bound and dependent) positions. This socialist employee 'milieu' is a complicated mixture of a blue-collar, middle-class (tradesmen, businessmen) 'milieu', the behaviour and values of the traditional elites from the previous period, and the behaviour and influences of the new political (communist) elites.

Transformation (1989) as conversion to market economy in the conditions of democratic society inevitably brings changes in social positions of people. Branch and territorial movement of persons as it is monitored by common statistic does not notice some important changes that occur on the axle of the social position: "up" – "down". The basic change of the social structure is caused by abolishment of legal, real and

economic barriers that previous regime imposed on private business. The Czech Republic (previously the whole Czechoslovakia) was outstanding among all other previous socialist countries as probably the most restrictive as to the private business until 1989. There were basically only two forms of ownership in the business area: state and cooperative. The share of independents (businessmen) was negligent and made 0.7% of economic active population in 1983 and 1.0% in 1988. The dynamic post-revolution change is reflected by the fact that this share reached 11% in 1993¹⁴. By this the share of entrepreneurs in Czech population quantitatively equalled the size of this category in other post-socialist countries (with the exception of Poland where there is bizarre high share of "independents" influenced by great share of small farmers). This quantitative growth is not followed, particularly in the initial stages, by substantial and desired changes in respect of modernisation of the economy. The largest part of it were tradesmen and small businessmen in trade and services. The emerging (or substantial strengthening) of the group of entrepreneurs in Czech Republic means simultaneously emerging of the group of "participants" in majority of post-socialist social changes.

The transformation processes of different social groups were of different intensity and content. Major issue in Czech conditions was the constitution of the group of great *proprietors* (capitalists, strong shareholders etc.). This small upper group of the society arose by virtue of the restitution of the nationalized properties or by virtue of different privatization projects. Many former communist leaders and henchmen gained considerable economic properties this way.

The trade and business parts of the middle class undergone almost global reconstruction. These groups were practically destroyed in the fifties during the collectivization and nationalization. Restitution and privatization in the field of agriculture contribute to the reconstruction of the middle class. The reconstruction of the higher group of employees brought significant changes as well. "Nomenclatural core" (mainly clerks) left their positions and were replaced by new political elite. Simultaneously a large group of young managers, working in home enterprises, foreign companies, banks etc is being formed. The working class and traditional elite have not gone through any radical changes. They keep their sociocultural positions. A relatively new group of socially deprived and problematic people emerges. These transformation changes can be defined by a new socio-cultural space.

4 Regional identity in the biographies of inhabitants in the Euroregion Nisa

Source of the findings about regional identity of inhabitants are biographical interviews with members of the "grandfathers" and "grandchildren" generation selected in accordance with the above stated structure of socio cultural area. Mentions of the region and place of residence are almost in all biographical stories. They are stated in various connections as for the life stage or the character of parallel events and their experiences.

¹⁴ Report on Czech society development in 1989–1998, Academia, Praha, 1998, s. 161

