

National Peripheries and Cultural Heritage: Community Building on the European Margins

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Abstract

This paper examines different heritagization processes in peripheral areas of Southern (the Portuguese-Spanish border in the Lower Guadiana Basin) and Central (Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland) Europe, while defining the peripherality of these borderland regions from a geographic as well as a socio-economic perspective. We pay particular attention to community building initiatives involving heritage mobilization, i.e., the participation of local communities in activities related to heritage enhancement, the participatory strategies, and the actors in these social processes. Despite the differences in the historical development of the countries selected, their peripheries face similar processes while generating different responses to those issues. Through the description of selected, locally based cases, the paper explores the varieties and the specifics of heritagization in peripheral regions (such as the role of in/stability of the borders, issues around the adaptability/resilience of local communities and sustainable growth strategies as well as the balance of local/global aspects in heritagization). Finally, the description and interpretation of the cases brings up new questions and addresses new issues which can be analysed and developed in further research (e.g., the role of the boundaries, communication/cooperation in cross-border communities, the differentiation of heritagization, etc.)

Keywords: Peripheries; borderlands; community building; small towns

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Periferias nacionales y patrimonio cultural: Desarrollo comunitario en áreas marginales de Europa

Resumen

El presente trabajo analiza distintos procesos de patrimonialización en áreas periféricas del suroeste europeo (frontera hispano-lusa en el Bajo Guadiana) y Centroeuropa (República Checa, Eslovaquia y Polonia), definiendo la condición periférica de las fronteras desde las perspectivas geográfica y socioeconómica. Se presta una especial atención a iniciativas de desarrollo comunitario a través de la movilización en torno al patrimonio, es decir, la participación de comunidades locales en actividades relacionadas con la valorización del patrimonio, las estrategias de participación y los actores de estos procesos sociales. A pesar de las diferencias entre los procesos históricos de los países seleccionados y analizados, sus periferias enfrentan problemas semejantes, a los que dan respuestas distintas. A través de la descripción de casos locales, este artículo explora la diversidad y las especificidades de la patrimonialización en regiones periféricas, tales como el rol de la (in)estabilidad de las fronteras, los problemas de adaptabilidad/resiliencia de las comunidades locales, las estrategias de desarrollo sostenible o el equilibrio entre aspectos locales/globales de la puesta en valor del patrimonio. Por último, la descripción e interpretación permite crear nuevos interrogantes que pueden contribuir al desarrollo de investigaciones futuras centradas, p. ej., en el papel de las fronteras, comunicación/cooperación entre comunidades fronterizas, diferenciación al nivel de la patrimonialización, etc.

Palabras clave: Periferias; territorios fronterizos; desarrollo comunitario; ciudades pequeñas

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1. Introduction

1.1 Approach, Methodology and Questions

This paper describes community building activities and heritagization, i.e., the mobilization of heritage as a resource for community building in three different peripheral regions and small towns in Western (Portugal – Spain border) and Central Europe (Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland) (Figure 1). It outlines the way regions deal with common problems, for example, marginality in relation to the national metropolis and the consequences of this situation for the socio-economic realities of these regions. Heritage *latu sensu* stands out as a strategy for attracting visitors and reinforcing local collective identities in all the cases examined.

From a historical point of view, the main difference between the Western and Central European cases is the antiquity of the former's territory as a borderland (since 1297), which configured a unique human landscape with fortresses and surveillance structures constructed along the riversides and communication roads laid out to prevent circulation, as well as villages specifically founded to defend the national borders. The separations created by national metropolis paved the way for interactions between communities on either side of the separation line (so-called *raya* or *raia* in Spanish and Portuguese respectively), but conversely these regions and small villages and towns always remained at the very end of their national territories. In recent decades, the state of abandonment, drastic reductions in their economic activities and depopulation became serious issues in the borderlands and a considerable threat to their sustainability (Albuquerque & García Fernández 2019, with bibliography). Notwithstanding, initiatives such as Mértola's *Vila-Museu* (an Open-Air Museum-Town) have been alleviating this trend by enhancing cultural heritage and the resilience of local communities ever since 1978 (Gómez Martínez *et al.*, 2016; Del Espino, 2020).

Compared to Iberia, Central European borders do not reflect such territorial/geopolitical stability over past centuries clearly in keeping with the heterogeneity of the political, ethnical, and cultural factors as well as by the general geographical fragmentation of the region. Furthermore, this heterogeneity and fragmentation have created various internal borders within the region, with many traditional borderlands and peripheries opposing the central areas (Nolte, 1997).

1.2 Concepts: Border, Periphery, Small Towns, Resilience and Heritage

There are different scales of borders, with some deriving from political control. From the lower to the higher scale, there are third-order divisions (e.g., municipalities), sub-national or second-level boundaries (e.g., between different regions), and national borders (Timothy, 2001), which is the case of the Luso-Spanish border. This level of bordering had – and is still having – an evident impact on the human landscape, especially the distribution of settlements as well as their interactions and the legality or illegality of flows. A border thus represents the symbolic limit of a territory that marks a separation between two political entities. As historical constructs, the functions, dimensions, and locations of borders depend on the political, social, and cultural perceptions of territories and landscapes.

Examination of these movements and contacts may take a micro historical approach, both spatially and chronologically, to better characterize the relationships occurring between the two sides. This interpretation must be focused on an *inside view* and not only on the perception of sovereignties. States may perceive, unlike local communities, borders as barriers, which means that the image provided by international relations and diplomacy do not always reflect the interactions *in loco*.

This assumption is crucial to understanding the similarities and differences between the communities on both sides, which highlights the need to "glocally" examine these dynamic relations instead of adopting an *outsider* perspective of liminality and exclusion. It must also be stated that the states themselves frequently ignore these territories as seen, for example, in the road networks of rural border areas.

It is telling that the traditional historiographic image of borderlands transmits the idea that a collective personality is strictly delimited by national frontiers, which leads to the image of peripheries-barriers that are only historically relevant during border conflicts. Tangible facets such as towers and fortresses, for example, reveal the tensions prevailing, whether throughout short or long periods and, conversely, the obsolescence of their strategic importance, as well as subsequent depopulation, may stem from peaceful relations and political circumstances, for example, the Iberian countries integrating into the Schengen Area (Cavaco, 1997). Furthermore, it is relatively common to read elsewhere that fortifications represent the most relevant heritage assets in borderlands, ignoring other manifestations that also configure their unique landscapes and cultural features, such as the mixed languages arising from encounters and interactions. This perception frequently also configures the touristification of these areas, i.e., their remoteness and contrast become the most interesting attractions for tourist experiences of borderlands (Timothy, 2001; Hernández-Ramírez, 2017).

The notion of periphery primarily reflects in the mostly negative, long-term socio-economic characteristics of development (such as low economic productivity, depopulation, high average age, and low education rates), when compared to the general situation existing elsewhere in particular states (Wallerstein, 2004; Nolte, 1997). These regions are usually perceived as underdeveloped and distant rural areas far from the centres of states. On the other hand, the negative image (in terms of development indicators) of these regions is somehow counterbalanced or erased by the positive image emerging from their natural wealth and resources (images of "pure and calm nature", "traditional agro-products and crafts" that serve for branding and promoting local products).

