

# Folk landscape architecture as a significant value of Czech landscape

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**ABSTRACT:** In the past the image of Czech countryside was created by agricultural and social activities of the rural population in a significant manner. These activities related to natural elements and to the creation of landscape in a wider sense can be described as folk landscape architecture. Its object is mainly the spatial arrangement and assortment composition of vegetation and its functionality in villages and in their landscape environment. This study defines these activities as time limited regional (local) customary practices of agricultural and cultural and social character, reflected especially in the spatial arrangement and assortment composition of vegetation elements. Vegetation and other natural elements are evaluated as functional singularities and as functional systems in relation to particular structures, type of village pattern and state of the surrounding landscape. Besides the methodical categorisation of evaluated objects principles for their use in different forms of land-use planning are defined. A significant result of this study is the definition of landscape architecture as a phenomenon of the rural population lifestyle in which not only the past but also the future of rural landscape is reflected.

**Keywords:** landscape; landscape character; village; landscape architecture; permanent vegetation; tree species; customary practice

Until now the system of permanent vegetation of villages and rural landscape has been narrowed down to its agriculture-related functions only: nature conservation, fruit or biomass production, regulation of microclimatic and hygienic conditions, transport, etc. (SKLENIČKA 2003). These stands are very often evaluated from a single aspect, from the ecological one (NEUHÄUSLOVÁ et al. 2001; MORAVEC et al. 1994). Social and cultural aspects were applied in this sense only in the areas where intentional landscape architecture measures were taken (parks) in conditions of the Czech Republic in the periods of Baroque and Romanticism (PACÁKOVÁ et al. 1999). A certain approach to the given theme can be found in papers dealing with aesthetics of natural structures, position of a piece of art in landscape – land art, and creation of aesthetic values by systems of farm crops – agrodiseign (ŽÁK 1947; LIBROVÁ 1998; JELLIOCE et al. 1995). Very inspiring and up-to-date is the concept of rural landscape as a complex block of geographic and natural conditions (CULEK et al. 1996). The unity of ecological, economic and social functions and values of landscape resulting in the landscape character was defined in

a comprehensive way by LÖW and MÍČAL (2003). In the Czech Republic the landscape character as a phenomenon solving the problem of rural landscape to some extent is laid down by Act No. 114/1992 On Nature and Landscape Conservation. New trends are the evaluation of landscape as a markedly aesthetic phenomenon. Basic features of the majority of these papers are rather one-sided evaluation criteria and generalisation from the aspect of specific landscape practice. The objective of the project focused on folk landscape architecture is the synthesis and development of the given conclusions for specific needs of landscape planning with an accent on social and culturally social aspects (MAREČEK 2005).

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Form of assessment

Tree species evaluation in villages and in their landscape environment was done from the aspect of their spatial arrangement, assortment composition and landscape value. The spatial arrangement was related to buildings and other engineering