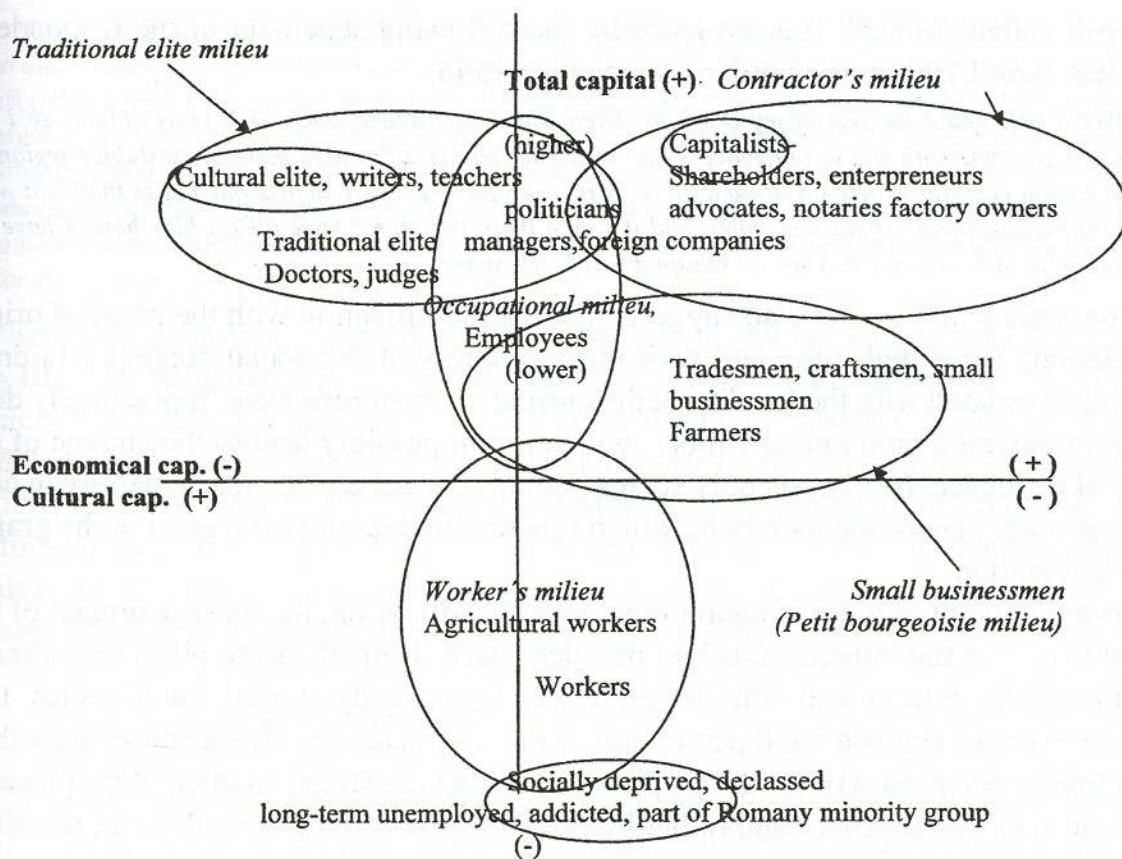


Diagram 2 Generation of grandsons about 1995

We conclude from the analysis of 60 generational pairs that the regional identity of inhabitants in the Czech part of the Euroregion Nisa is generally strong though we must pay attention to the significant internal differentiation.

The biographical identity forms, functions and establishes itself in the activities realized in the space where people live. This "lived space" is taken mostly as granted. It is used, adopted, evaluated and named in the experience everydayness. B. Spalová distinguishes the following dimensions of "lived space": practice space, identification space and symbol space.¹⁵ Distinguishing of these dimensions is very useful for analytical work. The individual dimensions of the lived space, though they have a common carrier, do not necessarily have to correspond and overlap. They are usually in a complementary relationship but they might be in conflict as well. For example, many newcomers, who came to the border region after displacement of Germans, experienced conflict between their identity and the place of practice (new point of activity) and the place they were internally united with (mostly the original place of residence). In the older generation biographies, there is rather often a spontaneous description of "lived space" from childhood. These are memories of places, where various games, meeting and other events were carried out. They are typical for their deep knowledge of the place and changes that happened in this area. This locality is often still part of their identity, it is living in their memories or even visited and in more than one case,

¹⁵ B. Spalová: Pohraniční prostor in the collection: F. Zich and coll. Formation of across-the-border community on the Czech-German border, Sociologický ústav AV ČR, 2000, p. 244

it is still called "home". It is evidence by the following statement of the respondent, who has been living in the border region since 1945.

"Well I will spend the rest of my life here. Even when my brother comes and leaves home, so I say I'd love to go home with you to our place there. Well but there is a flat land there in Pardubice region all around so you can ride a bike all around there. It is beautiful over there across our house there's a wonderful 50 hectare pond, where they camp and it's nice there but then I have all my kids here. I have my daughter here in Š., my son in Š so ..." (Respondent Č. 70 years)

The statement however also suggests that the identification with the place of origin (childhood) fades with time and with the awareness of the social context (children, family) associated with the locality of the current place of residence. It practically does not have any motivation go any more, which might possibly lead to the change of the place of residence. It suggests only such a "double inveteracy" of space identity in case of some older generation members, which practically does not exist at all in the grandsons' generation.

From the point of view of the regional identity formation, the most dominant of the "lived space" is the dimension called practice space. It involves the place of realization of everyday routine and other frequently and repeatedly carried out activities. Depending on their character and perception of this character, the "lived space" may then be defined very narrowly (with the place of residence, street, municipality, place of work etc.), or on the other hand rather broadly, if these activities involve e.g. traveling to work, to school, for entertainment, shopping etc.