As demonstrated by recent research on small towns, which constitute the typical urban structure of peripheral regions, regional cultural heritage accounts for a large part of this positive image as well as providing an important basis for local development strategies and, in fact, plays two roles in regional development. On the one hand, local heritage is subject to touristification, thus outwardly promoted and presented, towards the centers and visitors (Bowitz & Ibenholt, 2009). On the other hand, local heritage, as a subject of wide social participation, plays an important role in the local community identifying, building and (re)producing such heritage. This is also deployed as a source of resilience for local communities in terms of their adaptability and persistence to changing circumstances (socio-economic, political, cultural, etc.).

Small towns generally represent a specific urban form that retains many of the characteristics usually associated with rurality. That may perhaps best be illustrated by recourse to the traditional sociological dichotomy of urban society – rural community. Furthermore, unlike major urban centers, most small towns gradually ceased to perform central administrative functions, formerly a key factor in their prosperity. In peripheral rural regions, small towns generally retain some level of centrality (especially in social and cultural terms), but increasingly suffer from urban shrinkage (depopulation and economic decline) (Kühn, 2015).

It has been argued that, given the general demographic and economic development in Europe, the pursuit of renewed growth hardly constitutes a viable strategic option for most (especially peripheral) small towns (Schlappa & Nishino, 2021). Instead, various proposals for controlled "smart" shrinkage have appeared, arguing that a sustainable policy response to urban shrinkage does exist.

Instead of growth and development, contemporary academic and policy debates emphasize the long-term sustainability of small-town communities, built on social and cultural rather than economic capital. The notion of *resilience*, although sometimes dismissed as a meaningless buzzword, does in a way sum up such a perspective. In the discourse on small towns, resilience refers to their ability to sustain external pressures by enhancing the capacity of local communities to transform and adapt to challenges associated with globalization through fostering a local collective identity (sense of belonging) and various forms of social and cultural capital (Klusáková & Del Espino, 2021). Within a cross-border perspective, as seen later, differences between territorial strategies can be determinant for the organization of common, cultural heritage related, initiatives.

The notion of *Heritage* relates to the idea of a collective inheritance or legacy that is recognized by a community as part of its identity and character (Querol 2010). Heritage has been identified as one of the critical resources for enhancing and building small-town community resilience due to its universal availability and capacity to strengthen collective identities and the sense of place (Klusáková & Del Espino, 2021). This view is based on a constructivist, bottom-up approach to the notion of Heritage. In recent decades, we can observe a shift in meaning from the focus on “recording” the (national, civilizational, etc.) past towards refocusing the debate on the role of heritage in local and regional community building and the pluralization and democratization of heritage – thus switching attention from individual objects and sites towards peoples and communities.

The Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Council of Europe, 2005) proposed the notion of Heritage community in this sense, marking a shift from seeing heritage as “objective” towards a “subjective” definition, serving the needs and interests of local inhabitants. However, even today, attempts to promote local community heritage in peripheral small towns suffer from certain structural deficiencies embedded in the technocratic character of national level management. The assessments of heritage value made by national authorities traditionally reflect expert rather than local perspectives (Mydland & Grahn, 2012) and with urban and regional planning focusing on economic rather than cultural capital, dealing with peripheral small towns in terms of rural countryside rather than urban settlements. Furthermore, the heritage production of small-town communities often suffers from a certain “lock-in syndrome” (Knox & Meyer, 2013), a conservative bias which effectively limits the ability of local communities to perceived themselves from the perspective of others.

These concepts represent useful tools for understanding the case studies from the Western and Central European peripheries presented in the next chapter. Heritage constitutes a key input to community building projects as well as for resilience in peripheral territories. The regions examined face similar problems regarding poor economic conditions and underdevelopment. However, they provided different responses to those issues in the ways they implemented their heritagization and touristification strategies.

2. Heritage and Communities: Case Studies of the Iberian Borderland PT-SP & Central European Peripheries CZ/SK/PL

These short notes about basic concepts for interpreting peripheral realities enable a more accurate understanding of the strategies carried out in the different contexts examined here, especially the role of heritage enhancement in community building and identity strengthening. As stated above, the selection of peripheral regions in Portugal – Spain and the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland (Figure 1) derives from the existing need to pave the way for further cooperation and knowledge exchanges in areas where similar processes have taken place.

On the one hand, the borderlands of the two Iberian countries constitute national peripheries with a shared history and heritage, which configured the human landscape. On the other hand, different (and recent) historical circumstances determined the present-day configuration of Central Europe countries.

In the case of the Iberian Peninsula, the unrestricted commercial flows in the Schengen area resulted in a worrying abandonment and depopulation due to the loss of their political and economic function and relevance. This furthermore explains why they became unattractive for investments. Heritage is, in these contexts, a key and useful steppingstone for the cultural, social, and economic sustainability and resilience of regions traditionally occupied by communities that interact with each other, configuring unique cultural features and, consequently, landscapes. Such flows have determined realities that exist only in border contexts. However, it is noteworthy that, as stated above, bottom-top initiatives should consider how local communities must participate in decision-making over what should – and should not – be preserved and enhanced.

On the other hand, the cases from Central Europe countries examined here may serve as an inspiration for future works carried out in the Iberian borderlands and vice-versa. Indeed, Central European regions of Bohemian-Moravian Highlands, Šariš and Podlasie share the same features of historical development within the state territory, with all being small peripheries dependent on central areas and having to cope with the various geopolitical and cultural changes of Central European history in the Modern Era.

Figure 1. Approximate location of the Regions discussed in the article (see details below)



Source: Own elaboration from www.mapbox.com

2.1 PT-SP Cross-Border region

- Heritage and National Borders/ Peripheries

The 1,234 km border between Spain and Portugal was defined in 1297, which makes it the oldest border in Europe. It has also remained roughly unaltered ever since, which shaped the construction of a unique landscape down through the centuries and, consequently, notable shared heritage. Our case-study, the Lower Guadiana Region, partially served as a natural boundary marker (between Vila Real de Santo António/ Ayamonte, and Pomarão/ Cañaveral) in the Treaty of Alcañices (1297) (see Figure 2). Prior to that, there was possibly a frontier marker during the Iron Age, a separation line between political/ ethnic identities in the context of the Roman provincial organization in the early decades of the 1st century AD, of the Visigoth bishoprics (Niebla, Faro, and Beja), and of Islamic *Taifas* (Huelva and Algarve) (Albuquerque & García Fernández, 2019; Albuquerque *et al.*, 2020, with bibliography). The navigability of this river stands out as one of most relevant features for understanding the particularities of this historical landscape. Indeed, along its 70 km of navigable stretch, important, strategic ports (Castro Marim, Ayamonte and Mértola) emerged during the Iron Age and Roman Era. However, the river is also easily traversable in several places, which represented a concern in times when protection of the borders was needed. Proof of this arises from the post-1297 fortification of some of these ports and other settlements such as Alcoutim or Sanlúcar de Guadiana (see, for example, D'Armas, 1509), or even the founding of small new villages along the border by Portuguese King Dinis.

Figure 2. The Lower Guadiana Basin and the area studied



Source: Own elaboration from www.mapbox.com

However, the history of the Iberian borderlands is far more than their role in the defence of sovereign kingdoms. Traditional historiography often ignored these territories except in periods when of relevance to defining or maintaining the national frontiers. Nevertheless, borders are idoneous sites of social and economic interactions, which can be captured by long-term historical analysis, examining the landscapes nurtured by these interconnections and the ways tangible and intangible heritage reflect cultural processes (cf. a general overview in Herzog, 2015). Different written sources exemplify the particularities of the social relationships developed in peripheral contexts and the contrast between them and the image generated by state level discourses. While for kings the border would mark the end of their sovereignty, local communities might have developed a particular sense of belonging or, in other words, shared identities. From their perspective, this would include the ability to move along identity constructs and even to the extent of speaking hybrid forms of language between Castilian and Portuguese (among others, Medina García, 2006; López, 2020).

