

TV Reporting and Self-governing Regions in the Czech Republic

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Abstract

Local and regional development is increasingly influenced by less traditional soft factors. Mental maps represent one of the most important categories in this respect. Information delivered by media considerably affects the formation of mental maps. Analyses show that TV coverage embodies media agenda in a satisfactory manner just due to the intensity of its impact on the wide public as well as its representative character. News in national TV reporting related to regions and localities importantly co-determine territorial images and in aggregate view also mental maps. This article attempts to examine regionally-related news in Czech national TV reporting from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Thus, TV portrayals of self-governing regions in the Czech Republic related to the period 2004-2010 will be disclosed and assessed. In spite of its relevance, amazingly small amount of research has been devoted to this topic so far.

Key words: self-governing regions, differentiation, mental maps, media, TV

JEL Classification: R10, R19, M30, H80, B59, Z19

1 Introduction

Territories of various types and scales can be examined by various disciplines including economics, geography, sociology, environmental sciences as well as marketing. The latest comprises not only material but also intangible categories. Basically, we are dealing with territorial identity representing internal view and bottom-up approach and territorial image embodying top-down approach or the external reputation of the territory in question. In positive case territorial identity constitutes an intangible territorial clue *sui generis*. This can strengthen also the harmonisation of territorial image with real economic, social, cultural, environmental and other aspects of life of the territory in question.

Both territorial identity and image can be ranked under soft location factors which increasingly supplement traditional hard factors of location. Indeed, factors such as quality of environment, social quality of the population or mental maps are taken into consideration more and more (see Gregory et al, 2009, Hudec et al, 2009 or Suchacek, 2013b). And just mental maps that reflect psychosocial perception of the space and considerably co-determine the geography of future activities constitute an intriguing category (for more information see for instance Gould and White, 1986).

Media territorial contributions can be treated as one of the most important determinants of mental maps. Media contributions influence the audience mainly in the short run, which complies with contemporary emphasis on fast and typically ad hoc solutions. However, frequent repetition of certain topics can affect long term attitudes and behaviour of the population. Mental maps are formed not only through the influence of media but a distinct role is played also by educational institutions, family settings or surrounding milieu in general (Suchacek and Seda, 2011).

Media cannot be perceived as mere observer of surrounding events. On the contrary, they serve as one-way mediator of information from one source to the wide public. In that way, media can underpin the cultural hegemony, i.e. the form of government, when the governing group does not use violence. Last but not least, media should be treated as an important economic category providing its owner with profit or representing the subject of entrepreneurship (see also Galtung and Ruge, 1965, Karlsson and Picard et al, 2011 or Ftopek, 2009).

The traditional mission of media consisted is objective, accurate and unbiased description of reality. Nonetheless, modern media can be already perceived as co-creators of the milieu we are living in. Taking into account the great and steadily growing interconnectedness of the world, media can provide us just with selective cuts of complex reality. People are thus informed about the events but at the same time media more or less conspicuously direct their attitudes, ways of behaviour and the perception of reality. Many people even accept opinions presented by media in a very sophisticated way. Agenda-setting, i.e. accentuation of chosen events or agenda-cutting, i.e. ignorance of selected occurrences play increasingly important role in this context. Subsequently, we are currently entitled to speak about media-territorial or meditorial development rather than about mere territorial development (for more information see for instance McCombs and Shaw, 1972 or Suchacek, Seda and Friedrich, 2013).

Albeit it is mentioned only rarely, there exists spatial-scalar differentiation of media. Naturally, the influence of national media is much higher than those covering regional or local levels. In this article we are concentrating primarily upon national media, more precisely on TV news reporting in public Czech TV and private TV Nova and TV Prima. Comparisons show that TV coverage embodies media agenda in a satisfactory manner because it has rather intense impact on the public on the one hand and is representative enough on the other. News in national TV reporting related to regions and localities importantly co-determine territorial images and in aggregate view also mental maps (Suchacek, 2014).

2 Methods and Objectives

Empirical part of the article is based on unique data purchased from Media Tenor, Ltd., which is a company dealing with a systematic and continuous analysis of media reports in the Czech Republic. TV coverage we examined was represented by evening news of 3 main TV companies in the Czech Republic. The research thus concentrated on Události ČT and Události, komentáře ČT, both of them representing public TV. On the contrary, Televizní noviny constitute part of private TV Nova air time. The same applies to Zprávy of TV Prima. Research that has been done covers the period between 2004 and 2010.