At the same time, it is verified that people mostly feel stronger and more committed relationship with their closest neighborhood, i.e. with their place of residence (municipality, street, quarter), than with the broader area such as e.g. region, district or region. According to some researches, more than 80% of people manifest close or very close relationship with the municipality where they live (or part thereof), whereas only 67 % feel the same relationship with the whole district.¹⁶

Feeling of identification with the space is filled with experiences with one's own social environment with the possibility of communication, solidarity and security.

".... we are such a bunch, rather during the holidays we meet like this and undertake something somewhere, like we ride bikes or at night we go to that shed, in the evening, in the late afternoon, or we go to the water station, it's such a nice place here, well for the sunset, then we can see the whole O. and then we always go up there and wait until it gets dark and go home". (Respondent M, 17 years).

Awareness of closeness with the surroundings is one of the factors of identification, dividing also the "own" and "sb. else's". This difference appears in the biographies most often in the relationship with another village, town, but because the whole region is actually a large vacation resort, and rather often also with self-identification in relation to the temporary inhabitants – cottagers.

"Well those cottagers were worse when they came here. Especially when those ladies thought we were only puts and they... And when we were standing in the line and they wanted to jump and when somebody told them they started to flaunt I'll tell to that one and I'll to another one, they wanted to show they had had some connections. Only it is precisely why we... those Prague people ..."(respondent K. 71 years)

In this connection, the statements show even some signs of subjective determination of region limits and rather broad perception of the region and regional identity:

¹⁶ Nedomová, Kostecký (1996). These are results from the statewide empirical survey in the program ISSP, 1111 respondents were questioned.

"So e.g. there's certain rivalry between Jablonec and Liberec, just the same these two towns understand each other. You know, we have the same condition and we have the same streetcar. I think that the term Liberečák (person from Liberec) may involve even that Jablonec. And where does it go in the north? In the north, it might reach according to that as far as Frýdlant. Though there already, Frýdlant is a little bit closer to a provincial town. We are not a big city either of a worldwide importance because like 300 000 residents, it would be a small town in America. But it's I think that that term Liberečák, those people I understand best, I would thus rank myself among them, it encompasses a rather large, it would be a rather fair area, if taken as for the surface." (Respondent S., student, 24 years)

Regional identity is the result of many processes and activities of people's everyday life. Undoubtedly, it is also influenced by economic and political conditions of the society life, where the people's activities are carried out. Regional identity as a whole and their individual dimensions are also determined by the time of realizing these life activities. There must always be some specific minimum time for the regional identity to form and another time for it to be able to work as a factor influencing decision-making and activities. Importance of this "lived time" in the "lived space" is distinct in comparison of the biographies of grandfathers and grandsons.

Regional identity of grandfather generation

When reviewing the regional identity of the inhabitants in the Euroregion Nisa, we can find differences among the pre-war denizens (we mean the inhabitants who had lived there already before World War Two) and those, who came after the year 1945. Stories of those, who came, contain description of the places where they spent their childhood and, as we have already stated, it works here in some cases as one of the identification dimensions.

Intensity of this link to the place of childhood depends on many circumstances. It comes out that these are mostly memories of childhood and especially those, who have lived there for a long time, identify themselves with the place of residence and broader locality. They are also active in this regard. They are interested in the municipality or town condition and have done much in this regard.

"...well then I was in Č. and there was such a chapel, those were years, you know (thinks and counts the years) fifty-eight. Well and there was such a nice chapel and it was vandalized, it was across the gamekeeper's house, well yes., late baroque, yeah. Well and smashed windows, i.e. so I asked the church official, if they could repair it and so on, ..." (Respondent Š., 75 years, forester).

Most of the local activities had a different character in the period of the so-called real socialism, they regarded various voluntary work for village adaptation, building of outlets etc.

From the point of view of the regional identity, it is important that many new post-war settlers came to the border region from unsuitable social conditions and the new place of activity meant improvement in their situation.