This shared heritage and identities may provide a case-study for examining the history of etic and emic construction and perceptions of national peripheries throughout the centuries, and their transformation in a context in which national borders have become fuzzy. These territories reflect the history of political relations, legal/ illegal interconnections, and everyday coexistence, and how these political, social, and economic processes were transferred across the Atlantic Ocean.

The treaties that defined the frontiers between Spanish and Portuguese possessions in South America at the second half of the 18th century (Madrid, 1750, and San Ildefonso, 1777), are telling examples of the global dimension of these borders. Consequently, the conflicts between the Iberian kingdoms and the protection of the sovereign boundaries configured this human landscape. At the same time, separations paved the way for cross-border social relations and interdependencies that developed independently from political decisions, which was recently termed as the “Border Paradox” by Van der Vleuten and Feys (2016). According to these authors, “[...] borders trigger legal and illegal cross-border flows by virtue of the separations they create” (Van der Vleuten & Feys, 2016, p. 29).

However, the effect of the European political and economic context is noteworthy for understanding the current state of these territories and for proposing new strategies for their development. A large proportion of these settlements became obsolete for several reasons. Firstly, when the fluvial circulation and commerce lost its economic relevance, places such as Castro Marim and Mértola were no longer bustling and important ports. Secondly, the end of mining operations led to a considerable depopulation of these territories, especially in the interior. Thirdly, there was no longer the same need to defend these borders and, as a result, they lost any lingering strategic importance. This long-term peripheral condition, despite its historical and cultural relevance, seems to return dramatic consequences for the life and sustainability of those territories, as Pintado and Barrenechea clearly described in 1972. In addition, people also dedicated themselves to smuggling, to the border surveillance or to a particular kind of border market, that is, the sales of towels and blankets on the Portuguese side and of sweets on the Spanish side. These products were, respectively, demanded by Spanish and Portuguese people (see Márquez Domínguez, 2011).

The integration of the two Iberian countries into the Schengen Area was socially and economically devastating for the communities living in inland regions. Investment in road communications benefited the coastal territories, leaving the interior still more isolated from the dream of a borderless Europe. Border controls and surveillance, as well as smuggling, became unsustainable and obsolete, which led to considerable further depopulation in these areas (Calderón Vázquez 2015). Consequently, a major percentage of this intangible (and living) heritage is endangered and may become lost beyond any recovery, which does at least represent a stimulus for its thorough examination and systematization.

The particularities of these regions attracted research projects, development plans and cooperation activities focused on the study of these landscapes from territorial, environmental, historical, archaeological, and cultural perspectives (including linguistic and sociolinguistic approaches). The scope of interaction of phenomena, or even hybridizations, centred on the Lower Guadiana basin, might break with the traditional views of insularity and incommunicability between countries and pave the way for new interpretations of unique human landscapes. Consequently, the evaluation of these peripheral areas and the enhancement of their heritage can provide a steppingstone for promoting and reinforcing sustainable local development, community building and resilience (see Del Espino 2020). Thus, it is worth mentioning some of the initiatives carried out in the last decades for a more accurate view of what has been and what can be done in these national peripheries.

- Heritage and Community Building - Cases

After the adhesion of Portugal and Spain to the EEC (1986) and the Schengen Area (1991), the two countries advanced with certain initiatives, including the creation of the so-called *Comunidades de Trabajo* (among others, Andalusia – Algarve in 1995, and Andalusia – Alentejo in 2001), established to manage European funding programs, for example FEDER, and further deepened by creating the Euro-Regions (e.g., Alentejo – Algarve – Andalusia in 2010). However, there was still no institutionalized cross-border regional or local cooperation between these countries prior to the Valencia Convention (2002) (Herrero, 2010). In the second decade of this century, the Euro-Regions served to promote information exchanges between their members, as well as co-financed initiatives, projects, and coordinated public and private initiatives aiming at local development (e.g., FEDER and POCTEP).

This institutionalization of cross-border cooperation also reflected in the launching of projects such as PACT – A3, which involved running some cultural initiatives, including such highlights as *Itinerários do Baixo Guadiana* (2008 – 2011), *Odyssea-SUDOE* (2009 – 2011), *Andalbagua (Territorio y Navegabilidad en el Bajo Guadiana, 2012)*, which focused on setting up routes along this river and its adjacent territories. Heritage was virtually absent from these proposals and the final project analysis, which reflects an outstanding feature when considering assets such as those mentioned above (e.g., the fortresses). Moreover, the UADITurS (*Turismo Sustentável no Baixo Guadiana*) project combines heritage, territory, and cross-border landscapes in a route composed by interpretation centres while adopting local communities and visitor awareness as the main priorities (García Fernández *et al.*, 2017).

With a different scope, the long experience of the Archaeological Campus in Mértola (*Campo Arqueológico de Mértola = CAM*) stands out as an initiative that has brought together archaeological and ethnological research clearly oriented towards local development ever since 1978 (Figure 3). This institution promotes the dissemination and transfer of knowledge by carrying out urban archaeological excavations through long-term projects and rescue interventions, publishing monographs and a journal (*Arqueologia Medieval*), and managing ten archaeological and ethnographic museums inside this village with c. 1200 inhabitants.

It is also noteworthy that the village is per se considered an open-air museum. The main archaeological research focus - though not the only one - is by far the Islamic occupation, which is a leitmotif for CAM's logo as well as for organizing a biannual Islamic Festival since 2001. This festival, firstly conceived as a cultural activity with academic and educational purposes, is now a touristic event that attracts thousands of local and foreign traders to Mértola and involves the local community and different (inter)national institutions. One of the most outstanding features of the Town-Museum project is its promotion of both community building and improving the living conditions within an approach that closely interconnects archaeology and society.

It should be noted that this initiative was able to counter the depopulation trend in the Mértola municipality through creating jobs for local individuals and the infrastructures for attracting visitors into the urban centre, as well as training and knowledge transfer programs (Del Espino, 2020). Cultural tourism thus emerges as key to sustainable development and proves that heritage can support resilience or, in other words, that awareness of the past can constitute a powerful tool for a brighter future and an inspiration for projects that intend to promote the participation of local communities as well as for proposing Mértola for World Heritage status.

Figure 3. Mértola's Islamic Festival



Source: <https://visitmertola.pt>

Moreover, Alcoutim and Sanlúcar de Guadiana also organize cultural activities focused on smuggling (*Festival do Contrabando*) (Figure 3). In this case, there are street performances focused on the relationship between smugglers and policemen (Figure 4) as well as conferences dedicated to this theme. Curiously, it is the occasion for using the so-called floating bridge (*ponte do contrabando*) to enable easier circulation between the riverbanks. This festival can be compared to the “medieval days” organized every August in Castro Marim, a more conventional strategy adopted for attracting the visitors that arrive in the Algarve every summer.

