

PROBLEMS OF CONTEMPORARY REBUILDING OF RURAL PUBLIC AREA (URBAN-ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS AS A NECESSARY BASIS FOR THE NEXT DEVELOPMENT)

Jan Kašpar

*CTU in Prague, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Thákurova 7, 166 29 Praha 6 - Dejvice, Czech Republic,
jan.kaspar.2@fsv.cvut.cz*

Summary

Since the nineteen fifties construction in the Czech countryside has been accompanied by a gradual loss of identity and historical continuity. It can be perceived on individual buildings and their relations to public space and landscape. Despite efforts to assimilate country to town its residential qualities have not been paradoxically achieved. Urbanism and architecture of original villages were damaged by an unsuitable contemporary building. This research nevertheless points to unimpaired pattern of settlement and good recognizable former historical concept which shaped today's public spaces. These are the values which should become a foundation for future development. The Czech countryside stagnates in this case compared to neighboring West European countries.

This paper deals with problems of urbanistic and architectural evaluation of rural public spaces, which should be regarded as one of important bases for the sustainable building. Based on research of a specific area, local plans, planning data and related literature, basic phenomena for assessing were suggested. Their identification and analysis should be groundwork for the next development of rural centers.

Keywords: rebuilding of countryside, rural public space, urbanism, architecture

1 Thesis introduction

For centuries countryside was integral part of our living environment in which it kept eminent position. Its development we can simply describe as gradual and continuous. A typical relation to land (agriculture was the main source of making a living) is shown on its face which we positively accept up to now.

Lack of municipal finances, interruption of continuous development and relation disruption to land, farmhouse and tradition in the 2nd half of the 20th century, but primarily recent shortage of suitable architectural examples to follow, these are the current problems of rural areas. Small-scale and medium-scale projects which are typical for these localities are often carried out without the intervention of an erudite architect or urban planner with sufficient knowledge and so the crisis of countryside intensifies. Residential construction is moved to edges of settlements and original centers paradoxically depopulate. Research from the year 2011 [1] brought a critical look at the current situation of rural public space in Příbram region.

Need for reconstruction and rebuilding of original village buildings and revitalizations of spaces is clear. Major architectural, urban and historical ties can not be ignored. It is necessary to promote methods for their preservation.

The presented research was focused on main public area (it means village square, street or different sort of center). This area was formed in the first evolution phase of settlement and it is bearer of significant values (for example cultural, historical, urban, architectural). But the identification is very problematic. This fact is confirmed by several studies [2]. How else we can rationalize that some of primary phenomena are not marked in local plans (historical concept of settlement, former land division and so on). Sýkora and Pešková [3] bring other ignored points into focus.

It appears that a complete set of tools for analysis of rural public area do not exist. Educational text [4] worked out by team from CTU in Prague is crucial. It provides general instructions for fast processing of historical core analysis of village. Naturally we can use other sources of information, for example work written by Kuča and Kučová [5] or other books published by Institute for the Monuments Protection, local plans and planning data (mainly data prepared for Prague). Real results of Countryside Renewal Programs in the Czech Republic and neighboring countries (Germany, Austria) or related studies [6] are very interesting and relevant to this discussion as well.

2 Research description

2.1 Locality

The target of this research is the district of Dobříš which represented relatively stably populated area at the turn of the 10th and 11th century already. But we can find younger villages from following period of colonization too.

22 municipalities (69 villages, without solitary houses and recreational settlements) were assessed in total. As far as the classification of settlements goes, we can find mostly hamlets and freely growing types of villages in the district (classification by J. Pešta [7]).

Pattern of settlement - proportion (District of Dobříš)

Type of urban pattern	%
Geometric types	5
Irregular types	88
- free growing	57
- street	18
- Hamlets	25
Other mixed types	7

2.2 State of historical pattern of settlement in the Czech countryside

Remanent original pattern of settlement and its spatial concept form unique character of each village and therefore should be preserved as much as possible. These patterns manifest themselves usually very well. The exception to that are villages affected by floods (riverside of Vltava). More relevant disruption of former spatial character was discovered in three settlements only.