"... Because when we considered it, so Prague was crowded, even in those big cities people had let's say bad housing, small housing. For instance we had a kitchen, room and such a small room in Prague a tiny one..., so we actually came here so that we could get a better housing. More comfortable, when there was the possibility." (Respondent K., 73 years, workwoman)

The Newcomers started new life here, which meant, among others, also a gradual formation of the relationship with the new life space. Regional identity of the people

from “grandfather” generation, who were born here, is vice-versa given by immediate and mostly continuous experiences of everyday life in this space. It is probably characteristic that in their biographic stories, these old settlers put emphasis on experience from coexistence of Czechs and Germans. These memories often overshadow the references to the region character or description of the childhood places. For the lifestyle in the first half of the last century, it was probably more important how to manage the coexistence of Czechs and Germans. Fight for the national identity in the middle of one family stand out from the following story:

“...second grandpa with grandma lived in L., where my brother went to their place and they spoke especially at home they knew both, but they spoke especially German at home, you know. So he learned German quite well, me nothing, ehm... my mom was fixated on her parents very much well Czechs, ... that border between Czech and German inhabitants was mostly quite sharp, you know, like here in Smržovka it was rather mixed here ... I'd say that, it was more German than Czech village, but there were many people everywhere, who didn't know what they were and didn't care at all, you know they said ehm they said this and that.” (P. B. Smržovka, 67 years, university degree)

In the biographies of that part of the older generation, which was born here, we can often see long-term stays outside the region (e.g. leaving for work, military service, school etc.) although their feeling of closeness to the region and home is strong and their perception of this region has continual character. It is a place, where they are at home since they were children and where they always return. The relationship with the region is manifested e.g. by the following memory from childhood:

“It's a nice country here, but those people who came here don't know that. We went as pupils, we went to Smrk to see the sunrise. Ask those people, (new settlers-our note) if they have been to Smrk already. This is not a bad region. Those Jizerske hory all around here, they are not far away but they are accessible only by walking. And those people who came here are not able to do that. It was said that boys who arrive, have skis on their legs.” (Mr. H. 87 years, Nové Město pod Smrkem, old settler)

Some post-war settlers came back to the border region because they had to leave after the year 1938. However, they returned to different conditions and with different intentions. A respondent, who was just beyond twenty in the year 1945:

“Well I decided and went to see my birthplace again. Such as, purely just because like, because I was attracted there, yeah, it was quite natural when we have not been there for such a long time you know, well and there, there was such a group of boys I met when I came to Šluknov, there in one rest, in one restaurant down there, former hotel Praha, and they told me to stay there, there are jobs here, so I decided, you know...” (Respondent V. 75 years, sales representative)

About 80% of inhabitants in the Czech part of the Euroregion Nisa came here after the year 1945. The circumstances of their arrival were different, however in most cases with identical free decision to start the new life in the new environment. Backward migration from the border region was however high in the following years. Especially those, who pursued mostly acquisitive goals or how to gain some property easily, were leaving. Those, who stayed in the border region, were gradually creating the regional identity to this new space.

This applies even for that part of the oldest generation of euroregion inhabitants, which came here later (in the sixties or seventies) mostly in connection with work or because of professional commitments.

Question: Well and when they say home, so where you're at home?

“Thus, as for these like such relationships. I am just a uranium man and I live there where I am. Such

memories like there was and there wasn't, like better there or there, so like in different ways somehow. I never like, so as to say, didn't care, you know I'm here at home, right now it's here.

Question: And when you take the whole life, so this feeling of home, where it is strongest?

"I don't have, like well I'd like to see my birthplace but I wouldn't like to live there. In those Lib... Because it's a small town and it would be hard for me to get used to that there after this... But this feeling, I'm am at home here and not here, just there, where I live and stay" (Respondent s. 71 years, former company director, Liberec.)

The memory of old settlers is connected with the region and its form and even its changes. Sometime the changes in the "lived space" are not even registered, because they are mostly carried out continuously. Return to the previously lived space is thus usually surprising. The dynamic changes in the lived space is confirmed by the following passage:

"Just yesterday again, my son came, that older one and that we'd go for a walk in the mountains so that I went for a trip. So we were we went here ...well then I knew each yard here in the whole mountains. Well when you can't go out for about 20 years then it's great, that advance you know that all, those buildings, say he knows all streets each path in the mountains, it's all asphalt all those asphalt roads ... And on the way back we stopped in Javornice again in the pub that is if you ever heard about it where they have those horses there and a pub made of a cow house." (Mr. V., farmer 89 years)

According to the biographical statements of all interviewed, most members of the older generation identify with the place of their current residence, they regard it home and the place where they want to live. After all, this attitude is rather understandable in case of the older generation, especially when they live close to their children and their families. As a last resort, it is a habit based on the idea that there is no sense in moving anywhere in one's old age.