Local community participation was one of the main goals of a project focused on examining human settlement along the Guadiana Basin between the 8th century BC and the 1st century AD from an archaeological point of view (see, in general, Albuquerque *et al.*, 2020). The role of the Guadiana as the centre of webs of interaction spanning the interiors of the Algarve and Alentejo to reach the Mediterranean and Atlantic coastlines, reveals how the river promoted more encounters than separations. The acquisition of goods from other parts of the Atlantic and Mediterranean is categorically demonstrated by the diversity of archaeological materials found especially in Mértola (García Fernández *et al.* 2019) but also in Castro Marim (Arruda *et al.*, 2017, among others). The definition of the national borders in 1297 did not stop these flows but was crucial to shaping a unique landscape that can per se represent the shared heritage of the two Iberian countries. This uniqueness, as stated above, is revealed in lifeways, which highlight the role of borderlands as spaces for complicities and mutual influences, as well as the role of local communities in shaping border landscapes and constructing local identities.

While local communities may share cultural features or identities, transboundary initiatives focused on cultural aspects may encounter constraints that deserve highlighting. Despite the launching of pan-continental and regional cooperation strategies within the EU and, on a lesser scale, the Euroregions (in our case, Alentejo-Algarve-Andaluzia), or bilateral (between countries), the most effective and common way for improving collaborations in borderlands is inter-local cooperation (for further details, see Timothy & Teye, 2004) as they are not as dependent on central governments and face “fewer bureaucratic obstacles” (*ibid.*, p. 588), which is clearly beneficial to promoting tourism and “[...] contributes to reduce the separative role of the boundary [because] the common problems in a peripheral region prevail over nationalistic considerations” (Leimgruber, quoted in Timothy & Teye 2004). However, heritage policies differ between national and/or municipal governments, which means that cultural routes are integrated into different legal realms depending on the specific location of heritage assets.

Figure 4. Smuggling Festival in Alcútim and Sanlúcar de Guadiana



Source: <https://www.moveaveiro.pt>

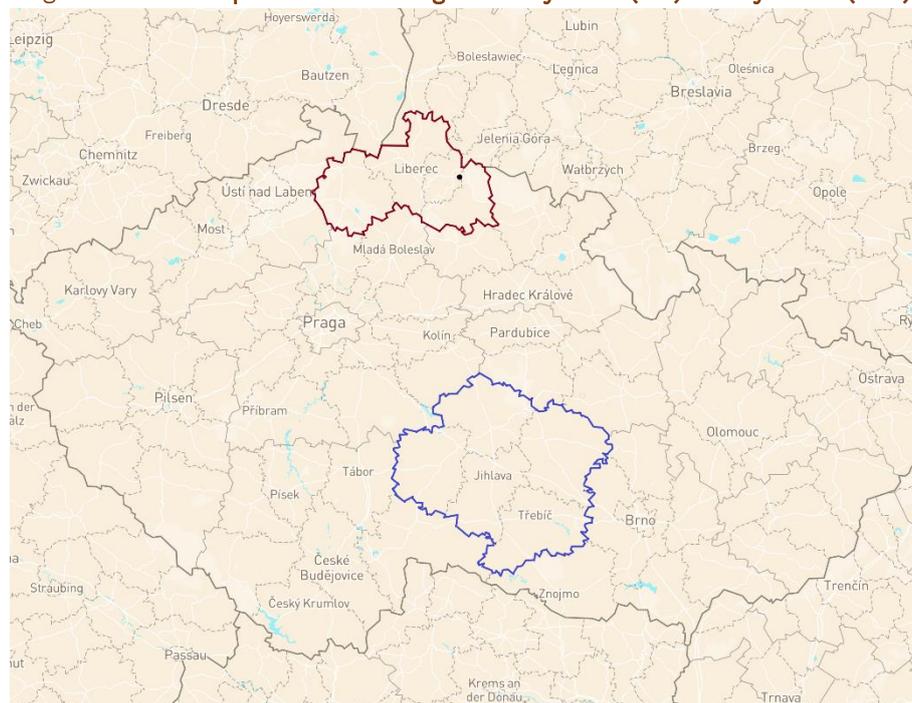
This is also relevant for the study of small towns in borderlands. Some were purpose founded or promoted for either defence against or for economic relations between both sides. The most outstanding case is the function of Castro Marim (a fortified site in front of Ayamonte) and of Vila Real de Santo António, which was crucial for commercial flows from the middle of the 18th century onwards. Castro Marim and Ayamonte were raised hundreds of years before the consolidation of the modern Portuguese and Spanish states. Ever since, their relevance in international relationships is undeniable. Notwithstanding, account must also be taken of how urban networks and their organization differ. Although some villages were founded in the Middle Ages, or even earlier in some cases (Albuquerque & García Fernández, 2019), they were shaped by the same feudalization processes following the Christian conquest of these territories. However, their evolution within the Iberian states differs quite sharply. Therefore, while in Portugal the administrative structure features a system with a limited number of small urban nuclei and numerous small villages (*freguesias*) dispersed throughout the territories, in Spain there are more municipalities and fewer small villages. Consequently, the main difference lies in the administrative structure and not in the number of small towns on either side of the border.

2.2 Small-Town Heritage in C-E Borderland Peripheries: CZ/SK/PL

- Heritage and National Borders/ Peripheries

The Central European small towns and regions discussed here are in peripheral areas of Czech Republic (CZ), Slovakia (SK) and Poland (PL), which allows us to consider different responses to heritagization. In this examination, we may articulate the core questions as the following: How do (can) small town communities mobilize heritage to foster local identities and make themselves sustainable/resilient? Who are the actors? What are the strategies?

Figure 5. Czech Republic and the Regions of Vysocko (red) and Vysočina (blue)



Source: Own elaboration from www.mapbox.com

The region known as Vysocko (comprising of the town of Vysoké and a few surrounding villages) has not existed in administrative terms ever since the abolition of the judicial districts in 1938. This location falls within northern Bohemia, the foothills of the Krkonoše and Jizerské hory mountains (Figure 5).

Since medieval times, these sparsely populated mountain ridges formed the political border between the Kingdom of Bohemia and Lower Silesia, confirmed by the settlement between the House of Habsburg Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia in 1742. However, medieval colonization of the mountains (known by their German settlers as *Ostsiedlung*), effectively also Germanized the southern, Bohemian side of the mountains and placed the town of Vysoké directly on the language border. During the second world war and the Nazi occupation, the political boundaries of the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia shifted from the top of the mountains closer towards the language line and Vysoké for a short period of time did become a bordertown. After 1945, the German population was transferred out of the country (on both sides of the mountains) and the national (political) and language border (formerly Czech-German, now Czech-Polish) moved back to the top of the mountain range.

In this region, the small town of Vysoké nad Jizerou stands out as a case study that illustrates how community-led heritagization strategies in combination with the administrative set-up effectively limit the “visibility” of such efforts beyond the local audience, especially in relation to cross-border contacts. Furthermore, the heritage content of the activities and events studied clearly builds upon the traditional and well-developed traits of Vysoké as a Heritage community. The case of Vysoké fits virtually every definition of the notion of periphery: located relatively far from the national metropole, in a non-industrialized rural region, without even a railway connection and, over the last century, gradually stripped of all administrative functions within the governance system.

