

## Regional economies: Reality, and national TV reporting

### *Regionális gazdaságok: a valóság és a nemzeti televíziós tudósítások*

JAN SUCHÁČEK, JAROSLAV URMINSKÝ

**Jan SUCHÁČEK:** professor, Department of Regional Development, Faculty of Regional Development and International Studies, Mendel University in Brno; 61300 Brno, tř. Generála Píky 7, Czech Republic; jan.suchacek@mendelu.cz; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9508-6959>

**Jaroslav URMINSKÝ:** academic staff member, Faculty of Economics, VSB-Technical University of Ostrava; 70200 Ostrava 1, Sokolská 33, Czech Republic; jaroslav.urminsky@vsb.cz; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8254-4305>

**KEYWORDS:** regional economies; territories; marketing; TV coverage; mass media; centre – periphery

**ABSTRACT:** The problem of the spatial patterns of information transmitted by media is insufficiently debated within the literature so far. In relation to territorial marketing, in most countries the role of TV coverage is a pivotal one as it has the most intense impact on the wider public. Moreover, the TV news-reporting agenda to a large degree also epitomises the press and radio coverage agenda. This paper aims at assessing whether the selected attributes of real economic life in NUTS III regions in Czechia find their adequate portrayal in the regionally related contributions of an economic character that appear in national TV news reporting. Our attention was devoted primarily to the territorial perspective; more specifically, to the 14 self-governing regions in Czechia. In order to reduce the urban character of Prague, two NUTS III regions with the same centre, Prague and Central Bohemia, were aggregated into one territory. This is compliant with their natural geographical characteristics. Thus, the final number of analysed territories reached thirteen. Naturally, the share of news about the given topics in individual regions should roughly correspond to the presence of the themes in terms of territorial statistics. We will attempt to examine the intensity of the above-mentioned congruence.

In this article, we shall concentrate on selected economic pillars. These pillars include economic life, economic policy, economic criminality, as well as research, development, and education. These pillars facilitate the evaluation of centralities and peripheralities in Czechia with regard to both material (i.e., real) and intangible (i.e., TV coverage-based) components. The process of gatekeeping plays a critical role in the selection of information that is transformed into media. Moreover, one cannot ignore the media bias – i.e., the bias or perceived bias of journalists and news producers – within the mass media in the selection of events and stories that are reported and the way they are covered.

The research question posed in the frame of this article is as follows: can the significant differences between the virtual portrayals and genuine economic characteristics be found in all investigated territories in Czechia? Quantitative content analysis has been utilised for the classification and structuration of individual contributions in TV news reporting. In sum, disproportions between the real and virtual



economic characters of regions are identified. Deviations from potential balance could be found in all of four defined economic pillars. Even more, single events may be so intensive that they affect and even distort the whole media portrayal of concrete regions. Subsequently, the relationship between centralities and peripheralities may become more intense and at the same time flexible within the virtual dimension. In this way, the intangible dimensions of centralities and peripheralities can act as either supportive or mitigating powers in relation to their material counterparts.

**SUCHÁČEK, Jan:** *professzor, Department of Regional Development, Faculty of Regional Development and International Studies, Mendel University in Brno; 61300 Brno, tř. Generála Píky 7, Czech Republic; jan.suchacek@mendelu.cz; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9508-6959>*

**URMINSKÝ, Jaroslav:** *akadémiai munkatárs, Faculty of Economics, VSB-Technical University of Ostrava; 70200 Ostrava 1, Sokolská 33, Czech Republic; jaroslav.urminsky@vsb.cz; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8254-4305>*

**KULCSSZAVAK:** *regionális gazdaságok; területek; marketing; televíziós híradások; tömegtájékoztatói eszközök; centrum és periféria*

**ABSZTRAKT:** *A szakirodalom mindaddig kevés figyelmet szentelt a média által közvetített információk területi mintázatainak. Az országok többségében a területi marketingtevékenységek között, a közönségre gyakorolt kiemelkedő hatásuk miatt, a televíziós híradások játsszák a döntő szerepet. Tanulmányunkban azt vizsgáljuk, hogy a cseh NUTS III régiók tényleges gazdasági életének kiválasztott jellemzői milyen pontossággal jelennek meg a televíziós hírekben. Figyelmiünket, területi perspektívából, elsődlegesen a 14 csehországi saját önkormányzattal rendelkező régióknak szenteltük. Annak érdekében, hogy Prága torzító hatását csökkentjük, a két azonos központtal rendelkező NUTS III régiót, Prágát és Közép-Csehországot, egységes területként kezeljük, ami természetes földrajzi jellemzőiknek is megfelel. Ebből következően 13 területi egységet elemeztünk. Tisztában vagyunk azonban azzal, hogy az adott témák megjelenése a régiós híradásokban összefügg azzal, hogy rendelkezésre állnak-e a vonatkozó területi statisztikák.*