Those, who were born here, regard it as a tradition, the others in fact as a deeply adopted and experienced space.

Regional identity of grandsons' generation

We can find a rather strong attachment to the region in the biographies of grandsons. However, the general tendencies to move corresponds with the situation in the whole CR. Pursuant to the research from the year 1996, 26% were willing to change their residence to another town within the region for better working conditions, 22% to another district and 11% abroad. Unwillingness to change the place of residence thus grows with the distance to the possible new place of activity.¹⁷

Regional identity and stability of the population is however disturbed by degradation of economic conditions (lack of job opportunities), bad transport services and last but not least also insufficient civic amenities. This concerns especially the small settlements in sub-regions, which suffer from depression or total liquidation of industry and strong restriction of agricultural production. (Šluknov region, Frýdlant region, some parts of Semily and Česká Lípa districts.) Especially young people must deal with the question whether to live and survive in a town, to commute or move away. Larger cities quite the contrary show increase in the number of inhabitants, scilicet even outside the Liberec region. Balance of the outward migration (emigra-

¹⁷ Nedomová, Kostelecký (1996).

tion – immigration) is positive. According to the data of statistical office, this migration increase in the year 2000 was e.g. 388 persons. This is why the current Liberec region is different from most of the other regions, where the migration balance is negative. Most of the immigrants head toward large cities in the region.

“... Like it's very nice here, such as I really don't wonder that people from Prague like it here, but like for my future living I'd surely stay in Prague. Especially maybe even because of job, that is then such thing as that you can't get a job there in fact, only some shop assistant at most, which is not my life objective.... Well and above all like with that professional orientation I had chosen, so I think that it wouldn't be good there, that I would absolutely be unable get a job with reasonable money.” (Respondent Š. from a small village Z. O., 19 years).

Some people from the youngest generation already left the region. Especially young people from small villages leave or are getting ready for it. Internal migration within the region heads from small settlements to larger towns, especially to the regional centers (Liberec, Jablonec), closer to the work opportunities. Migration away from the region heads mostly toward Prague. Especially the university graduates remain in Prague because they mostly would not find a job in their parents' region. At the same time, their attachment to home, place of their youth and the whole region remains rather strong. A respondent, who works and lives permanently in Prague after graduating from the faculty of education, states:

“So I still like to go there and have always something to discuss with grandpa, yeah. Well, so, I say, I like that Smržovka very much as well, it's also a lovely town, and even that Brod, but I'd say that I got used to that Prague rather well... But I must say that like when we perhaps, I don't know, start a family so I will be happy to go to that Brod with my kids on weekends, to be, we have a cottage there close to that Brod, just to have some rest,... I cannot exclude that somewhere in that higher age, around fifty, sixty or when I'm retired, I'll return to Brod once, it doesn't have to be Brod itself, but somewhere in that area near the mountains. Because these mountains still attract me.” (Respondent Ť, 30 years, teacher).

This statement shows also clearly the relationship with the region substantiated by its beauty, peace, sport opportunities etc. These characteristics of the Liberec region repeat almost in all biographical statements. Those, who left, come back though only for a visit, naturally especially because of their parents. At the same time, they always point out that this region is almost a perfect place for relaxation and sport.

As for the work and living conditions, the situation in the Czech part of the Euro-region Nisa is substantially differentiated.

“That commuting was mad, actually because the last bus goes simply before the afternoon shift ends, well so it was all terribly complicated. Then I was actually so hopeless and I was so mad even due to the last paycheck so I gave notice without having another job found somewhere else. Then I was without a job for 6 days, ... I was in Jablonec, in Turnov, in Semily, in Tanvald at employment department and looked at those notice boards on various places well I just spent about two hundred and finally it was worth. From time to time, I went to try it I was lucky..” (Respondent K. 20 years, Železný Brod).

