

NEW TRENDS IN CZECH AND WORLD HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

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Abstract: Application of historical approach in geography, brought about by an increasing need to understand the past state and evolution of functional and social space structures (regional processes and evolution of space organization of the society) to forecast their future development, is a challenge mainly for historical geographers. Especially the historical geographical research aimed at studying the geographical image of a territory either during a given period of the past or in its long-term development, tends to explain the historical roots of the present state and character of the given territory, as well as the genesis of formation of mutual relations and processes in nature - society interactions.

Key words: historical geography, cultural historical geography, regional geography, environmental historical geography

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with principal trends in the development of the Czech historical geography with a special view at the development during the last decade, with continuity and discontinuity of historical geographical research and with its comparison with the development of the orientation of historical geographical research in the world.

It also considers the not yet solved themes and possible orientations of historical geographical research or proposes its possible implementation in view to strengthen the historical approach in the research on geographical and space approaches in historiography. Especially the final part of the text should be understood as an impulsion to discuss the importance of historical and cultural factors in geography in a period when studies on economic and social transformation predominate without paying more attention to cultural transformation.

2. HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY IN THE SYSTEM OF SCIENCES - "BETWEEN CURRENTS"

In this place, it is not necessary to think out and to develop theoretic reflections on the convenience and inconvenience of different definitions of historical geography. Because of the necessary general "framing" of the paper and in respect to final understanding of the position of Czech historical geographical research, within the context of the present trends in the world, I will only repeat several basic theses related to this problem.

What is above all meant under the term of historical geography? There exist a number of different definitions by different authors. All of them nevertheless agree in one issue: historical geography is a scientific discipline dealing with, as appositely expressed by R. J. Johnston (1994), the geography of the past; it thus thinks in categories of space and time. So far, agreement prevails. Controversies or disagreement (and that also among the historical geographers themselves) appear when incorporating historical geography into the system of sciences. Here the spectrum of traditional opinions differs as follows:

1. historical geography is considered as an independent scientific discipline at the limit of social and nature sciences,
2. historical geography is a discipline of geography,
3. historical geography is a discipline of historiography, respectively an auxiliary historical science. As an untraditional fourth opinion could be quoted assertion on "the non existence of historical geography" representing the position of both some historians and geographers.

Historical geography uses the findings and in the same time forms the bases of the majority of geographical and historical branches. It is a scientific discipline at the limit of geography and history, inquiring about the historical image of the given territory either in a certain period of the past or in its long-term development, with the aim to explain historical roots of its present state and character (L. Jeleček, 1996).

All the more detailed definitions (R.J. Johnston 1996, R.A. Butlin 1993) reflect the evolution of historical geography on the background of the evolution of thinking, similarly as in geography (historical geography being at first formed within geography): beginning with the research on the history of discoveries and travels, history of cartographic illustration, history of changes of borders of political units (development of the political map of the world), geographical determinism (which physical geographical factor had a historical impact on evolution of the society), studying of historically variable ways how the human groups settled in given localities and in given regions with the given physical-geographical environment, studying of the impact of natural environment on the human society and adaptation of human to nature, and finally the classical links of historical geography with history of countries, law, territorial administrative development, social and economic history, etc.

The traditional empirical historical geography before the 1960's thus started with reconstruction of geographical environment in the past. Since H.C. Darby (1930's), it has been studying landscape as a permanently transforming object influenced by the system of settlement, the origin and the development of communications, etc.

The modern positivist historical geography (late 1960's, 1970's and 1980's) studied field evidences and cultural geographical problems at the limit of contact disciplines - archaeology and anthropology. It looked for answers to the following questions: Why a certain landscape looks as it looks? What has given to the landscape its present character? It studied causes and coherence of changes. Under the influence of the quantitative revolution, application of new methods was registered, mainly of those of modelling the space organisation of the society. T. Grap, T. Heimgartner and A. Kaufmann (1999) delimit within this period several "internal" phases: the *scientific historical phase* (description and interpretation of cultural landscape, existence of specific objects of inquiry: earth, surface, space, region, landscape, searching for constants of evolution of cultural landscape and for a complex functional coherence, evaluation of individual cultural elements and their consequent protection); *functional dynamic phase* (research of the human - nature interaction) and the *theoretical mathematical phase* (the research is not anymore primarily aimed at objects of the Earth surface, but a mutual affection of elements, using of quantitative methods, consequent social scientific orientation and approaching to practice; settled areas are considered as a part of a system consisting of a great number of elements that are mutually interconnected by an information and energy network).

