

## Reviews

### Atlas Wyszehradzki–Visegrad Atlas. Ed. Przemysław Śleszyński, Konrad Czapiewski

Instytut Współpracy Polsko-Węgierskiej im. Waława Felczaka–Polskie Towarzystwo Geograficzne, Warszawa 2021. 299 pages.

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The Visegrad Atlas (Atlas Wyszehradzki) is a book of maps presenting the geographical diversity of the Visegrad Group (V4) countries - Czechia, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia – from social and economic point of view. While it was written and edited by the *Polish Geographical Society* (Polskie Towarzystwo Geograficzne), the publication of the Atlas was financed by the *Wacław Felczak Institute of Polish-Hungarian Cooperation* (Instytut Współpracy Polsko-Węgierskiej im. Waława Felczaka). The Wacław Felczak Institute is a Polish centre based in Warsaw, most important of all, it is not to be confused with its Hungarian partner organization the *Wacław Felczak Foundation* (Wacław Felczak Alapítvány) in Budapest. Namesake Felczak was a Polish historian, an avid researcher of Polish-Hungarian relations and a frequent visitor of Hungary, who is (or shall be) famous for organizing a secret courier service between the Polish Home Army and the Polish government-in-exile in London through the Hungarian capital during World War II. The Institution bearing his name was established by an act of the Sejm on 8 February 2018. Since then it has been functioning as the organizing body of summer universities, project financier and news portal operator – this Atlas, which was published in February 2021, perfectly fits the Institution’s framework. Prof. Maciej Szymanowski, the Institute’s director, wrote the preface, which, by a conscious choice, is available in 5 languages (Polish, Hungarian, Slovak, Czech and English). That triggers a wider interest within the Visegrad Group countries, which are – according to Szymanowski – *geographical-*

ly embedded in Central Europe and politically in the architecture of the European Union; thus, this Atlas is an invitation to everyone to get objective knowledge about the region, the *free and democratic Central Europe*. The director's rhetorical or rather theatrical question is simple: is this region to play the role of Sisyphus or Hercules in the near future?

The Atlas does not reflect this question directly, but it contributes to place the Visegrad Group countries in the global competition, according to their respective social and economic development. In order to do so, the publication sums up the four countries' geography, history, human resources, economy, ecology, urbanism, healthcare, religion, tourism and transportation – the main topics that are divided into 50 chapters, described on 267 pages, including issues from historical borders through sports and migration all the way to cryptocurrencies. The chapters are edited to be shorter than usual or expected, which is the result of deliberate decision in order to reach a wider audience and provide brief, easily understandable explanations of the selected topics chapter by chapter. The Atlas is rich in figures and tables, and many colourful maps help the reader – figuratively speaking - dive into this pool of information. The editorial preface by Przemysław Śleszyński and Konrad Czapiewski from the *Polish Geographical Society* also lists the primarily addressed audience: *administration and offices, experts, scientists and students*. I suppose the main target audience may be Polish readers, especially the younger generations – the entire Atlas or most of the chapters could be applied as teaching material at Polish universities. Being the Atlas bilingual, via the translated text (Polish-English), it could elevate the desired foreign interest, even beyond the horizon of the Visegrad Group.

Does the Atlas provide factual knowledge about the V4 and Central Europe? I will try to respond this question by detailing some of the key chapters of the book, but first, I have to react on some more general issues, such as what were the sources of the atlas and where the authors gained their information. When looking at the main data sources listed at the end of each chapter, as well as the literature and the supplementary sources printed at the end of the publication, one can see a high number of English language sources, mainly from Polish authors – the usage of international and Polish sources reaches a staggering 85 percent (pages 292–297), while Czech, Slovak and Hungarian publications are only represented by a mere 34

percent even in the list of main data sources (pages 288–291). Therefore, the Atlas provides objective knowledge about the region, but it is heavily oriented towards Poland considering the use of predominantly Polish language literature.

The first chapter, titled as *Geographical location*, gives a comprehensive list of first-level administrative regions in the four countries, providing a quite useful introduction to the area and its contemporary status. It was compiled by Tomasz Nowacki and one of the editors, Przemysław Śleszyński. In my opinion, the most detailed and useful parts of the Atlas made up by 3 other chapters, which were written by the latter. These chapters – *Density of population*, *Size structure and administrative hierarchy of cities*, *Gravitation of cities* – outline urban centres and urban relations in Central Europe by their population in their core and in agglomeration. The writer unfolds the attraction and power of the urban areas – as these are one of the most important development bases. The section *Density of population* (co-author: Marcin Mazur) involves three maps, one figure and a table, by which the authors tend to provide a detailed description on the current situation of the V4's urbanization and spatial structure on the basis of population density. The first map applies 46600 spatial units, where the average size of a unit is 11,4 km<sup>2</sup>. The data reflects clearly that on the contrary to Poland's population structure, in Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary, the majority of the population lives in areas less than 1000 inhabitants per 1km<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, comparatively speaking, the level of urbanization is higher in Czechia, Hungary and Western Poland, thanks to historical conditions, which are still measurable by today's social-economic structure. The authors came to the conclusion that only Poland has a favourable layout in the density of population, the other countries are monocentric – they mention Budapest as an example - the city with the least favourable setting, because the Hungarian capital clearly dominates over the whole country. Śleszyński at the beginning of the next chapter, *Size structure and administrative hierarchy of cities*, states that the region is not homogenous regarding the number and distribution of cities: rapid industrialization and the internal mass migration during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century hardly delayed urbanization.