*Tanulmányunkban a gazdaság néhány kiválasztott területére fókuszálunk: a gazdasági életre, a gazdaságpolitikára, a gazdasági bűnözésre, valamint a kutatás, fejlesztés és oktatás területeire. Ezek a területek mind tényleges (anyagi), mind virtuális (a televíziós híradásokban megjelenő) komponenseik révén hozzájárulnak a centrum-periféria viszonyok értelmezéséhez és értékeléséhez. A médiában megjelenő információk szelektálásában a hozzáférés szabályozása játszik perdöntő szerepet. Ugyanakkor nem hagyhatjuk figyelmen kívül a média elfoglaltságát, vagyis a tömegmédiában dolgozó újságírók, hírtermelők tényleges vagy vélt elfoglaltságát az események, történetek kiválasztásában és közvetítésük módjában.*

*Kutatási kérdésünk, hogy a vizsgált cseh régiók tényleges gazdasági jellemzői és ezek médiabeli megjelenítése között felfedezhetők-e szignifikáns különbségek. E kérdés megválaszolása érdekében az egyes televíziós híradásokat kvantitatív tartalomelemzéssel osztályoztuk és rendszereztük. Eredményeink rámutatnak a régiók tényleges és virtuális gazdasági jellemzői közötti aránytalanságokra; a lehetséges kiegyensúlyozottságtól való eltérést mind a négy vizsgált gazdasági területen azonosítottuk. Ezen túlmenően, egyetlen eseményről szóló híradás is befolyásolhatja, vagy éppen torzíthatja egy adott régió teljes médiabeli megjelenését. Ebből következik, hogy a virtuális dimenzióban megjelenő centrum-periféria viszonyok a valóságosnál markánsabbak és egyúttal változó-konyabbak lehetnek. Másként fogalmazva, a virtuális, médiabeli megjelenítés felerősítheti, ám mérsékelheti is a centrumok és perifériák közötti tényleges, adatokban megragadható viszonyokat.*

## Introduction

Centralities and peripheralities are of utmost importance for spatial disciplines. Traditionally, they have been anchored primarily in economic categories. Over time, centralities and peripheralities have substantially expanded and their new economic and social as well as institutional-political dimensions have evolved (Nugin 2014; Pospěch 2014; Plüschke-Altöf 2016). Apart from the traditional material and tangible dimensions of centralities and peripheralities, we are increasingly entitled to talk about their intangible counterparts.

For the purposes of our article, it is of crucial importance that centralities and peripheralities can also be found in the world of the media. This can be contemplated in the sphere of the location of the media – mainly national – as well as with regard to the content of media reporting that has spatial connotations and expresses the preferences of the few elite groups that are channelled to the wider public (Karlsson, Picard 2011; Dill 2013).

There is no doubt about the importance of media in local and regional development as well as the distinct spatiality of media coverage. Nonetheless, contemporary conceptions of local and regional development, and in fact other spatial sciences as well, too seldom reflect these facts. This is surprising, mainly in view of the fact that the media aggregate information and spread it via various spatio-temporal frameworks (Sucháček 2014, 2015; Poledníková 2019), which enhance at least the basic structuration of contemporary information flows.

National media are only partially limited when choosing their topics. They can reference foreign happenings as well as domestic ones. Domestic news can be incorporated from various places and regions. As already indicated, the image of a particular region inside its borders is shaped mainly by national media. National media disseminate information about regional issues on a nationwide level. In spite of the fact that they collect material from various parts of the country, their main influence is describable as ‘top-down’, involving almost no feedback (McCombs, Reynolds 2002; Van Gorp, Terlouw 2017).

People from the west of the country get information about their eastern counterparts mainly by means of national media. However, since people from the west have only a vague notion of the reality in the east, they are compelled to rely primarily on the news provided by national media. Obviously, the same holds true for the opposite relation, and people from the eastern part of the country get information about their western counterparts primarily through national media.

From this point of view, national media have a great responsibility in terms of the objectivity and exactness of regional news. Unfortunately, central editors typically have very little knowledge about the real life of individual regions, and they have practically no relation (neither professional nor emotional) to these territories (see e.g. Shoemaker, Vos 2009; Sucháček et al. 2016). Therefore, if they prepare or edit the news from a particular region, they may distort reality.

It is hardly necessary to underline the fact that prejudices, stereotypes, ignorance, and other informal institutions play a cardinal role in this context. Central media thus actually functions as an informational filter between the true happenings in the regions and regional perceptions across the whole country.

Every single human as well as wider communities base their decision-making on the basis of the quantity and quality of information, and media are subsequently able to co-determine societal developments (Lowery, De Fleur 1995; Dearing, Rogers 1996; Fog 2004). It is clear that individual types of programs are not equal in this sense. News reporting fulfils different needs, with different impacts.

Our attention will be devoted to TV news reporting, which has the most intense impact on the wider public (see for instance Nečas 2009). We shall deal with regionally orientated TV contributions broadcast through national TV reporting. Special attention is concentrated on economic themes (see also Boomgaarden et al. 2011; Van Dalen, Vreese, Albæk 2015 or Urminský 2018). Thus, the main objective of the article is to evaluate whether the selected attributes of real economic life in NUTS III regions in Czechia find their adequate portrayal in the regionally related contributions of economic character that appear in national TV news reporting.

The research question posed in the frame of this article is as follows: can significant differences between the virtual portrayals and genuine economic characteristics be found in all investigated territories in Czechia?