The post-modern historical geography (since the 1980's) has been focused at the human as an agent of geographical changes and at elaboration of historical geographical syntheses and space analyses of regions (A.R.H. Baker 1987). A new dimension of the discipline appears then in the period of ecologization of science in the 1980's, in connection with the development of environmental history. The theoretic conception of environmental history is largely similar or nearly identical to the definition of historical geography as a discipline expressing the space-time relation between the human and the nature (L. Jeleček 1994a, 1994b).

3. WHAT IS THEN THE PRESENT HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY CONCERNED WITH? - CONTENT AND TASKS

The subject of the present historical geography is the same as that of the present geography: research of space structures of all kind, with the difference that the historical geographical research is not centred on present space structures of Earth surface but on its aspects and "space functioning" in the past in historical continuity. Typical is a shift from description to explanation of the genesis of transformation of natural and cultural landscape, functional-spatial and social-spatial relations in the past, and to the history of the interaction human-nature in general, as well as to the history of nature and its

protection, etc., that is the investigation of functions, processes and forces in their background. Historical geography comes thus with reconstruction of the function of "disappeared space" in "disappeared time" (Semotanová 1995). Thanks to the new research trends (historical land use, studies on historical landscape, evolution of natural landscape, and thanks to the process of the global environmentalization of science in general) historical geography can be again presented as a dynamically developing discipline.

In this sense, historical geography is thus different for each historical period (also thanks to the source base of the historical geographical knowledge); it is therefore necessary and possible to write for each historical epoch a specific historical geography. The methods are determined by combination of approaches from the disciplines of historical sciences (historical cartography and studying of old maps, palaeogeography, material relics - field monitoring, historical statistics) and geographical sciences (for instance spatial social-geographical analysis), etc. In connection with the environmentalization of historical geography, there newly appears the necessity to use sociological methods, mainly the research methods of social ecology and cultural anthropology. The interest gets transferred also to other branches of geography, geobotany, history of vegetation. There is also a significant shift to regional studies (regional analyses, research of model territories).

4. APPLIED HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

A sensible shift from traditional themes towards the research of historic land use, the part of individual or minorities, marginal and peripheral regions is registered not only at the level of theoretic research, but also at the level of application. The knowledge of the evolution of space structures in the past contributes to understanding of the present state and to a determination of a more stable future development.

The historical dimension of research should be therefore immediately reflected for example in territorial planning. In the present cultural landscape there is a rich potential of historical, for instance building elements and landscape relics of older periods, which have their educational, utilitarian and cultural value, because they evidence of the life of minority cultures and of the society in general. A special task of the historical geography is to reach a complex understanding of the present cultural landscape that is the proper object of territorial planning. In the same time, the relevant historical geography should not be oriented only at a simple evaluation of historical monuments. It should mediate to the planning the understanding of historical connections which would enable the territorial planners to better evaluate their momentous position at present and to uncover the measure of suitability or unsuitability (often with hidden risks) of a concrete planned space arrangement (for instance unsuitability of localization of certain activities, importance of tradition). Essential are the research of phenomena inertia, of historical contingency and the identification of principal forces affecting the development of a

territory. The aim of regional historical geographical studies must be therefore to discover the brakes of development. However, in the same time, it should strengthen the regional identity as a basic element of global civilization, while the elements as tradition and cultural geographical relics may be used for instance in management of a territory in view to develop tourism, etc.