2.3 Definition and position of main public area

Shape and size of an area is usually given historically. But there exist some settlements in which public areas are not exactly defined and these do not make typical functions (social, cultural, recreational, etc.) possible. This absence of running center is eminent problem for progression of a settlement. Especially displacement of a center to the edge of build-up area has some very negative consequences as a result of contemporary unsuitably placed housing development. Such displaced area becomes too isolated and subsequently deteriorates. Another issue might be a creation of a new different center in a different location. Such act is usually in direct contradiction with historical evolution and we can observe that people negatively accept this fact and have troubles relating themselves to the new area.

Main public area (District of Dobříš)

Main public area (village square, main street, etc.)	%
was found and described	71
was not found (not well defined or/ not exists)	29

2.4 Form of current protection

Preservation of public area and its values is commonly solved by simple pronouncing and confirming of current situation in local plans. Interpretation of conservation is left to the volition of clerks and project architects/planners. Required protection should be supported by clearly designed regulation – design of local zoning plan or local studies. These have to be based on a specific analysis. For example we can perceive the positive impact of regulation mechanisms for new housing localities in the context of their influence on historical cores which takes form of compulsory urban-design studies.

3 Proposed categorization

The project output is a list of points which we need to focus on for complex urban and architectural evaluation of the main public area of rural settlements.

3.1 Urban phenomenon

Basic categories: position of center (its identification in panorama), former pattern of settlement (land division, land coverage with buildings), definition of spaces and subspaces, urban assessment of buildings (location of buildings, ground plans, significance and value, groups of buildings), spatial and compositional ties (dominants, axes, vistas), functional solutions (routes and their importance, functional activities of area), public facilities, transport and technical infrastructure, water surfaces and streams, vegetation (trees, bushes).

3.2 Architectural phenomenon

Basic categories: architectural assessment of buildings (significance and value, typical architectural features, vernacular architecture), sculptures, furniture, types of vegetation, surfaces of roads (material).

4 Conclusions

"Abandoned and dilapidated" centers are a common image of the Czech countryside. Another uncontrolled development and growth of areas on the edges of settlements is not sustainable and so original historical cores represent a great potential for the future. We should understand their revitalization critically within the context of particular monitored attributes and phenomena. The importance of rural areas is mainly seen in historically formalized *genius loci* which is typical for this environment. However, this is a sensitive factor that can be easily destroyed by improper interventions.

Residential values are the main priority of public area. But its quality can rise or fall along with our ability to accept historical ties and traditions. Need of analytical tools for designing process is evident. With their application we can contribute to the recovery of existing rural centers. But the question remains how to deal with settlements lacking any center (e.g. quickly growing hamlets, transformed recreational settlements).

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by the Grant Agency of the Czech Technical University in Prague, grant No. SGS12/018/OHK1/1T/11.

References

- [1] KAŠPAR, J. *Reconnaissance and assessment of the main public village spaces in the district of Příbram*. Grant No. SGS11/017/OHK1/1T/11, Czech Technical University in Prague, Prague 2011.
- [2] BEČKA, M., MAIER, K., PELTAN, T., DODOKOVÁ, A., VOREL, J. *Hodnoty v územně analytických podkladech obcí s rozšířenou působností*. Urbanismus a územní rozvoj, 2/2010, pp. 53-58, ISSN 1212-0855.
- [3] SÝKORA, J., PEŠKOVÁ, Z. *Ochrana historických jader vesnic v urbanistické tvorbě*. Sborník konference ENVIRO 2007, pp. 317-318.
- [4] SÝKORA, J., PEŠKOVÁ, Z. *Hodnocení historického jádra venkovských sídel pro potřeby výuky*. Stavební obzor, 6/2011, pp. 187-191, ISSN 1210-4027.
- [5] KUČA, K., KUČOVÁ, V. *Principy památkového urbanismu*. Státní ústav památkové péče, Praha 2000, ISBN 80-86234-15-0.
- [6] DENNHARDT, H. *Vorschläge zur Ortserneuerung im Landkreis Gernersheim dargestellt am Beispiel Rheinzabern - Ausgewählte Studienarbeiten*. Universität Kaiserslautern, Raum- und Umweltpfung, Kaiserslautern 1984.
- [7] PEŠTA, J. *Několik poznámek ke studiu půdorysné struktury venkovských sídel na území Čech*. Průzkumy památek, II/2000, pp. 153-168.