### **Theoretical Background**

Conceptions of polarisation emerged as an antipole to neo-classic traditions. In contrast to neo-classic doctrine that primarily stresses the convergent mechanisms in spatial development, polarisation underlines that market forces may generate regional inequalities. Since these conceptions draw on the more realistic depictions of spatial developmental processes, it is far from surprising that they found truly wide applicability within the spatial sciences (Perroux 1950; Myrdal 1957; Hirschman 1958; Gyuris 2014; Nugin 2014; Pospěch 2014; Plüschke-Altöf 2016).

All conceptions that are classifiable as core-periphery theories are based on the existence of two types of regions – i.e., on core and periphery – and on an analysis of their mutual relations. The core-periphery dichotomy obviously does not reflect the real situation. In reality, there exist numerous sorts of regions and their classification is not an easy task at all. In other words, categories of ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ represent ideal versions or marginal types of regions (PoSCoPP Research Group 2015).

In general, we are dealing with abstract notions that are determined by mutual relations rather than particular indicators, such as the number of

inhabitants or income per capita etc. Core areas delimit the developmental paths of other regions that are dependent on the core. Core and periphery thus constitute a single system, in which the relations of authoritativeness and dependency are of a principal nature (Maier, Tödttling 1998).

Later on came the augmentation of the conception based on the new role of innovation that was not perceived as mere technical-economic change, but also as social change, new forms of societal organisation, and changes in life style (Friedmann 1972 or Maier, Tödttling 1998). The essential stimuli of societal development actually stem from a relatively small number of core regions (see also Shearmur 2012). The core-periphery structure also represents spatial forms of societal conflict.

Taking into account their bias, it is no surprise that conceptions of various forms of centralities and peripheralities found ample application in the frame of the description of general modernisation tendencies in advanced countries, as well as in the complex societal transformations in Central and Eastern Europe (Lux 2018).

The process of further broadening the concept of centralities and peripheralities subsequently also affected the intangible sphere (see Sucháček et al. 2014, 2015, 2016). Centralities and peripheralities can be perceived and measured not only from a material but an intangible perspective as well. In our case, the intangibles are embodied by territorially differentiated TV coverage.

In the context of TV reporting, a substantial role is played by so-called gatekeeping. This conception illuminates the process of the selection of information for final publication within media reporting. This selection is not haphazard, and the final shape of media reporting has a predictable character to some extent. Media reporting is dependent on certain criteria and routines (Galtung, Ruge 1965; Shoemaker, Reese 1996; Groseclose, Milyo 2005; Shoemaker, Vos 2009; Sucháček, Seďa, Friedrich 2013; Kuypers 2014).

Routine approaches that generate a definitive form of virtual portrayals of individual regions can accent certain characteristics on the one hand, and disregard other attributes on the other. Therefore, it is crucial to monitor whether the selected attributes of real economic life find their adequate portrayal in regional contributions that appear in national TV coverage.

There is little doubt that TV news reporting affects the wider public. It substantially co-forms mental maps that in turn influence the spatial behaviour of various entities, and from an aggregate point of view, also the formation of spatial structures. This happens via the final shape of the territorial image in the human mind (Tuan 1975; Gould, White 1986; Kitchin 1994; Kitchin, Blades 2002). For Anholt (2011), the territorial image is equivalent to reputation. Similarly to traditional material factors, these intangibles are rather important for local and regional development.

As mentioned by Rijnks and Strijker (2013), two pivotal aspects influence the creation of territorial image. The first one consists of the way people get information about a particular territory. The latter is embodied by the means of interaction with the territory in question.

In the case of personal interaction, we become acquainted with a territory in some way. Still, numerous filters affect our perception of the given territory. With growing distance from the place in question, the intensity of personal interaction tends to decline. In this case, information is gathered and tendered not via personal experience but different sources. Our notion of the territory is subsequently constrained.

From the spatial point of view, the media constitutes specific informational gates between 'inner' groups such as the municipal and regional actors of territorial development, and 'outer' groups such as visitors, potential visitors, investors, non-regional entrepreneurs, etc. Local and regional politicians, institutions, and entrepreneurial agents strive for media attention, and use media to address their voters, citizens, or employees. Conversely, these relevant actors that are involved in local and regional development obtain important information for their decision-making through media (Sucháček et al. 2016).

### **Methodological Continuities**

Virtual portrayals of regions in the economic sphere were assembled according to a database provided by Media Tenor Company. Media Tenor's research team statistically evaluates media data in order to determine what reality is reflected in the media, and what is not.

Our attention was devoted primarily to the territorial perspective; more specifically, to 14 self-governing regions in the Czech Republic. In order to reduce the urban character of Prague, two NUTS III regions with the same centre – Prague and Central Bohemia – were aggregated into one territory. Subsequently, one can monitor the individual characteristics of both NUTS III regions as well as the results of the united region composed of Prague and Central Bohemia. The aggregated region is congruous in terms of natural geographical characteristics. This unification was also accomplished to lessen the influence of Prague, which represents a specific outlier within the country's NUTS III territories. This approach has proved its efficacy many times (see for instance Sucháček et al. 2014, 2015, 2016). Thus, the final number of analysed territories reached 13.

This paper leans on regionally oriented contributions that appeared in the national TV reporting of the public company Česká televize and the private TV stations Nova and FTV Prima. Time series cover the period between 2005–2011. This is useful from the perspective of the evaluation of TV reporting in the various phases of the economic cycle.