The town has experienced continual “shrinkage” for decades now– perhaps best illustrated by depopulation (from 4,000 inhabitants in 1890 to less than 1,300 in 2020), a relatively higher average age (25% of the population aged over 65 in 2019) and a slow transition towards a “tourist resort” rather than a living community. With a minor ski resort on the outskirts of the town (9 pistes and trails for xc skiing), the local economy is becoming increasingly dependent on tourism: out of the existing 767 houses, many are used only as weekend houses (including a recently built resort comprising of 60 folklore-styled buildings) and in addition to the around 600 beds available for accommodation in the town (municipality estimate, 2019)¹. There are no data available for Vysoké on cross-border tourism but, based on the annual data at the district level, we may safely estimate that about one quarter to one third of visitors come from Poland, Germany, or the Netherlands.²

Following prior research of community building through heritage mobilization elsewhere (Janáč, 2021), we will here focus on a particular example of the festivities developed as local community heritage and their changes over the last twenty years. Particular attention shall be paid to the role of borders (here national/ethnic) in such representations.

Based on our analysis of the information dissemination strategies for 5th events and the target audiences, as well as the articulation of the heritage content of these events, it is obvious that rather than enhancing the reach of the image of Vysoké as a historical and heritage town beyond the borders of the region, the existing practices primarily aim at reinforcing the local collective identity and contributing to the self-appreciation of Vysoké as a heritage community. In the era culminating in the ethnic based nation building of the late 19th century, Vysoké, an otherwise perfectly ordinary rural town on the outskirts of the country, thus becomes hailed by Czech nationalist leaders as the “national guardhouse in the north” surrounded by Germans (Durych, quoted by Holubec, 2021).

In the context of the rising popularity of tourism and the consequent nationalization of space, Vysoké was declared the Czech gate to the mountains (other major towns had German majorities) and the cradle of Czech winter sports. Local elites swiftly embraced such an image, as demonstrated by the statues of national heroes erected in the municipal public space and developing the identity of “Czech highlanders (*horáčci*)”, based predominantly on the vernacular dialect, cuisine, and winter sports (Janáč, 2021).

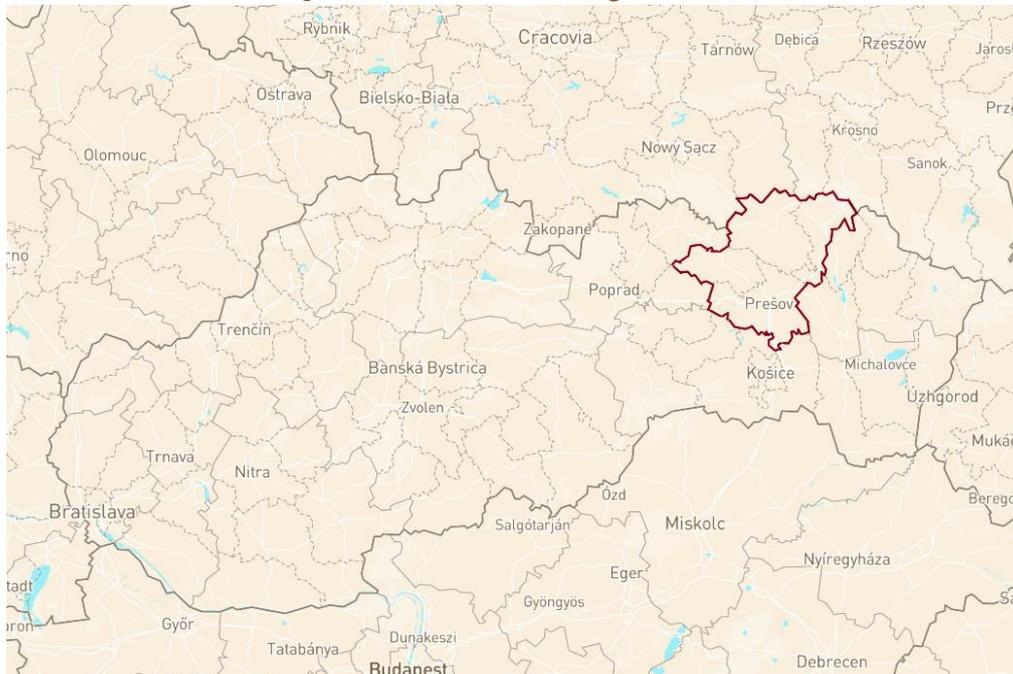
The Czech region Vysočina (Figure 5), alternatively called Českomoravská vrchovina (Bohemian-Moravian Highlands), is a region in the central, hilly part of Czechia. Traditionally, Vysočina was a borderland region located halfway between Bohemia and Moravia, two historical Czech regions with their capitals, Prague and Brno, the country's two main centres.

¹ Program rozvoje města Vysoké nad Jizerou na období 2021-2025 (Development Programme of Vysoké nad Jizerou for the period 2021-2025), https://www.vysokenadjizerou.cz/assets/File.ashx?id_org=18830&id_dokumenty=4658

² Sociologické šetření mezi podnikateli v cestovním ruchu Vyhodnocení průzkumu a závěrečná zpráva Integrovaný projekt cestovního ruchu Libereckého kraje r. č. projektu: CZ.1.13/3.2.00/02.00093 (2008-12), <https://regionalni-rozvoj.kraj-lbc.cz/getFile/case/show/id:887275> AND Cestovní ruch v Libereckém kraji, Czech statistical office, annual statistics: https://www.czso.cz/csu/xl/cestovni_ruch-xl.

In 2001, Vysočina became one of the fourteen Czech administrative regional units, hence nowadays recognized as the “Vysočina Region” on the (sub)national level. Although considered a centre from the geographical perspective, Vysočina emerges as a typical Central European peripheral region from the perspective of its long-term development characteristics, especially its socio-economic indicators. Even though the traditionally agricultural region was intensively industrialized and infrastructurally modernized during the communist period, these factors were mostly erased by deindustrialization and the socio-economic processes of the “Post-Socialist Transformation” in 1990s. Nevertheless, Vysočina was always primarily a rural region, with one of the highest ratios of agricultural production within the Czech land, resp. Czechoslovakia, in the modern era. Low levels of economic production, with a predominance of agriculture over simple industry, low levels of social capital and negative demographic indicators (low education rates, depopulation, high average age, unemployment) turned Vysočina into one of the most underdeveloped regions in Czechia (Musil & Müller, 2006; Krajíček, 2015). Notwithstanding, by the optics of regional cultural heritage, Vysočina stands out as a region with three UNESCO World Heritage sites: the Renaissance urban centre of Telč (in 1992), the Baroque Pilgrimage Church of Saint John of Nepomuk in Žďár nad Sázavou (in 1994), and the Jewish Town and gothic St. Procopius Basilica in Třebíč (in 2003).