TV coverage has the most intense impact on the public on the one hand and is representative enough on the other. As pointed out by Nečas (2008) TV coverage to a large extent represents also the contents of press or radio coverage. That is why regionally-related contributions appearing within national TV news reporting were taken as a point of departure for this research.

The main objective of this article is to analyse and interpret selected aspects of self-governing NUTS III regions portrayals within TV news reporting. In spite of existing data limitations this will be accomplished from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

Quantitative analysis focuses on the amount of contributions in national TV reporting as territories, which disappear from media space become naturally less conspicuous also in common life. It is useful to consider also the number of inhabitants in the researched NUTS III regions as they personify basic socioeconomic potential of the territory in question.

Qualitative part of this research is based on the content structure of contributions appearing within national TV news reporting. From the perspective of wide public, TV is one of sources, on the basis of which people shape their attitudes, stereotypes and ways of behaviour. Individual themes related to country's self-governing regions include relevant economic, social, environmental and other aspects of life in these territories. Altogether 30 topics were monitored (see also Suchacek, 2014).

3 Results and Discussion

As stated previously, TV reporting is one of the most relevant factors shaping regional images. In reality, individual NUTS III regions in the Czech Republic are rather peculiar and individual domains of their lives, such as population size, quality of life, quality of environment or labour market are geographically rather differentiated. The question remains, however, whether TV news reporting mirrors true situation in country's regions and whether it provides us with unbiased and objective regional portrayals. Quantitative and qualitative analyses, which follow, bring numerous interesting facts related to above mentioned issues.

3.1 Quantitative aspects of NUTS III regions portrayals in national TV news reporting

The first part of our analysis tackles the quantitative part of the relation TV news reporting – NUTS III regions. The amount of contributions about individual regions, which appears at the national level, indicates how often is the region in question mentioned and subsequently, whether it is present in public consciousness. Regions, which are omitted by media, do not resonate in people's minds so frequently.

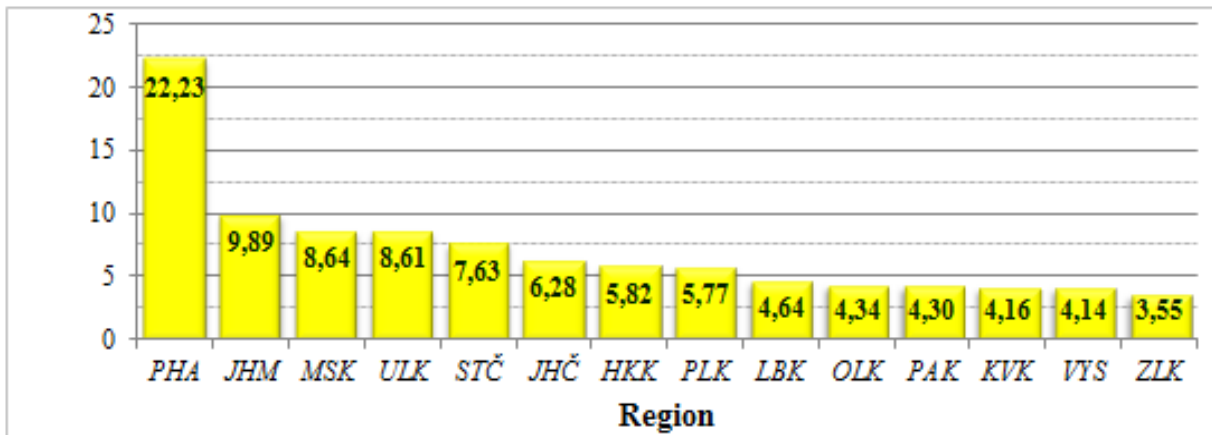


Fig. 1 Amount of TV contributions related to NUTS III regions between 2004 and 2010 (in %)

Source: Media Tenor

Figure 1 shows distinctive dominance of the capital city of Prague (PHA) as for the number of TV contributions. This fact is not surprising as capital city serves as principal administrative-political, social and cultural hub of the country. One should not omit that all three analysed TV stations, i.e. public Czech TV and private Nova TV and Prima TV are headquartered just in Prague.