Quantitative content analysis was utilised for the classification and structuration of individual regionally orientated contributions in national TV coverage (see Malhotra 2010 or Drisko, Maschi 2016). Berelson (1952) defined content analysis as the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.

The number of all contributions with a concrete territorial relation reached 52,255. Together, these contributions covered 30 topics. Economic categories that constitute the focal point of our article comprise 6, 692 contributions.

The classification of individual contributions was undertaken on the basis of a methodological approach using a coding book with the aim of limiting the subjective distortion of the information thereby communicated. The classification was not accomplished using automation, but by experts from the Media Tenor company. Individual contributions were subsequently aggregated into larger units called thematic categories. On the basis of keywords, economically orientated contributions were identified.

Thematic categories include information on economic entities and principal economic phenomena and processes happening in the regions. There can be found information on the proportion of products, individual companies, economic sectors, foreign investment, labour market, salaries, taxes, measures devoted to consumer protection, measures for the support of economic growth, corruption, and information on research and development.

Individual economic contributions that were analysed thoroughly for the purposes of our research were assigned into the following categories: economic life, economic policy, economic criminality, research, development and education.

In order to fulfil the objective of the paper, it is necessary to identify the representative real indicators for every thematic category. Real indicators are the standard indicators that are monitored and published on a regular basis by public organisations. In our case, this concerned the Czech Statistical Office, the Police of the Czech Republic, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. In every category, a single relevant indicator was chosen to approximate the category concerned. In order to determine the particular indicator, thematic media contributions with the highest frequency and the general thematic composition of the given category were studied thoroughly. Finally, the percentage shares of individual regions within the investigated thematic domain were compared cumulatively for the given time period. In other words, the primary perspective adopted here is a quantitative one.

Regarding individual categories, *economic life* comprises information about common happenings in the economic sphere. It concerns information about individual entrepreneurs and enterprises, whole economic sectors, or about economic performance in individual regions. To a large extent it is a synthetic indicator; nonetheless, it disregards active state economic policies, illegal activities with economic connotations, and research and development.

The proxy for the real indicators is embodied by the size of the Gross Domestic Product in prices of the previous year. This is a standard and at the same time also quite synthetic indicator. The source of data is the Czech Statistical Office.

Further on, we deal with *economic policy*. This category includes information related to, e.g., labour market, salaries, support for small- and middle-sized enterprises, the privatisation of enterprises, and measures aimed at supporting economic growth. The labour market is reflected rather intensely in media. This portrayal involves both policy measures for the labour market, and indications of problems on the labour market.

The impact of economic policies can be manifested rather unevenly within individual countries. An important part of economic policy is epitomised by active measures related to the labour market via employment policies. The reason for this is that unutilised labour limits the reachable size of production in regions, and finally also at the level of the whole state. Labour that is not engaged in the labour market is also associated with social impacts. Peripheral or old industrial regions are often mentioned in this context.

The proxy for real indicators is here represented by total expenditure on active and passive employment policy. The source of data was the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

As for *economic criminality*, this is a rather serious societal-economic issue. Moreover, due to its largely negative and extraordinary character, it is attractive for media coverage. The notion includes a rather wide spectrum of economic criminal offences. Economic criminality concerns both the private and public sectors and their interrelation (Sutherland 1983; Gottschalk 2016).

Regarding a real indicator that serves for final comparison with media interest in this sphere, total financial damage caused by economically oriented criminal offences was selected. The source of data was the Police of the Czech Republic.

*Research, development and education* concerned primarily research and development in regional profiles as well as characteristics of the respective education system.

Research and development represent an undoubted competitive advantage that manifests at the regional level in this case. At the same time, it should be noted that the above-mentioned activities tend to rather selective spatial concentration. Together with, for example, human capital and innovation, they can be treated as one of the substantial sources of regional differentiation (Nelson 1998; Dicken 2011 or Romer 1986).

As for the representative of real indicators serving for final comparison with media interest in this domain, expenditure on research and development was chosen. The source of data was the Czech Statistical Office.



## Results

As already indicated, in this chapter we deal with four economic categories; namely, economic life, economic policy, economic criminality and research, development and education. Basically, the relation between real territorial economic indicators and their virtual portrayals will be evaluated. In other words, material and intangible characteristics and the degree of their congruence will be assessed. The chosen real indicators serve as an approximation of the news categories.

It should be underlined that in the Czech Republic, the spatial distribution of media is concentrated in the capital city. This fact corresponds with the administrative structure and socioeconomic and political profile of the country. Prague thus functions as an administrative, political, and socioeconomic as well as media centre of the whole country. Naturally, this affects economic life, economic policy, economic criminality, as well as research and development and education from both the material point of view as well as from an intangible perspective – i.e., a media coverage perspective.

Table 1 provides us with the regional distribution of TV contributions and real indicators in individual thematic categories.