Young people however realize the trends and opportunities of the open labor market and some of them count with job migration even abroad and of course with the returns home as well:

“I'll stay here, if it's possible. I'd like go abroad like to have a look, to try....but since it's like inconceivable for me because ...I have such a feeling that I'd surely come back. Well and because I don't have that experience from that stay there then it's maybe ...but I think that in several years I won't matter if

I work there or here much less that my profession is in fact such that I can work here for them. So I think that it'll be probably quite a bit distributed" (Respondent V. years, university graduate, information specialist, Liberec)

On the other side of the region center, they provide relatively interesting work opportunity and in connection with the good living environment level, they are attractive even for a lifelong program.

"Precisely that firm I worked for, that's one of the most profitable companies here, it's French, and it belongs to them. Well and then what they're doing here, of course that that Škoda. They make those plastic bumpers, and it all gives work for people. And these companies bring besides these work opportunities, they improve the living environment. And lately, even that streetcar got better here. That is we have..... that ride is smooth, streetcars are modernized. It is, that development here is." (Respondent S. 24 years, university graduate, Liberec)

Not everybody longs for the life in a big city. There are always more factors in the game for the regional identity. The respondent was dissatisfied with living in Liberec and that is why she moved to a smaller town.

"Well. For instance in Liberec I didn't like,... they are there or just they were so strange with each other, here when I needed something they just helped me or chatted a bit or they just went to have coffee and that it was there like that I don't know. That was what I didn't like you know." (Respondent. 22 years, secondary school, Č.)

It is important that even at the places with not so good economic conditions for satisfied life and especially for the perspectives of young people, there are efforts to solve the situation independently. These are mostly individual solutions but they nevertheless confirm the possibilities and synergetic sources of the social system even in the endangered sub-regions. In some situations, young people solve the lack of work opportunities by trying to conduct business:

"... so we started business in flower gardening ... but it doesn't look so easily as we thought. That competition here is something. Well and now another company started here so three are already too many for J., so we'll see how it comes out." (Respondent V. 30 years now a florist, J.).

Or another example from the same town:

"My husband would invest in his car repair workshop, that's his dream... so that we might possibly improve our housing a bit and especially probably that car repair so that he could become independent, because it's his hobby and he is skillful and I must say that also unfortunately or rather thank God even the customers from the service go to him, they go directly here to him, so he would actually need that workshop and now I really don't know... We have let's say right next to our house we have two lovely pieces of ground so there like, we have an ideal picture right now, such ideas are here you know, but no money well..." (Respondent 28 years, J.)

Though not even these solutions are easy and probably not very realistic and perspective, they represent the effort of this part of young people in the sub-region, where the economy is depressed significantly, to solve the complicated situation independently and stand on their own legs.

We can find a solution even in a broader scope. Some respondents pursue not only their personal needs but also those of their municipality or region. Or they at least think about these connections.

"...And that is why there must be more generation so that they had that relationship to that. For instance my father was born here he has that relationship. We were born here and work on that our kids and my husband had that feeling someday you know... so that everything was nice one day ..." (Respondent 22 years, L.)

5 Summary

The brief illustrative analysis of narrative biographies of the inhabitants in the Czech part of the Euroregion Nisa allows making some preliminary conclusions about their attachment to the region. Selection of the respondent was carried out so that it covered the above stated socio-cultural milieu and thus provided, ideally, a complex picture of this issue. The selection is however not sufficient in some areas, which regards especially the business atmosphere and the environment of local elites. In total, over fifty pairs of biographies we have, provide sufficiently substantiated findings about the regional identity.

The regional identity of both examined generations of the inhabitants in the Euroregion Nisa is generally very strong. The regional identity of "grandfathers" generation, which came here mostly after the war, is, though partially, affected by the fact of "double home". This is however traceable only on the verbal memory level. We have not recorded any case of interest in moving away. It is interesting that a substantial part of young people counts with this "double home", but they mostly identify very strongly with the places of their youth and at the same time come across its certain limitedness (especially the country parts of the region) as for the job offers or even other life conditions. On the other hand, there are possibilities offered both by large centers (Praha) and abroad.

Identity with the region is generally associated in both generations with its ecological and aesthetical qualities. The respondents appreciate the favorable conditions for relaxation and sport. In those places of the reviewed region, where there is concurrence of these circumstances with still rather favorable economic situation (especially the regional centers Liberec-Jablonec region), there is overall satisfaction and high level of regional identity regardless whether these are old settlers or those who came after the year 1945 or even later. The whole part of Euroregion Nisa is different than the German and Polish part as for the concurrence of these "natural" and "industrial" circumstances, where there are especially negative effects of the gradual depression and liquidation of the fuel industry.