Figure 6. Slovakia and the Region of Šariš



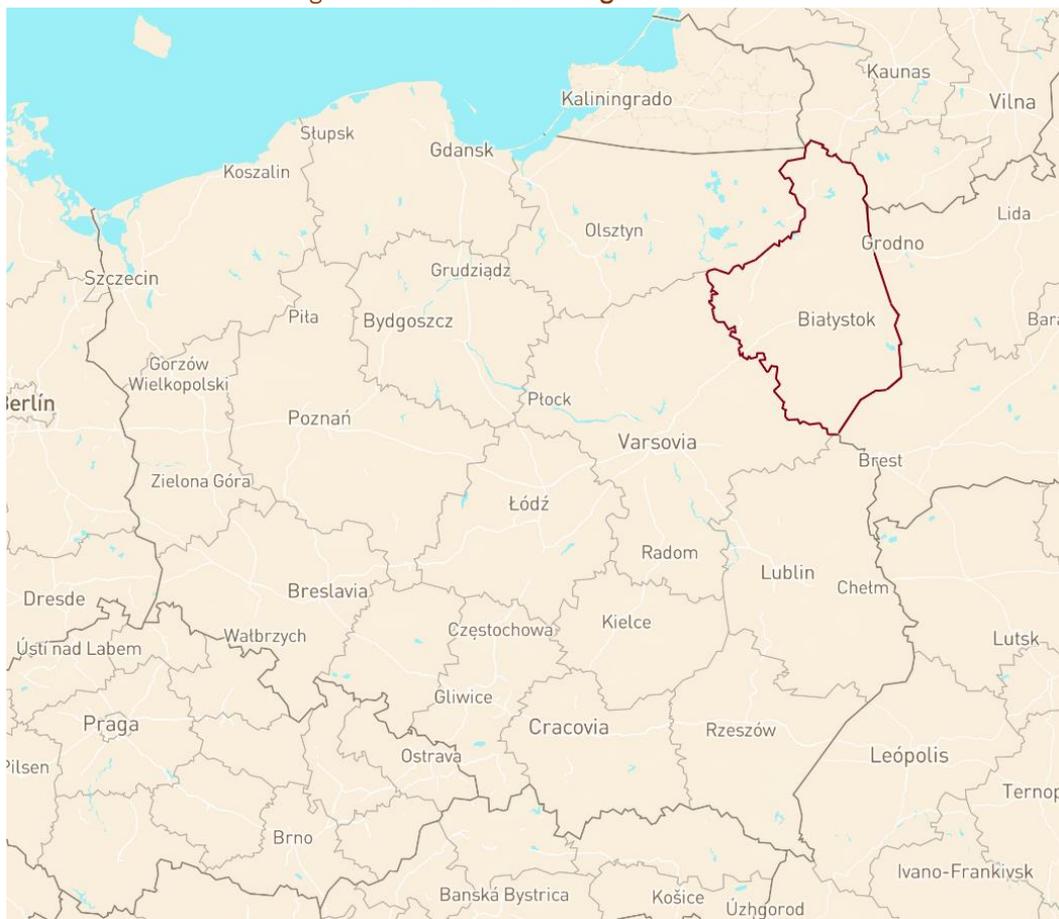
Source: Own elaboration from www.mapbox.com

In Slovakia, the region of Šariš has much in common with Vysočina, specifically its hilly countryside, rural character, scarce settlement, and distance from major urban centres (Figure 6). Geographically, its location lies in North-eastern Slovakia, near the Southern Polish border, and along the ridge of the Low Beskydy Mountains. As the hills of Ondavská vrchovina rise steeply into the sky, they create the impression of a mountainous, inaccessible landscape. Socio-economic indicators of development also report negative long-term trends. Accessibility difficulties are not an optical illusion but a reality; with examples being the only railway line, running from Prešov to Bardejov, where it ends, and the road that winds picturesquely to bypass the mountain ridges runs southwards. Statistics analysing population inventories from the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century document the natural population increase while simultaneously describing the issue of labour migration in response to the lack of job opportunities.

Again, like Vysočina, the region also contains some global-level heritage sites. Since 2000, the region's central town, Bardejov, has been on the UNESCO World Heritage List for its historical centre. In 2013, the group of regional wooden sacral architecture (Orthodox, Greek- and Roman-Catholic churches) was incorporated into UNESCO as well. The town is also visited for its popular spa, Bardejovské kúpele.

The Polish region of Podlasie is one of the 16 administrative units (voivodeships) established in 1990. It is situated in North-eastern Poland, bordering Lithuania and Belarus (Figure 7). The largest urban area is Białystok (293,000 inhabitants), and with the region otherwise mainly rural and scarcely populated. For centuries, a multi-national and multi-linguistic community of Poles, Russians, Jews, Belarussians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Germans lived here together. Both World Wars impacted heavily on this region, destroying most of what would today be its tangible and cultural heritage. The Jewish community was annihilated and its identity in the local community almost disappeared. Decades after WW2, Białystok was rebuilt and reconstructed as a modern urban centre, although the surrounding countryside remained rural, depopulated, and generally underdeveloped. As well as Vysočina and Šariš, Podlasie is also a region containing UNESCO heritage. In 1979, the Białowieża Primeval Forest was inscribed as the first cultural-natural heritage locality on the list. The forest ("Puszcza Białowieska") is recognized not only for its natural value but also as a place of memory connected to WW1 and WW2.

Figure 7. Poland and the Region of Podlasie



Source: Own elaboration from www.mapbox.com

- Heritage and Community Building - Cases

The presentation of the Czech, Slovak and Polish cases in this chapter is based on the research carried out in the framework of the REACH Project: RE-designing Access to Cultural Heritage for a wider participation in preservation, (re-)use and management of Cultural Heritage and its results (see Ira et al., 2021). In Czechia, three recently created events stand out as particular heritagization and community building strategies: the construction of the scenic route *Cesta Havlase Pavlaty* (since 2018); the Cabbage Festival (*Zelobraní*, since 2014); and the old-style cross-country races, *Závody po staru*, organized ever since the 1960s.

All three events openly refer to the local heritage, usually in connection to the highlanders' identity and/or the Czech national identity. The *Havlas Pavlata* route refers to the legend of a prophecy, dating back to around 1500, of a Vysoké dweller, who befriended a bear while working in a mill in the mountain forests. They kept each other warm through the winter cold to survive. Ever since, a bear has been part of the Vysoké shield of arms. This scenic route runs through the town and provides wonderful views of the Krkonoše mountains.

Zelobraní is basically a gastronomic festival/event celebrating the traditional local cuisine and local production – especially the local variety of red pointed cabbage known as *Hlavatka*, the cultivation of which was indeed territorially bounded, particularly to Vysocko, but with a market covering a larger area of the upper Jizera valley, also including (in times before the second world war) German speaking communities (Dědovský, 2019).

The old-style races refer to the tradition of skiing and winter sports as an important facet of community life. Concerning the “national” character of all three events and their “bordering/other” content, it is important to mention that the old-style race tradition allegedly started during World War 2, when the Nazi German authorities forbid racing. The ski club therefore decided to organize a fancy dress parade - which was in fact a race. Correspondingly, the *Havlas Pavlata* commemorations contain a strong nationalizing content as his prophecy about the future of the Bohemian kingdom was included into the list of Bohemian (Czech) legends compiled by leading figures in the Czech nationalist movement of the 19th century.

In terms of funding, ideas around participative rural development in Czechia first took shape in Local Action Groups (LAG), implemented via the EU Common Agricultural Policy. Vysoké, for reasons stemming from the policies of the early 1990s (microregions) did not become the centre of the separate LAG, but a periphery within the LAG of a nearby town of Jilemnice (also an administrative centre – but not for Vysoké). Heritage was superficially mentioned as a part of the “rural development strategy” defined by the local group. Similarly, subsidies directly targeted at the preservation of local heritage administered by the national ministry of culture are usually used for tangible heritage (the renovation of statues, monuments, and buildings). Beyond that, activities based on community participation are forced to seek funding elsewhere, e.g., with private funds. Indeed, *Cesta Havlase Pavlaty* is funded by the company Veolia, *Zelobraní* by the municipality, producers, and sellers, and *Závody po staru* by the municipality and local ski club.