5. SITUATION IN THE CZECH HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

The situation of the historical geographical research in Czechia in the last decade has been determined by the previous development of the branch, respectively by the orientation of individual historical geographic schools. Since the beginning of the 20th century, several idea streams have formed in the Czech historical geography (E. Semotanová 1998), the individual schools of which develop the subject and conception of the discipline in the sense mostly fixed by their founders. The following classical traditional schools can be specified:

1. regional historical geography within the historical homeland studies - the historical national history and geography (J.V. Šimák, F. Roubík, L. Hosák, J. Bartoš, J. Schulz, M. Trapl)
2. historical geography as a branch including other related scientific disciplines (B. Horák)
3. historical geography as an auxiliary historic science (J. Kašpar, O. Zwettler)
4. historical geography as a partial geographic science (O. Pokorný, D. Trávníček)
5. historical geography as an independent (interdisciplinary) scientific discipline (F. Vaniš, A. Boháč, L. Jeleček, E. Semotanová)

Since the late 1980's new trends have arisen:

1. historical geography, historical land use and environmental history (L. Jeleček, I. Bičík)
2. historical geography, historical climatology (J. Munzar, R. Brázdil)
3. historical geography, landscape ecology and archaeology (Z. Lipský, T. Velímský)

Traditional schools mostly part from approaches used in the German-speaking countries (where historical geography gets institutionalized mostly within historiography). However, new trends of the last decade (especially historic land use and environmental historical geography) have their roots in the British and American historical geography, where research is carried on in the field of geographical, newly also historical and environmental sciences). A specific separation of historical geography from geography in the 1950's took place in Central Europe. It was before the start of the quantitative revolution in geography in the 1960's. The regressive position of historical geography as an "auxiliary" science providing map appendices of historical works have caused that the present Czech historical geography not only lack one

development phase, but that it hardly looks for its relation to a more progressively developing geography. A chance for reconciliation is the post-positivist conception of reality by the geography and a strengthening application of historical approaches in geographical research.

From the viewpoint of institutionalization, the following work places and leading personalities keep in the forefront of the research streams. In the first two cases, the work places maintain their previous orientation also with modern trends reflection (the obvious drive of environmentalization links to the process of ecologization of history - historical ecology and historical geography of environment - at the end of the 1980's). The characteristic feature of the other ones is the development and application of new trends and approaches. A special attention should be paid to an analysis of university teaching of historical geography.

In the framework of historical sciences, they are:

1. Institute of History of the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic (succession organization of the Department of Economic History and Historical Geography of the Institute of Czechoslovak and World History of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science, which was, until 1989, the institutional base of the Czech historical geography) with the predominance of traditional research on settlement structure (historical geography of settlements) and historical cartography. Exactly there is being implemented an in the Czech situation unique project of Historical Atlas of Towns of the Czech Republic (the up to now published issues: České Budějovice, Děčín, Hradec Králové, Litoměřice, Pardubice, Slaný). One of the leading personalities is E. Semotanová, author of the up to now only incomplete synthesis of historical geography of Czech lands (E. Semotanová 1998).
2. Department of Regional History of the Faculty of Arts, Palacký University, Olomouc, oriented at regional history, historical topography and historical homeland studies (the historical regional history and geography). Its leading representatives are J. Bartoš, J. Schulz and M. Trapl.

In the framework of geographical sciences, they are:

3. Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Faculty of Science, Charles University, Prague, oriented at research of long-term changes in land use (headed by I. Bičík) - formation of historical land use in Czech geography (land use of Czechia 1845-1948-1990-1999) also in international connections (institutional activities of the IGU commission Land Use/Cover Changes and the common international programme IGBH and HDP "LUCC"), that is research on development of interactions of society and environment and other environmental problems. The leading representative of the historical geographical orientation L. Jeleček also develops PhD studies of historical geography.
4. Department of Geography, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Brno, and Institute of Geonics, aimed at historical climatology (R. Brázdil, J. Munzar)

Neither the world, nor the Czech historical geography is institutionally rooted. The Czech historical geographers take part at international conferences of historical

geographers (representing the Anglo-Saxon historical geography). The principal historical geographical journal in the world has been since 1975 the *Journal of Historical Geography*, published by Academic Press publishing house in London and New York. In the years 1986-96, its English editor was A. R. H. Baker, Department of Geography, University of Cambridge, since 1997 it has been edited by M. Heffernan, Department of Geography, Loughborough University. In Czechia it is the volume *Historická geografie* (Historical Geography) published since 1968 by the Institute of History, Academy of Science of the Czech Republic. It presents the results of historical geographical research or the projects in course, records new ideas and possible research perspectives. Its 30th issue will be published at the end of 1999.