Table 1.: Regional distribution of TV news and real indicators in thematic categories (%)  
*A televíziós hírek és a tényleges indikátorok regionális megoszlása tematikus kategóriák szerint (%)*

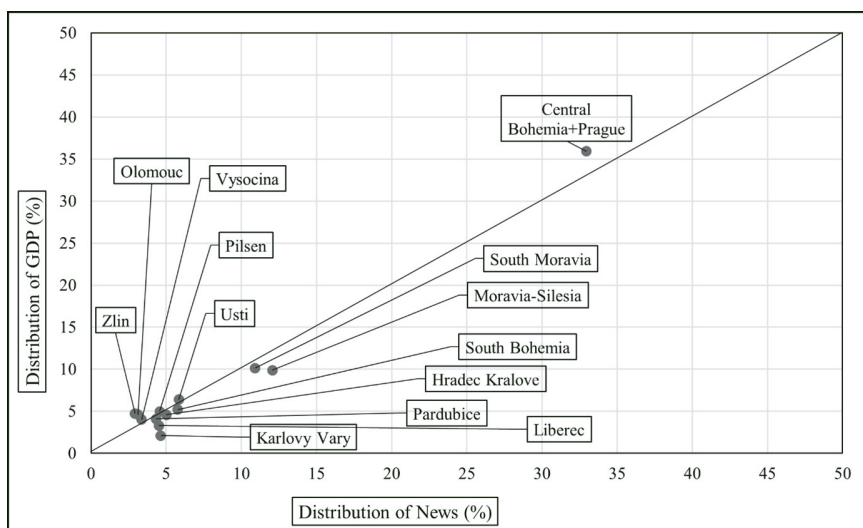
Region/thematic category	Economic Life		Economic Policy		Economic Criminality		R&D and Education	
	News	GDP	News	ALMPs, PLMPs expenditures	News	Total financial damage	News	R&D expenditure
Central Bohemia+Prague	32.95	35.91	24.52	16.82	34.23	50.13	43.26	52.60
South Bohemia	5.78	5.21	4.65	5.78	5.28	2.72	7.35	3.86
Pilsen	4.57	4.99	4.90	4.87	5.44	2.43	10.69	3.64
Karlovy Vary	4.63	2.12	5.03	2.97	4.77	1.31	2.25	0.17
Usti	5.84	6.40	12.00	11.42	6.99	8.68	4.66	1.42
Liberec	4.51	3.30	5.16	4.67	3.65	2.19	3.78	2.91
Hradec Kralove	5.02	4.57	3.10	4.71	5.20	3.48	2.63	2.62
Pardubice	4.32	4.10	2.97	5.03	4.92	2.39	2.19	3.99
Vysocina	3.37	4.02	2.84	5.36	3.14	1.82	1.59	1.33
South Moravia	10.92	10.13	7.48	11.89	11.60	9.35	11.13	14.79
Olomouc	3.11	4.61	5.03	7.18	3.26	2.81	3.29	3.15
Zlin	2.92	4.74	3.48	5.91	2.03	4.26	3.13	3.51
Moravia-Silesia	12.06	9.89	18.84	13.39	9.49	8.43	4.06	6.03

Source: Media Tenor, CSO (Czech Statistical Office), MOLSA (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs), Police of the Czech Republic, authors' elaboration (2019)

### Economic Life

Contributions related to economic life generally included information about the economic level and economic happenings in particular regions. GDP expressed in the previous year's values serves as the real indicator in this respect. This indicator was compared with the amount of regionally related contributions about economic life that appeared in national TV coverage. Figure 1 is a comparison between the regional distribution of GDP and TV reports.

Figure 1.: Comparison between regional distribution of GDP and TV reports (%)  
*A GDP és a televíziós riportok regionális megoszlásának összehasonlítása (%)*



Source: CSO, Media Tenor, authors' elaboration

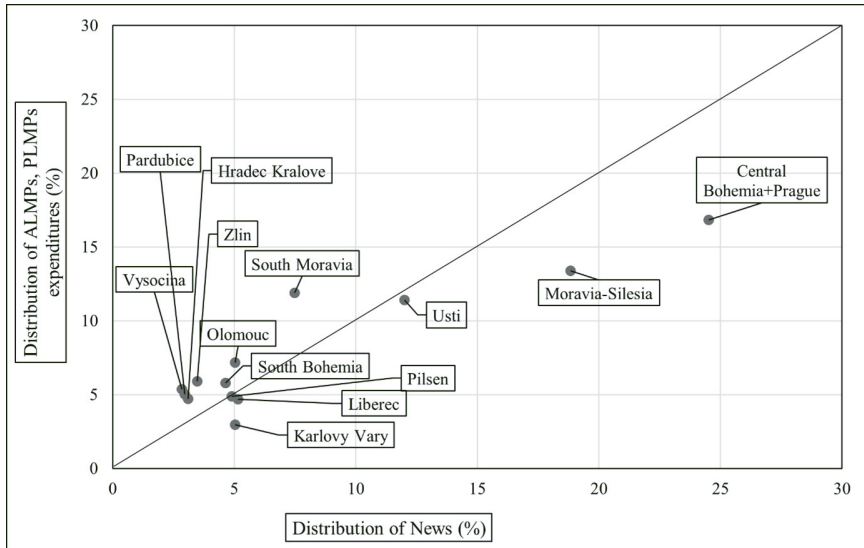
As can be seen, there is generally little variation in the balanced state represented by the diagonal. Larger deviations may be identified in case of the Karlovy Vary and Moravian-Silesian region on the one hand, and the united region of Prague and Central Bohemia on the other. Since the united region of Prague and Central Bohemia performs best in terms of GDP and GDP per capita respectively, it is perceived as an inbuilt factor, *sui generis*, that does not deserve greater media attention.