The dissemination of these events in Vysoké is also telling. Information about them generally spreads through the channels available to the municipality (website, Facebook), a large information/advertisement board on the main square (old fashioned but efficient – reaching tourists and visitors) and orally among families and friends. It is virtually impossible to find any information about the events outside of the social networks of the Vysoké community, including people from nearby villages. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that these activities do not aim to attract large crowds of tourists and visitors from other parts of the country or from Germany/Poland. Currently, the leaflets and posters do not exist other than in Czech language versions.

Moreover, the *Vysočina Barchan Festival* (Figure 8) stands out as one of the most outstanding cases of best practices in heritage participative activities in this region. The first mention of this annual festival held every June in Vysočina's small town of Jemnice stretches back to 1713. As part of a weekend of "St. Vitus Festivities", *Barchan* itself involves the run made by four young men in historical costumes based on the legend "About Queen Elisabeth of Bohemia and King John the Blind", who left the Queen in the town, went to battle the rebellious Moravian lords, and sent her messages from the battlefield. Messengers competed to be the quickest to reach the Queen in Jemnice and report their news. Information about the form of the run has been passed down from generation to generation and has been a popular ceremony for centuries. The run takes place in the streets of the historical town centre of Jemnice and is accompanied by a wide cultural program focused on local heritage, such as craft markets, a historical costume parade, traditional music concerts and dances, demonstrations of ancient crafts, horse-riding, fencing or falconry. It is declared to be the oldest festivity in Bohemia and Moravia and was registered on the Czech National List of Intangible Heritage and Traditional Folklore in 2014. *Barchan* displays high levels of local community participation as almost the whole town is affected by its preparations and performance. The festival is organized by the "Barchanical Committee" established by the town's municipality. The members, who can be elected just once in a lifetime, are representatives of various administrative, cultural institutions, organizations, and associations in Jemniště.

Figure 8. The Barchan Festival parade depicting the King entering the town of Jemnice



Source: Národní ústav lidové kultury ČR.

In addition, Veselý Kopec is the countryside area of preserved folk architecture from the ethnographic region of České Horácko in north-western Vysočina, along the Bohemian side of the Bohemia-Moravia border and integrates into the Vysočina open-air museum (Figure 9). From the early 1970s, various rural buildings from across the region were mapped, removed, and placed here, somehow forming this "historical" village with its many homesteads, farms, barns, and water-powered mills and sawmills built between the 17th and the late 19th centuries. The Veselý Kopec Open-Air Museum is very active in organizing and supporting public participatory events. The museum serves as the venue for many programs that bring together various areas of folk culture. It is run by the regional government, managed by experts and academics who coordinate the activities and events in cooperation mainly with regional folk culture groups, associations, and NGOs.

Popular shows include demonstrations of folk customs (Carnival procession, spring, Easter, and Christmas customs), demonstrations of crafts, folk food, the processing of agricultural crops and others. There are also special programs for families with children on the weekends. In recent years, the open-air museum has been ranked among the most visited tourist sites both in the region and in the country.

Figure 9. The Open-air Museum (Skansen) of vernacular architecture of Vysočina region (village of Veselý Kopec) during its spring opening



Source: Photo by Jan Krajčček.

Located approximately 20km from the Polish border, Bardejov is a historical small town with ca. 30,000 inhabitants. This small town, as well as the whole region, has experienced constant depopulation. Although the period of post-war Socialist construction brought new infrastructures and inhabitants to the town, Bardejov is still difficult to reach by transport and appears as a remote and distant place surrounded by mountains. The town's main annual festivity is called *Bardejovský jarmok*. Since the tradition was established in the second half of 14th century, at the end of August, the town's central square annually becomes a large marketplace, offering mainly traditional regional agricultural and craft products. From Thursday to Sunday, many folk culture activities and shows (crafts, music and dances, historical plays) are presented with the festival supported by the regional government and organised with the cooperation of the local municipality, regional cultural institutions (especially the regional Bardejov museum) and regional folk culture associations. The town's community is involved not just as passive visitors but also the creators of the contents of the festivity as local school groups, music bands and amateur theatre groups also perform in the festival (Figure 10).

In Slovakia, the *Šariš-Dukla* Battlefield Memorial War Commemorations contrast to the idyllic image of the Ruthenian villages surrounding Bardejov. The identity of the region is also shaped by a darker history of poverty, war, destruction, and post-war reconstruction. By the end of WW2, the entire North-Eastern Slovakia, today's Dukla region within Šariš, had been demonstrated. After the war, the regional population suffered from famine and was terrorised by Ukrainian paramilitary troops. Although the local municipality of Svidník tried to establish the tradition on the War Memorial Day (6th Oct.) in the late 1940s, it slowly vanished over the second half of the 20th century. The tradition was restored in the 1990s as a local initiative with the support of Slovak, Czech and Polish representatives (Figure 11).

The topics are stories of war, liberation and reconstruction that portray their heroes. The goal is to remember those who would otherwise be forgotten. The local organisers belong to the first and second post-war generation, whose own adolescence relates to the stories of the (post-)war era they learned through their parents and grandparents. Hence, the public tradition also became their personal tradition, part of their identity. The ritual evokes empathy and patriotic identification. The target group is mainly local high school students participating in remembrance rituals alongside veterans and other participants, such as official guests. The intention is that the memorial ceremony does not become a stereotype, emptied in terms of content and the order of the individual ceremonial elements are therefore changed every year. Over the years, local children and young people have played more active roles in the rituals as the group of war veterans diminishes.

Figure 10. Folklore music concert, a traditional event in the Bardejov Jarmok Market Festival in the historic centre of Bardejov



Source: <https://bardejov.sk/>

Figure 11. Annual commemorations at the Memorial of Czechoslovak Army Corps in Dukla Battlefield Memorial Area (village of Vyšný Komárnik)



Source: <https://ipravda.sk/>

The first case in the Polish region of Podlasie is the Jewish Museum and Synagogue in the small town of Tykocin, ca. 25km away from the regional capital, Białystok. Tykocin's most famous monument is the 17th century Great Synagogue and the Talmudic House from the 18th century (Figure 12). This synagogue has rich Renaissance decorations, it is the second largest and second oldest in Poland. The Jewish Museum and restored Synagogue in Tykocin represents an outstanding public active type of local heritage institution. The museum organises temporary exhibitions and staged observation of Jewish holidays, as well as concerts. The curators are not Jewish, they are mainly academics from Białystok, as there is no longer a Jewish community in Tykocin. Nevertheless, the town's Jewish heritage has become a "place of pilgrimage" for the Jewish youth and many tourists from Poland, the United States, Israel, and other countries from around the world. School trips and organised groups are usually scheduled all day in the season between April-October. The traces of Jewish culture are omnipresent even in the public space of the town, where there is the traditional Jewish restaurant Tejsza.

Figure 12. Former Synagogue, now the Museum of Jewish Culture in Tykocin, a Polish town with one of the oldest Jewish populations but completely eradicated during the Holocaust in 1941



Source: Photo by Jan Krajčček.