When looking at the first table of this chapter on page 97, one can see that only seven cities exceeded to 500.000 inhabitants – out of which 3 are national capitals (Prague, Budapest, Warsaw) and the other 4 are found in Poland (Kraków, Wrocław, Łódź, Poznań). According to the data introduced, Poland has the most polycentric system of cit-

ies in the region and by no surprise, Hungary has the least balanced. According to Śleszyński, changing the distribution of the cities and finding the optimal relationship between the size and the range of influence is the most difficult challenge of development policy and regional planning. *Gravitation of cities*, the following chapter, deals with the difference between healthy gravitation and harmful absorption. The first figure of the chapter (page 101) is one of the maps that opens up the borders of the Visegrad Group countries and presents a minimal outlook on the external connections of the region's cities. The figure shows the polycentric system of connections in Central Europe: the strong ties with the fully inter-connected north-western part of the continent, the loose ends to Southern Europe and the four countries on the receiving end of Eastern Europe's ever westward, but weak connections. The geographical and high demographic potential of Katowice, Kraków and Ostrava are clearly visible. The only shortcoming of the map is the missing links of Gdańsk and Gdynia – the two cities stand alone on the northern end, surprisingly untouched areas by either Warsaw or Berlin. The second figure of the chapter closes the previous map's borders and focuses only on the gravitation between the cities of the Visegrad Group by indicating the 3 most significant links of each city to another in the region. I have an interesting observation on this map: one can instantly notice that there are only few cities in Slovakia (Žilina, Sobrance etc.) without a direct link to Budapest - Hungary, not even one can be found without that. We can compare the Polish Gubin and the Hungarian Barcs, both relatively far from their respective capitals; while Gubin is connected to regional Zielona Góra and Lubsko, the city has no link to Warsaw, but to a foreign, much closer capital city: Prague. Barcs, on the contrary, has a striking direct link to Budapest, while holding two regional connections to Pécs and Kaposvár. These well-written chapters – *Density of population, Size structure and administrative hierarchy of cities* and *Gravitation of cities* – show where our current urban opportunities are found in the region, but one shall notice the striking mistakes of the pattern as well.

The chapter titled as *Stability of political borders* provides a modern and rather unhistorical understanding of the V4 countries and their borders presented by 8 maps on pages 28–29 and one on page 30. While the authors state at the beginning that modern, very precise linear borders only appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, their protection dates back into the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and onwards. In my opinion, showcasing

the territorial changes of the historical predecessors of the V4 countries would have been more exciting, beginning with the creation of the Hungarian, Czech and Polish kingdoms, starting somewhat around the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

*Endonyms and exonyms of larger cities* is one of the most exciting chapters of the Atlas. It was written by Tomasz Panecki, and it takes a linguistic approach in order to establish a deeper understanding of the intercultural urban connections in Central Europe. The focus is on urban settlements and their nomenclature with a population higher than 50000 inhabitants, which are all featured on a detailed map (1:500000) on page 41. The aim of the chapter, facilitated by the map and an extra figure, is to exhibit a certain conceptual and spatial proximity of exonyms in the social consciousness of the V4 countries. Panecki made the endonym-exonym distinction in a modern way, where the endonym is in the official (national) language and the exonym can be read in other official languages of the V4 countries. As I examined the Atlas, I realized that history was put aside by the author. The first proof of the decision is the exclusion of Latin and German geographical names from the analysis. These rather faded remnants of a multi-ethnic history are culturally significant, and in several cases, they are still used not only by religious groups – the weight of Latin in the Catholic Church is unquestionable, – or the German ethnic minority, but also they do so well beyond that. Latin and German geographical names in the region are known and frequently used, moreover researched by scientists of many academic disciplines. The second proof, however, is more subtle. By the endonym-exonym definitions declared by UNGEGN (United Nation Group of Experts on Geographical Names), an endonym is a name of a geographical feature either in an official or in a well-established language occurring in the area where that feature is located.<sup>1</sup> This definition could raise a rather rhetorical question. If the local people were – even to this day – multicultural or multi-ethnic, as well as their settlements on greater geographical areas had more denominations than one – mirroring the linguistic variation, do we indeed have to decide between an endonym and exonym based on the cultural-ethnic division, where the name used by the majority will automatically get the endonym label? [*See the debate on the Triaon Monument in Budapest – translator's note.*] Providing the well-established toponym and creating a more