### Economic Policy

As for the category named 'economic policy', individual contributions focused primarily on events related to regional labour markets. The indicator representing the real world situation was embodied by aggregate expenditure on both active (ALMP) and passive (PLMP) employment policy in individual regions (see also Figure 2).

Figure 2.: Comparison of regional distribution of total expenditure on ALMPs, PLMPs and TV reports (%)

*Az aktív és passzív foglalkoztatási politikára fordított teljes kiadások és a televíziós riportok regionális megoszlásának összehasonlítása (%)*



Source: MOLSA, Media Tenor, authors' elaboration

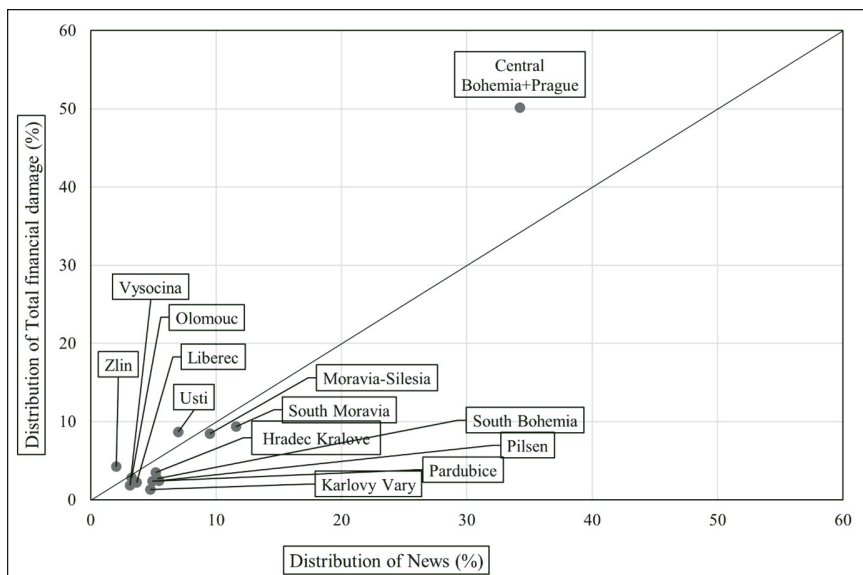
The largest deviations from a state of balance can be found in case of regions with a larger population. Media interest above what would be proportional could be detected in the case of Central Bohemia together with Prague, as well as the Moravian-Silesian region. In contrast, less than proportional media interest was found for South Moravia. Interestingly, the South Moravian and Moravian-Silesian regions are similar in terms of expenditure. However, the intensity of media coverage in this thematic pillar was 2.5 times greater in the case of Moravia-Silesia. This fact does not have to be interpreted in a strictly negative way, and may be accounted for by the rather difficult (post)transformation processes in the Moravian-Silesian region, representing a territory typical of traditional industry. In the case of Central Bohemia together with Prague, media interest can be attributed to the fact that virtually all relevant institutions in terms of the labour market have a seat in Prague.

### **Economic Criminality**

As to economic criminality, which represents a negative, albeit important part of the economy and its functioning, the contributions in terms of TV reporting were confronted by the scale of the harm caused by economically orientated criminal acts (Figure 3). That size was expressed in a pecuniary way.

The outlier represented by Central Bohemia and Prague is determined primarily by the scale of harm, accounting for more than one-half of the total country figure. Again, the spatial concentration of the state's management of institutional-political as well as economic structures may illuminate the causes of this phenomenon. The share of Central Bohemia and Prague in the shadow economy is proportionately larger than the share of that region in terms of its GDP contribution. Nonetheless, final news coverage of the phenomenon turns out to be similar.

Figure 3.: Comparison of the regional distribution of total financial damage and TV reports (%)  
*A teljes pénzügyi kárösszeg és a televíziós riportok regionális megoszlásának összehasonlítása (%)*



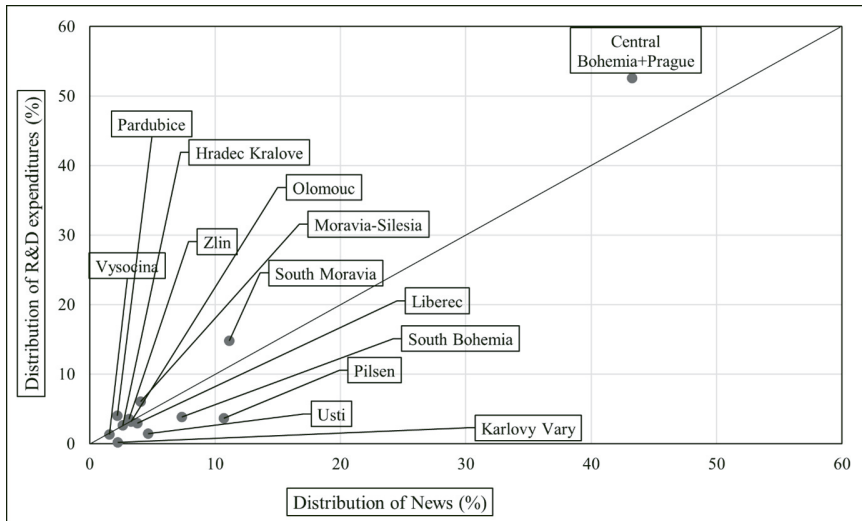
Source: Police of the Czech Republic, Media Tenor, authors' elaboration