When regarding the nearly thirty issues of the volume *Historická geografie* and comparing the orientation of the Czech historical geography with the development of historical geography in the world, we arrive at a conclusion that the Czech historical geography faces a whole series of tasks and of possibilities of orientation of historical geographical research, as well as up to now not solved or insufficiently solved problems.

6. TASKS OF THE CZECH HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

At the level of theoretical studies:

- ♦ It is necessary to continue to pay attention to and to develop theoretical and methodological issues of historical geographical studies, to follow the present trends in the world historical geography (transformations and separation into different streams), respectively its continuing disintegration, to follow the evolution of the environmentalization process of historical geographical studies as a possible vision of its paradigmatic reintegration, to pay attention to the evolution of environmental history.
- ♦ It is necessary to follow the development of historical approaches in geography and of spatial approaches in historiography.
- ♦ Up to now, the Czech historical geography lacks the synthesis, the indispensable condition of which is elaboration of analytical-syntactical historical-geographical studies at the limit of historical and cultural geography, history, cultural anthropology and ethnography.

At the level of practical research:

- ♦ A shift is necessary towards regional historical geography (using positive elements of regionalism), to the application of historical geographical findings into the fields of regional development and territorial planning, in the territorial management, for instance from the point of view of tourism (A. Komlosy ed. 1995).
- ♦ The up to now neglected, or insufficiently resolved problem is equally the cultural historical geography. It should concerns not only material cultures, in the actual

conception monasteries, but cultures in geographical concept - language segment, religion, ethnicity, etc. in interaction of society and nature, towards a sustainable way of coexistence between the human and the nature.

- ♦ From the spatial viewpoint, it is indispensable to aim the present historical geographical research of regional processes and of development of spatial organization of society to the level of microregions - the research of relatively natural geographical units and identification of by development typologically different territorial units, with a particular attention to:
 - identification of principal factors of functional-spatial and social-spatial changes and evolution of the interaction society - environment at the microregional level in the past
 - identification of cultural and historically (by development) differentiated territories, delimitation, diversification and differentiation of cultural regions in the territory of Czechia and Slovakia, research on the impact of ethnicity in the development of society and space
 - evaluation of the state, development and perspectives of the evolution of typologically specific territories from the cultural-geographic and historical - geographical viewpoints (cultural-historical potential of development), for instance near-border regions, peripheral territories, cultural regions (formal, functional and mental - perceptual), etc.
 - research on the impact of tradition and regional identity on natural environment and human organization of space in the past, for example in ethnographically specific regions: Moravské Kopyce, Valašsko, Slovácko, Hornácko, etc. (R. Jeřábek 1990, J. Vařeka 1997)
 - research of ways of living, style, quotidian reality, mentality and coexistence of smaller groups of population in the past and impact of these factors on changes in the organization of space
 - functional-spatial analysis: land use, development of transport system (with a special stress put upon the impact of local railways of the 3rd order on the development of non-industrialized areas), industrialization process, etc.
 - inquiry on the state and development of spatial structures and of landscape before the industrial revolution
 - definition of historical-geographical region (as a social, economic and cultural-geographical region delimited according to relatively closed space relations in the past and characterized by the dichotomy centre - background and "oscillating" limit), inquiry on the part of the historical geographical border in the today's space, elaboration of historical GIS and its using in geography, regional and territorial planning.

From the time viewpoint, it is necessary to pay a special attention to:

- ♦ the pre-industrial epoch of our history (feudalism), but mainly to
- ♦ the period immediately before the start of industrial revolution - "space revolution": period at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries and in the first half of the 19th century

- ♦ the period of the second half of the 20th century - displacement of Germans of Czechia, onset and fall of the communist regime.