The second Podlachian case is a private open-air museum located in Białowieża (Figure 13). This contains a complex of wooden buildings belonging to the Ruthenian population living in the area around the former village of Kropiwnik, destroyed by the Nazis during WW2. It is a fine case of a heritage initiative undertaken by active local amateurs, who became experts and heritage-site managers. The development of the open-air museum began in 1978 during the restoration of a windmill brought to Białowieża. In 1983, a group of humanities students ("Stowarzyszenie Skansen" – "Open-air Museum Association") from Białystok, co-owners of the windmill, purchased land for the future open-air museum. In 2004, it was decided to open the open-air museum to tourists. Due to the private nature of the facility and the voluntary nature of its operation, it opens only during the summer and on so-called long weekends. Currently, the second generation, the sons of the owners, also Białystok university students, help to care for the open-air museum. The Museum's operations are secured by local employees and volunteers and providing a local venue for public activities (art exhibitions, performances). In its present form, the open-air museum reflects the merit of the whole association as well as the participating locals (Ira *et al.* 2021).

Figure 13. The Open-air Museum in Białowieża collects and preserves wooden vernacular architecture of the Ruthenian culture in Podlasie region



Source: Photo by Jan Krajčček.

3. Conclusions

Taking into consideration all the cases examined above, from the Iberian Peninsula to the outskirts of three Central European countries (Czechia, Slovakia, and Poland), it seems clear that, despite the differences between the historical processes of these countries, their peripheries face similar processes but provide different responses to those issues. On the one hand, there is a border that remained roughly unaltered for more than seven centuries, which had clear consequences for the landscapes. On the other hand, there are the territories in which the borders were redefined after the events of past decades. In this paper, the authors present the first steps in a dialogue between “old” and “young” peripheries in the Schengen Area, where internal borders have become virtually irrelevant. As was discussed above, the peripheral location of these territories affected several aspects, particularly road communications, loss of relevance in the national contexts, etcetera, which further aggravated their isolation.

However, the abolition of border controls did not eliminate borders and differences between government strategies and decision-making processes, which several authors have highlighted (Timothy, 2001; Timothy & Teye, 2004; Hernández, 2017; García Fernández *et al.*, 2017, among others). As stated above, inter-local cooperation is the easiest (and sometimes the only) way to overcoming unsurmountable bureaucratic obstacles and constitutes a viable alternative to national or regional initiatives. This may derive from the institutional and academic relationship ongoing between national capitals and peripheral territories in keeping with how the former frequently ignore the latter and their communities. The implementation of tailored heritagization strategies, as well as inter-institutional programs, is perhaps the most relevant challenge for the forthcoming years, particularly in cases where two countries share cultural features and identities along a borderland. This means that the regions examined in this paper face the consequences of the so-called “border effect” due to their liminal location on the outskirts of sovereignties, which emerges more clearly in the case of rural territories.

Human activity, culture and lifeways shape the unique landscape units of borderlands, as well as their settlement patterns. In the Luso-Spanish case, the dissemination of small urban centres along the border (e.g., Elvas and the villages mentioned above) represents one of the most outstanding features stemming from bordering ever since medieval times (cf. Baquero Moreno, 1986). These centres present unique architectural features, as well as other monuments (fortifications, industrial facilities, etc.), and ethnographic assets, and form part of the so-called lineal structures (traditional roads, railroads, etc.) that shaped cross-border interconnections and connected the assemblage of different kinds of buildings disseminated along the border (e.g., mills, Fiscal Guard houses, etc.). Vernacular architecture, gastronomy and language are, in this context, important case-studies in the characterization of cross-border flows and mutual influences.

Only Elvas and its fortifications, out of all this border heritage, have gained recognition as UNESCO World Heritage. This may represent an opportunity for rethinking this global heritage from the point of view of sustainability, especially considering the massive touristification in the main cultural destinations of both countries. Indeed, although the border regions between Spain and Portugal are important destinations for inland tourism, for example Galicia – Northern Portugal and the border between Andalusia, Algarve, and Alentejo in the South (which interact with the beach tourism around the Bay of Cadiz), the impact on the life of local communities has not been significant, despite all the social and economic benefits. This means that development policies in rural areas contrast with coastal territories (e.g., Vila Real de Santo António and Ayamonte). However, it is noteworthy that coastal towns have obtained overwhelming levels of over-touristification. Strategies for heritagization in rural borderlands must differ and preserve local features and authenticity (without creating false touristic cultures). The initiatives examined in this paper, carried out in these regions over recent years, may lead to a necessary debate about their social impact and for proposing bottom-up strategies regarding community building, sustainability, and resilience. We would correspondingly note that close collaboration between local communities and researchers may return various benefits.

For example, Vysoké, fully incorporated into the UNESCO heritage networks, rather paradoxically continues with its traditional image developed in the period of nation building, discarding other opportunities offered by the UNESCO brand. Despite the relatively close distance to the state border and even closer to the actual sites of ethnically non-Czech heritage in the region, the local authorities and their initiatives embraced and tend to repeat the narrative emphasizing the place of Vysoké in the history of the Czech nation, mostly leaving aside eventual hints at the transnational history of the Krkonoše mountains, its peoples and its touristification. Here, we might perhaps observe the limits of building resilience through heritage when left to bottom-up activities of local stakeholders in peripheral regions. Heritagization activities and strategies do not particularly aim at bringing in “more tourists” by building a universally recognizable international brand. Instead, international, or cross-border aspects remain underrepresented or completely absent. UNESCO related aspects (although present: the geopark, traditional crafts, amateur theatre) are not emphasized in representations of the town (website, leaflets).

Even though the UNESCO Heritage in Vysočina, Šariš and Podlasie is undoubtedly perceived as a clear advantage in terms of strategic opportunity and a strong market brand for the promotion and development of these peripheries, the long-term positive effects are predominantly economic (e.g., touristification and real estate valorization; boosting local businesses, services and the production of regional goods). On the other hand, should the perspective be shifted from “instant growth” to “long-term sustainability”, such “globalized heritagization” is also accompanied by clearly negative impacts on local communities (*i.e.*, the effects of overtouristification and the depopulation of historical urban centres, prioritization of the tourist-based economy over local interests, etc.) (Klusáková & Del Espino, 2021).

Therefore, as demonstrated by the cases in this paper, peripheral communities undoubtedly respond positively towards local-based (as opposed to those global-based) performative heritage activities through which they actively participate as the main actors of such processes, whether as the performers or as the audience. In fact, this finding confirms the above-mentioned general statement of recent “democratization” and “pluralization” of heritagization as merely bottom-up initiatives and processes in recent years, which can clearly be observed even on the geographical scale of peripheral small towns and rural settlements. Within the set of regional development strategic components, heritagization stands out as one of the leading identity-building resources for the peripheral region communities of Central Europe as well as on the Iberian Peninsula.

The description and interpretation of the selected cases from a transnational perspective also brought up new questions, which might be developed by future research, for example, the role of boundaries in heritage management and its activities (transnational projects, etc.), the issue of communication/cooperation in cross-border communities, the mutual differentiations in their heritagization processes or the identification of local actors (for the purpose of efficiently targeting central government support, etc).

It would seem clear that, in keeping with the differences, transnational collaboration between projects and countries might be thought-provoking. The opening up of new research avenues for enhancing peripheral areas thus becomes a stepping-stone to defining new strategies for the sustainable future of the ignored territories on the national outskirts.

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Authorship

Research was designed by all authors. Authors 1 and 2 outlined the methodology for the examination of the Iberian cases (chapter 2.1). Authors 3 and 4 outlined the methodology for the examination of the Central Europe cases (chapter 2.2). The paper was written and reviewed by all authors.

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