It is also worth noting that statistically significant differences could be found in all investigated territories with just one exception represented by the Olomouc self-governing region, which is economically relatively weak. This situation has much to do with the medially attractive content of those criminal offences that happen in various parts of the country. Comparisons show that TV coverage distinctively prefers negative events that are of interest to the general public.

### **Research, Development and Education**

From a media point of view, research, development and education turn out to barely attract the attention of the general public (Figure 4). Thus, in Central Bohemia and Southern Moravia, where Prague and Brno, country's research,

Figure 4.: Comparison of regional distribution of R&D expenditure and TV reports (%)  
 A kutatásra és fejlesztésre fordított kiadások és a televíziós riportok összehasonlítása (%)



Source: CSO, Media Tenor, authors' elaboration

development and education centres are located, investments into research and development are considered a built-in factor, *sui generis*.

The specific position of the Pilsen region is determined by a single event. This involved a well-known incident concerning the Faculty of Law at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen. This incident was a media-exacerbated scandal involving 'turbo students' (students who accelerate their course of study to complete degree requirements in extraordinarily short times) that involved senior politicians in the Czech Republic. The students obtained their degrees after only a few months of study (for more information, see Sucháček et al. 2016).

## Discussion

Table 2 provides us with a useful and synthetic overview of the reporting on real economic phenomena. The table shows the statistically significant differences between real and TV portrayals in concrete regions. These disproportions are presented from both vertical and horizontal perspectives. While the vertical point of view concerns the disproportions in the framework of the investigated economic categories, the horizontal perspective is related to individual regions.

It is possible to identify whether the region in question is mentioned in the media at statistically significant higher or lower intensity, taking into consideration its real economic performance in the selected area. The respective indicators are GDP for economic life, expenditure on active and passive employment policy as a part of

Table 2.: Synthetic comparison of regional economic virtual portrayals and the real economic situation based on statistical evaluation<sup>1</sup>

*A regionális gazdaság virtuális ábrázolása és a valós gazdasági helyzet összehasonlítása statisztikai értékelés alapján*

Region/thematic category	Economic Life		Economic Policy		Economic Criminality		R&D and Education	
	Above proportion	Under proportion	Above proportion	Under proportion	Above proportion	Under proportion	Above proportion	Under proportion
Central Bohemia+Prague		1	3			3		4
South Bohemia					6		2	
Pilsen					8		4	
Karlovy Vary	3		1		9		5	
Usti						1	3	
Liberec	1				5		1	
Hradec Kralove				1	3			
Pardubice				3	7			2
Vysocina				5	4			
South Moravia				6	2			3
Olomouc		2		2				
Zlin		3		4		2		
Moravian-Silesian	2		2		1			1

Source: authors' elaboration

economic policy, total financial damage in the case of economic criminality, and research and development expenditures for the thematic category research, development and education.

Regions in both columns according to individual categories are ranked in a top-down way only on the basis of the relative disproportions: this concerns both cases – i.e., either over-proportional or under-proportional representation. Individual numbers in the table show the hierarchy of the regions based only on rank, provided that the testing criterion was statistically significant. All the calculations were accomplished on the basis of testing the hypotheses about relative frequency.

### *Economic life*

In the case of economic life, the more intense interest of the media in a region than indicated by its real economic performance could be identified in the case of Karlovy Vary, and the Moravian-Silesian and Liberec regions. On the contrary, statistically significant underrepresentation in the media could be found for Zlin, Olomouc, and the Central Bohemia and Prague territories.

On the basis of the content structure of the contributions, a single event that affected the shape of the category of economic life was identified: a change of owner of a traditional porcelain producer in 2009. This mainly involved TV coverage on public Czech TV related to the Karlovy Vary region, with a full 23% of contributions related to that event. Subsequently, in the case of the TV reporting of Czech TV, one specific event affected the final form of the thematic category called economic life. This is consonant with previous investigations into various categories that are mirrored in regionally focused national TV reporting (see also Sucháček et al. 2016).

### ***Economic policy***

Table 2 further shows statistically significant differences between TV reporting and genuine phenomena that are epitomised by aggregate expenditure on both active and passive *employment policy*.

In the case of Central Bohemia, the position can be derived from the presence of the capital city of Prague, where economic policy is formed. Central institutions located in this territory affect the economic policies of the whole country. In case of the Moravian-Silesian region, we identify the media weight of one single event again. This concerned the preparation and subsequent accomplishment of an automotive investment by the Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Czech Company. A full 30% of all TV contributions that were examined were dedicated to this event, which affected the transformation of a region beset by old industry. In contrast to other media coverage related to regions of traditional industry (Sucháček 2015), the connotations of this very investment proved to be quite positive.