In a partial way, these problems are solved under the form of historical analyses within grant projects at the Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Faculty of Science, Charles University, Prague (Grant Agency of the CR - "Land Use/Cover Changes: evolution, situation, perspectives", responsible I. Bičík; Grant Agency of Charles University - "Perspectives of the development of peripheral regions in the Czech Republic", responsible V. Jančák; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the CR - "The role of the Czech Republic borderland and the importance of the economic and political cooperation with the bordering countries in the interactions of the Czech Republic to the European Union", responsible M. Jeřábek; Ministry of Agriculture of the CR - "Attempt of historical-geographical typology of the territory for the needs of strategical development of the Kocába catchment area", responsible I. Bičík, R. Perlin.

7. CONCLUSION

Johnston's definition in the Dictionary of Human Geography touches the core of the problem: historical geography is the geography of the past. On the one hand, there is a geographical space, on the other hand is time; they are interdependent and dialectically bound together. Historical geography is a limit science linking the elements of space and time in a dynamical process of inquiry into cultural space or as a view at the history of spatial structures in different time epochs, whereas there does not exist time without space and space without time.

On the base of the survey of the development of historical geography and of historical geographical thinking in the world, it is possible to identify and to present the evolution specifics of the historical geography in Czechia. Above all, there is a paradigmatic dichotomy of historical geographical studies in our country within "historical" and "geographical" historical geography, which is a sequel of the regressive evolution of the discipline mainly since the 1950's. For the Czech historical geography, a deflection from geography is characteristic immediately before the starting of the quantitative revolution in the 1960's and a progressive return into geography under the form of historical approach within the process of its environmentalization and searching for roots of the today's functioning of space. This fact implements a retardation of the thematic orientation of the historical geography in Czechia behind the world historical geography towards cultural-historical-geographical themes.

New research orientations are developing. Remarkable is especially the shift from the traditional economic and social studies to the cultural-geographical research. Not only the understanding of the present state, but also that of the development in the past (understanding of both natural and social factors, political, social, national, cultural and

other specificities) are a condition for a successful formation and functioning of an integrated and regionally itemized structure.

Historical geographical work cannot have only an auxiliary informative function. It must offer a global view of the space in its historical dimension, state and transformation. A special attention must be paid to the necessity of transfer of the research from the academic to the application level.

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Resume

Nové trendy v české a světové historické geografii

Johnstonova definice v Dictionary of Human Geography se dotýká jádra věci: historická geografie je geografii minulosti. Na jedné straně stojí geografický prostor, na druhé čas, oba jsou na sobě závislé, jsou dialekticky propojeny. Historická geografie je hraniční věda spojující elementy prostoru a času v dynamickoprocесivním průzkumu kulturního prostoru nebo jako náhled na dějiny prostorových struktur v různých časových epochách, přičemž neexistuje čas bez prostoru a prostor bez času.

Na základě nástinu vývoje historické geografie a historickogeografického myšlení ve světě lze identifikovat a představit vývojová specifika této disciplíny v Česku. Především paradigmatickou dichotomií historickogeografického studia u nás v prostředí "historické" a "geografické" historické geografie, která je důsledkem regresního vývoje oboru především od 50. let 20. století. Pro českou historickou geografii je charakteristický především odklon od geografie těsně před nástupem kvantitativní revoluce 60. let a postupný návrat do geografie v podobě historického přístupu v rámci procesu její environmentalizace a hledání kořenů současného fungování prostoru. Tato skutečnost sebou nese i zpoždění tematického zaměření historické geografie v Česku za světovou historickou geografii, a to především v oblasti kulturně-historickogeografických studií.

Rozvíjí se nové směry výzkumu, z nich zejména posun od tradičních ekonomických a sociálních studií k výzkumu kulturněgeografickému. Nejen poznání současného stavu, ale i vývoje v minulosti (poznání přírodních i společenských faktorů, politických, sociálních, národnostních, kulturních i jiných specifík), je předpokladem úspěšného vytváření a fungování integrované a regionálně členěné struktury. Historickogeografická práce nemůže plnit jen pomocnou informační funkci. Jde o ucelený pohled na prostor v jeho historickém rozměru, stavu i změně. Zvláštní zřetel je třeba věnovat potřebě posunu výzkmu z roviny akademické do roviny aplikační (do oblasti regionálního plánování, managementu území, cestovního ruchu apod.).