The second position is occupied by South Moravia (JHM), which can be ascribed to the presence of the second largest city in the country. The third position belongs to Moravian-Silesian region (MSK), which is driven by Ostrava, the third largest city in the country. Moravian-Silesian region on the third and Ústecký region (ULK) on the fourth position share industrial character and subsequently also numerous socioeconomic issues. Bottom of this ladder is occupied by less populous Karlovarský region (KVK), Vysočina region (VYS) and Zlínský region (ZLK).

Absolute view on the number of regionally-related TV contributions provides us with useful starting point. However, quantitative dimension of TV news can be measured also from relative perspective when one takes into account also the population size of the given region. Spatial distribution of population represents rough indicator of the volume of social, economic, cultural and other activities taking place in individual regions. Naturally, there should be an approximate balance between the number of inhabitants living in the given region and the amount of TV contributions devoted to the region in question.

The following figure 2 presents the number of TV news per 1000 inhabitants in researched self-governing regions.

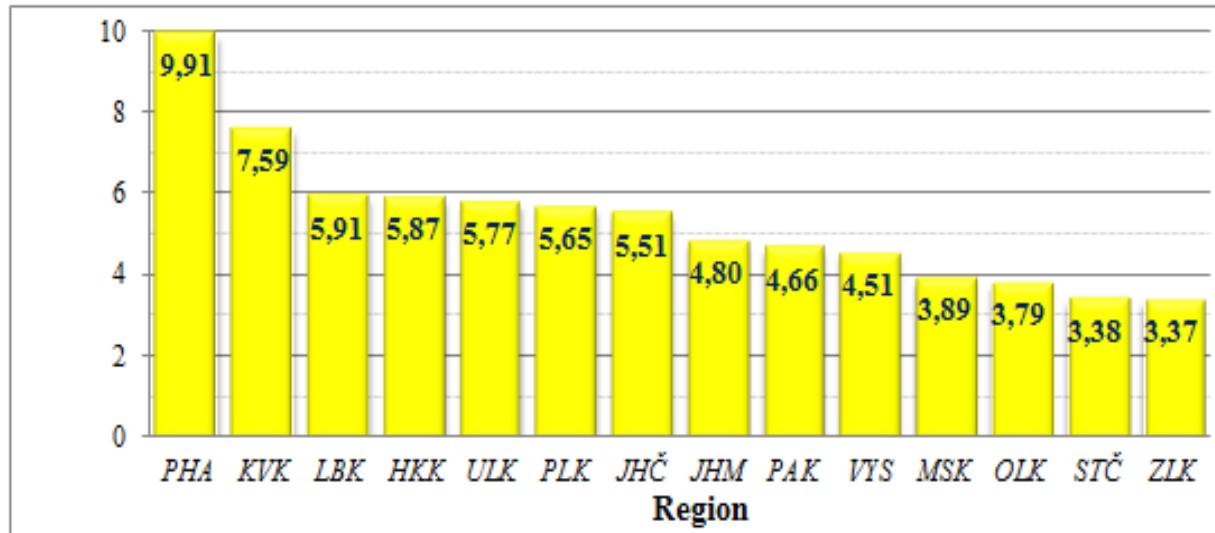


Fig. 2 Amount of TV contributions per 1000 inhabitants according to NUTS III regions

Source: Media Tenor

If we assess Figure 2 we get somehow different picture. Prague turned out to be an ultimate winner also in this category. Between 2004 and 2010 more than 9 news per 1000 inhabitants of Prague were broadcasted, which is more than 1 contribution per 1000 inhabitants annually. Karlovarský region is the second mainly for the sake of famed film festival and small population size of the region. Further positions are occupied by Liberecký, Královehradecký and Ústecký regions.

Self-governing regions that can be found at the bottom share an important feature: with exception of Central Bohemia they are geographically the most distant from Prague. In case of Central Bohemia representing natural hinterland of the capital city, we are entitled to talk about centripetal influence of Prague, which finds also its media projection.

3.2 Qualitative aspects of NUTS III regions portrayals in national TV news reporting

This part of the article stresses thematic composition of TV contributions devoted to individual NUTS III regions. This can be treated as a useful supplement to the quantitative analysis.