### ***Economic criminality***

In the case of economic criminality, the real indicator was represented by the size of the harm stemming from economically orientated criminal offences. The clear dominance of the Karlovy Vary region is apparent, influenced by one single event again. It was there that manipulation occurred related to the competition for the construction of an ice hockey arena in Karlovy Vary, which turned out to be truly attractive for media. The whole Karlovy Vary region was labelled by this event, which resonated in TV coverage.

This category also involved the highest amount of statistically significant differences, reflecting the disproportionate attention devoted to individual cases of economic criminality. Taking into account previous studies (e.g., Sucháček et al. 2016), this fact is far from surprising. Negative phenomena in general are rather attractive for media coverage (e.g., Galtung, Ruge 1965; Shoemaker, Vos 2009).

### ***Research, Development and Education***

This domain virtually embodies the phenomenon of how a single event can affect the media picture of a whole region. As already mentioned, the affair of the Faculty of Law of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen was widely publicized, subsequently influencing the entire picture of that region in media. This phenomenon is similar to previous categories and demonstrates the amplifying effects of the media in relation to territories.

In contrast, regions that enjoy investment into research, development and education in the long term, such as Central Bohemia or Southern Moravia, do not attract similar media attention, as research, development and education are typically only marginally interesting from the perspective of gatekeeping.

### **Conclusions**

*As could be seen, centralities and peripheralities can be perceived and measured not only from a material but also from an intangible perspective.* In our case, the intangible dimension was epitomised by territorially differentiated TV coverage.

From an empirical point of view, it can be stated that *real regional economic patterns are barely reflected by regionally orientated national economic TV reporting. In every investigated territory, significant differences between virtual portrayals and genuine economic characteristics were found.* Thus, the congruence of the material and intangible aspects of the investigated space was in no manner strong, and the answer to the research question posed at the beginning is a positive one.

This situation was palpable mainly in the case of Central Bohemia, Karlovy Vary, and the Moravian-Silesian region. Significant distortions concerned all four economic spheres that were examined – i.e., economic life, economic policy, economic criminality, as well as research, development and education.

Nonetheless, in the case of remaining territories, the distortion applied to at least two of those domains. The greatest disproportion could be found in case of the thematic category focused on economic criminality, which is medially rather attractive. In contrast, the smallest disproportion was found in the thematic category depicting economic life.

Obviously, one cannot assume that the general public automatically perceives, evaluates, and memorises all media information related to regions. This statement even more strongly applies to economic information and information related to other territories. *Nevertheless, certain specific events that strongly and repeatedly resonate within the media world can reinforce or create associations with the respective territory.*

In the case of economic events – and similarly to other researched media categories – it was found that media select one event, which can via its persistent occurrence within reporting lead to the labelling of whole regions. One or more



single events usually tend to affect media portrayals of whole territories. This finding is congruous with the conclusions of previous studies (Sucháček et al. 2016). Thus, *media portrayals of individual territories gradually fail to represent their unique, regional character* that would otherwise be commensurate with the variety of activities and life in these territories. There also appeared to be a distinct lack of news oriented around genuine local and regional development.

In Czechia, the headquarters of all national media are concentrated in the capital city. *This geographical concentration that follows the country's spatial socioeconomic profile tends to support a monoperspective and sometimes even a biased perception of reality.* This is important mainly in view of the fact that relevant social, economic, and other actors very often obtain their information from media, and their decision-making is influenced by the content of media information.

In a more general vein, there is little doubt that the media – and in our case, TV coverage – is taking the form of an increasingly aggressive and important institution. From a spatial point of view, it co-creates mental maps and, in spite of its virtual character, is co-shaping real regional development.

Naturally, the image of regions is formed primarily by the composition of regional themes in national media. However, one can barely obtain an objective regional picture, as images are subjected to gatekeeping processes.

Since there is limited time for TV reporting, and gatekeeping acts as a filter between reality and the information that appears in media, superficial and simplified images of reality may arise. The regional portrayals of media thus may differ from the reality. Hence, *media may enhance the neglect and stereotypical perceptions of individual territories in either a positive or negative way, and often disregard very dynamic change.*

Sequentially created immaterial mental maps then co-determine spatial material socioeconomic relations and interactions. Persistently repeated media images are at least partly transposed into real physical activities and processes. The information transmitted by the media can be thus characterised by its territorial patterns that can further affect real activities within space.

Centralities and peripheralities of an intangible character have been underestimated for a long time as there have been many question marks related to their measurability; nonetheless, their importance is undeniable and their analysis should complement traditional, material analyses of centralities and peripheralities.

Last but not least, one should be aware of the limitations of this study. In this article, there was not sufficient space for more contextual handling of the issue. Wider framing would be beneficial indeed, but would require much more space. A further limitation can be seen in the absence of the analysis of internet media, which is increasingly superseding traditional TV coverage. There is no doubt that future research directions in this vein should take into consideration internet media as well.

## Notes

1 The table presents the hierarchy of investigated regions in a top-down way on the basis of statistically significant disproportions between virtual portrayals and genuine economic performance in all researched categories; i.e. economic life, economic policy, economic criminality and research, development and education. The hierarchy is based only on the above-mentioned disproportions, as defined by the testing criterion. It includes both overrepresentation as well as underrepresentation.

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