1 <http://ungegn.zrc-sazu.si/>

detailed approach, according to the UNGEGN definitions, could have been useful in this matter. Nonetheless, we shall appreciate that divided cities as Cieszyn/Těšín and Komárno/Komárom were under the radar of the author, because the cities, if reunited at present, would have a population of over 50000 inhabitants, and the author would have challenged to make a distinction between an endonym or an exonym. However, the problematic issues in this chapter are yet to end here. The Hungarian exonyms in Poland and Czechia are only used sporadically, meaning it is hard to keep track of their applications, but they still exist. For instance, while its contemporary use is very limited, *Boroszló* – the historical Hungarian geographical name for Wrocław, derived from the German Breslau – was taken into account by the author very precisely. Brno was labelled in Hungarian as *Berén* – a historical, nearly forgotten version again, – yet most Hungarians know the Moravian capital by its German name, *Brünn*. Panecki failed to mention *Dancka* as a historical Hungarian exonym for Gdańsk, *Csensztohova* or *Csensztokó* for Częstochowa, *Gnézna* for Gniezno, *Ladisló* for Włocławek, *Palacka* for Płock, *Petrikó* for Piotrków Trybunalski, *Opoly* for Opole, *Toronya* for Toruń, and in Czechia, *Alamóc* for Olomouc. Following up with the list of errors, in the Slovak language, Tarnowskie Góry is *Tarnovice*, Pécs is *Pät'kostolie*, Győr is *Ráb*, Székesfehérvár is *Stoličný Belehrad*, and Miskolc could be *Miškolc*, too. In addition, two versions exist for Székesfehérvár in Polish: *Białogród Stołeczny* and *Białogród Królewski*.

As honourable mentions, I shall praise two further chapters, *Natura 2000 ecological network* from Yuliia Semeniuk and Anna Kowalska and *Railway transport* written by Jakub Taczanowski. The initial lists and describes the 28 sites of the Natura 2000 programme in the four countries, which are to establish protection zones for birds and natural habitats of flora and fauna alike. Taczanowski on the other hand, shortly introduces the well-developed, but unevenly distributed railroad network of the Visegrad Group – as it indeed is: strictly objective information about how the four countries are managing their railroads and what could lie ahead in the future.

In summary, the publication of the Atlas is a great improvement for Central Europe and Central European relations. In just one work, the Atlas provides varied, interdisciplinary knowledge to form a deeper understanding of the four countries' unique backgrounds, differences and similarities. As I have stated before, the Atlas will certainly be used by scholars and students, entrepreneurs and politicians and the list may be extended. Numerous professions will find a piece of information in this book, which will

prove to be useful for them. Hopefully, the Atlas will find them – however, this scenario is most likely to happen in Poland, since the Atlas itself is Polish, and therefore deeply centred around Polish perspectives and opinions. For instance, a Hungarian reader, who would like to learn more about Czechia, will hardly find useful information about that country, however, they will clearly discover how Poland sees the rest of the Visegrad Group countries; and that has key advantages. Thus, I would urge the wide audience who have the smallest flick of interest in these four countries about who have formed the political Central Europe, just after exiting the Soviet sphere of influence, to take a seat and get through this huge amount of facts and figures, presented by the *Polish Geographical Society*. It is worth reading.

Bence Biró

## Stipe Kljaić, *Nikada više Jugoslavija. Intelektualci i hrvatsko nacionalno pitanje, 1929–1945.*

[Never more Yugoslavia: Croatian Intellectuals and the National Question, 1929–1945] Hrvatski institut za povijest, Zagreb 2017. 436 pages

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Stipe Kljaić, a member of the younger generation of Croatian historians, published his first book in 2017 titled as, *Nikada više Jugoslavija: Intelektualci i hrvatsko nacionalno pitanje (1929. – 1945.)* [Never more Yugoslavia: Croatian Intellectuals and the National Question, 1929-1945]. The publisher was his home institution, the Croatian Institute of History (HIP) in Zagreb, where he is employed as a research associate. The book is based on Kljaić's doctoral dissertation that he defended at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Zagreb in 2015. The dissertation was notably improved and expanded before the researcher decided to publish his book, which is the result of eight years of research.

Kljaić's book is a remarkable work on the intellectual history of the Croatian intelligentsia in the first half of the 20th century. The author considers *intellectual history* as the main social and political ideas of the era and their appropriation in the Croatian intellectual public, the different interpretations of Croatian identity, as well