We observed altogether 30 thematic domains. The most frequented ones were as follows: security, accidents, society, art, culture and health services. Other important spheres of life, such as environment or transportation proved to be surprisingly underestimated. The following table 1 provides us with synthetic view on the top 5 topics in individual NUTS III regions.

Tab. 1 NUTS III regions according to percent occurrence of contributions in national TV coverage

Region	Top 5 themes and their frequency in %									
	1		2		3		4		5	
STČ	Security	29,9	Accidents	26,0	Health services	7,3	Society	5,7	Environment	4,8
PHA	Security	28,1	Art and culture	13,5	Accidents	12,2	Society	11,8	Transportation	5,3
MSK	Security	30,2	Accidents	26,4	Society	6,3	Health services	5,6	Environment	4,8

JHM	Security	30,5	Accidents	19,6	Society	8,0	Justice	5,5	Health services	5,4
ULK	Security	28,9	Accidents	19,6	Environment	7,7	Transportation	6,5	Society	6,4
OLK	Accidents	29,8	Security	23,0	Society	6,7	Environment	5,1	Health services	5,0
JHČ	Accidents	27,4	Security	20,7	Society	7,8	Art and culture	6,8	Environment	6,1
ZLK	Accidents	27,5	Security	16,6	Society	12,2	Art and culture	7,3	Environment	5,5
PLK	Security	30,7	Accidents	21,8	Society	6,4	Environment	5,9	Justice	4,7
HKK	Security	23,9	Accidents	21,2	Environment	9,9	Society	7,3	Justice	6,0
PAK	Accidents	26,9	Security	21,7	Environment	7,1	Society	6,2	Health services	5,6
VYS	Accidents	26,4	Security	23,4	Health services	7,9	Society	5,5	Art and culture	4,6
LBK	Accidents	27,2	Security	20,6	Environment	7,8	Society	7,4	Health services	5,4
KVK	Security	24,8	Accidents	19,5	Art and culture	14,1	Health services	7,2	Society	7,0

Source: Media Tenor

In spite of dissimilar character of individual NUTS III regions, the thematic direction of TV contributions is quite uniform. Top five thematic domains of all NUTS III regions contain mere eight themes. This fact is in consonance with previous researches (see Suchacek, 2013a).

Tabloid topics, such as security and accidents, unfortunately tend to suppress development-orientated ones. Specific urban character of Prague finds its reflection in above standard number of contributions related to art and culture. The same applies to the sphere of transportation.

In comparison with Prague, Central Bohemia offers much more common TV news reporting portrayal. With some exceptions, media pictures of other regions are almost amorphous. Presence of environmental topics reflects objective environmental problems in Moravian-Silesian and Ústecký regions. Surprisingly, South Bohemia bears a great media resemblance with Zlínský region. In reality, both regions do not share so many common attributes.

In some cases, one or several events can considerably affect media picture of some regions. This happened in case of Karlovarský region where annually held International Film Festival in Karlovy Vary shapes continuously the media image of this region or in case of Vysočina region where mistaking newborns to wrong mothers took place. This influenced thematic categories of art and culture and health services respectively.

3 Conclusions

TV coverage undoubtedly co-determines position of individual regions on mental maps. From quantitative perspective, Prague turned out to be an ultimate winner from both absolute and relative perspectives. In more remote regions, there is an under-proportional amount of TV contributions per capita. From quantitative point of view, we thus get a centripetal spatial media pattern of the country.

What these self-governing regions have in common is apparent from qualitative point of view. All of them are lacking persistent and intensive feature which may have an influence on media image in terms of sound development.

From qualitative standpoint, it may be asserted that TV news insufficiently reflect motley character of self-governing regions in the Czech Republic. Top five thematic realms of all fourteen NUTS III regions contain mere eight themes. Tabloid themes, such as security or accidents, which traditionally attract attention, tend to suppress development-orientated domains. Moreover, results of some smaller regions have been intensely influenced by one or several events.

This implies the necessity of more systematic marketing activities that should be adopted by individual regions. In this respect, regions can utilise wide spectrum of categories including relationship marketing, monitoring regionally-bounded TV coverage or organisation of events in the region concerned.

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