The least favorable situation for the regional identity is in those parts of the region, where the textile industry was practically destroyed and the engineering industry was reduced. These are especially the Šluknov and Frýdlant parts. There are certain problems also in the Semily region and partially even in the Česká Lípa region. That is where we observe the strongest realized and manifested migration tendencies. In this regard, we may consider problematic especially the migration tendencies of young people with university education. Even though we can find manifestation of the positive attachment to the region in their statements, the departure of qualified people means to the great extent weakening of the regional potential. On the contrary, a positive expression of regional identification under these hard conditions are the efforts especially of the young

people to look for their living in the form of starting new businesses in the professions, which may bring not only the personal profit but they are profitable for the region as well. The positive outside-the-region migration balances indicate attractiveness of the Liberec region, especially of its industry and relaxation centers.

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R é s u m é

Stručná analýza narativních biografí obyvatel české části euroregionu Nisa umožňuje učinit některé předběžné závěry o jejich vztahu k regionu. Výběr respondentů byl proveden tak, aby pokrýval hlavní sociokulturní milieu a poskytl tak pokud možno ucelený a přiměřeně reprezentativní obraz o této problematice. Celkově bylo analyzováno přes padesát dvojic biografí generace prarodičů a generace vnuků, poskytují dostatečně zdůvodněné poznatky o regionální identitě.

Identita v české části euroregionu Nisa je, jak vyplývá z biografických vyprávění, u obou generací všeobecně opřena o její ekologické a estetické kvality. Jsou zejména oceňovány příznivé podmínky pro rekreaci a sport. V těch místech posuzovaného regionu, kde je souběh těchto okolností s celkem příznivou ekonomickou situací (hlavně regionální centra Liberecko-Jablonecko) existuje všeobecná spokojenost a vysoká míra regionální identity bez ohledu na to zda se jedná o předválečné starousedlíky, či o osídlence, kteří přišli po roce 1945, nebo i později. Celá česká část euroregionu Nisa se, pokud jde o souběh těchto „přírodních“ a „industriálních“ okolností liší od německé i polské části, kde zejména negativně působí postupný útlum a likvidace průmyslu paliv.

Nejméně příznivá situace pro regionální identitu mají ty části území, kde byl prakticky likvidován textilní průmysl a omezeno i strojírenství. Jde především Šluknovský a Frýdlantský výběžek. Určité problémy jsou ovšem také na Semilsku a částečně i na bývalém okrese Česká Lípa. Zde konstatujeme také nejsilnější realizované i manifestované migrační tendence. V tomto ohledu za problematický lze zejména považovat migrační tendence mladých lidí s vysokoškolským vzděláním. I když i u nich se setkáváme s manifestací pozitivního vztahu k regionu, je odchod kvalifikovaných lidí do značné míry ochuzením územního potenciálu. Za pozitivní výraz regionální identifikace v těchto obtížných podmínkách je možno naopak považovat snahu, části mladých lidí hledat obživu v místě formou zakládání živností v oborech, které mohou přinést nejen vlastní profit a jsou i přínosné pro region. Pozitivní mimoregionální migrační bilance naznačuje přitažlivost Libereckého kraje, hlavně jeho průmyslových a rekreačních center. Je však otázka zda zůstane tato tendence v souvislosti s ekonomickými změnami v regionu zachována i v příštích letech.

Regionální identita obou zkoumaných generací obyvatel euroregionu Nisa je celkově velmi silná. Regionální identita generace prarodičů, kteří přišli do pohraničí z větší části po válce v roce 1945, je i když jen u části dotazovaných poznamenána faktem „dvojího domova“. To se však pohybuje jen ve vzpomínkách na místo svého dětství označované jako „tam u nás doma“. Nezaznamenali jsme ani jeden případ zájmu o odstěhování. S tímto „dvojím domovem“ počítá i značná část mladých lidí, kteří se již většinou narodili v euroregionu a jsou také velmi silně identifikovaní s místy svého mládí a kteří vzhledem k nedostatečné pracovní nabídce a problémy s dopravou (zejména z malých obcí regionu) musí hledat svoje uplatnění mimo region. Většina z nich ovšem plánuje návrat do regionu a zdůrazňuje silné citové vazby k tomuto domovu.