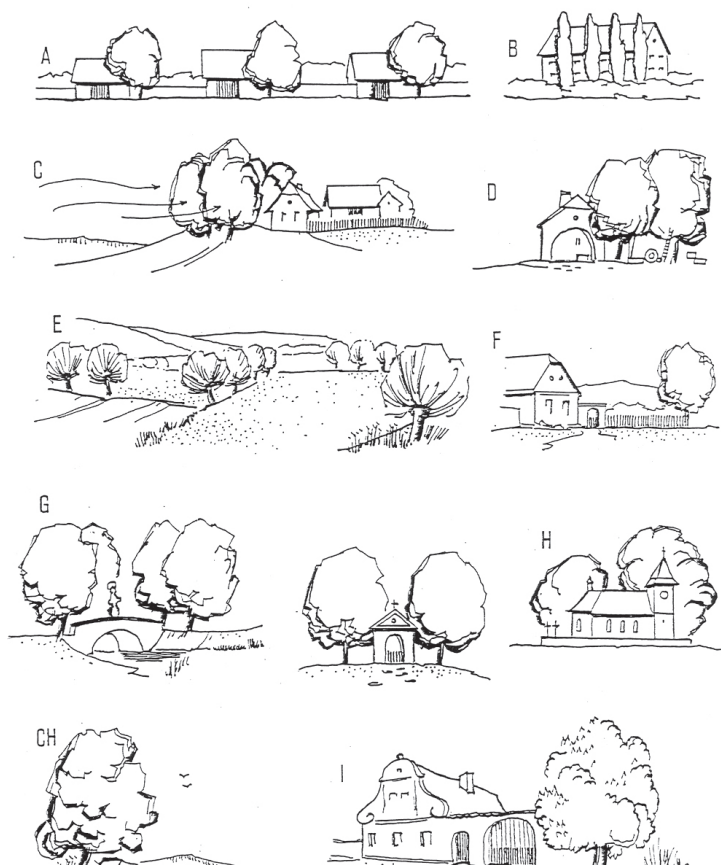


Fig. 1. Folk landscape architecture reflected locally handed over customs

*Customary practice based on management needs:*

A – wide-crown trees as protection against the fire spread, B – pyramidal poplar-trees in the function of lightning conductors of that time, C – tree barrier on the windward side of the building, D – summer shelters (smithy, pub, courtyard), E – boundary trees in meadows, F – boundary trees accompanying boundary stones and fences

*Customary practice on the level of cultural and social needs – folk aesthetics:*

G – application of the compositional principle of symmetry – two trees beside a small chapel, four trees beside a small bridge across a brook, H – embellishment of important buildings with big tree crowns, CH – planting of trees to commemorate places and events, I – artistic unity of the building and its accompanying greenery (the chestnut crown corresponding by its shape to the baroque gable of the farm house)

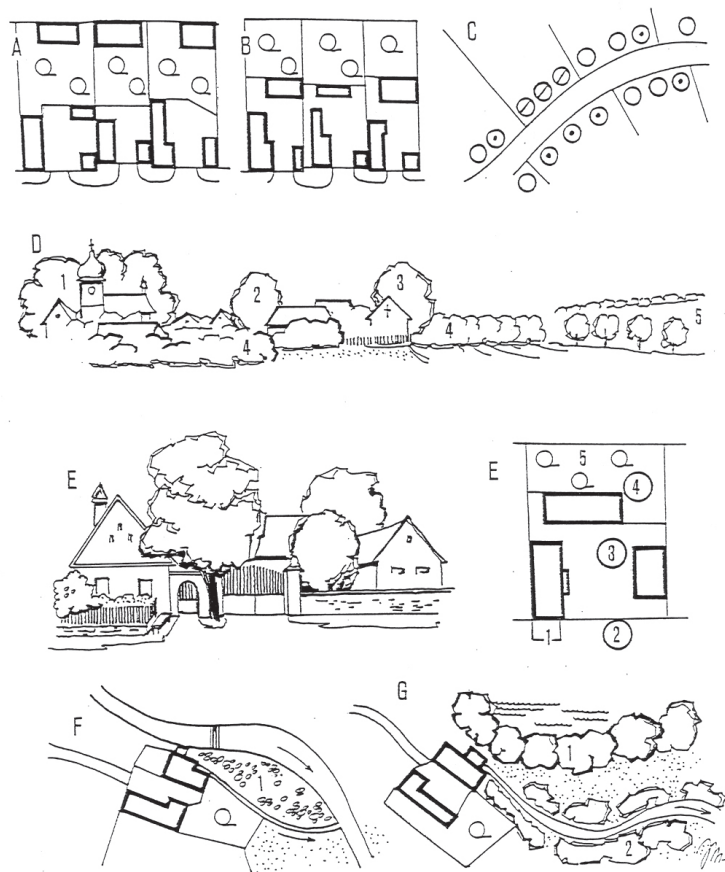


Fig. 2. Combination of partial elements into functional systems was an important feature of folk landscape architecture. Landscape values of higher type were created in this way:

A, B – the system of customarily identically situated gardens created a functionally higher type of vegetation belt important for the whole village, C – spontaneous, not intentionally planted fruit-tree alley resulting from the custom to plant fruit trees on the plot edge, D – typical height gradation of vegetation in the village skyline consisting of the system of partial customary elements (1 – trees of the village historical centre, 2 – trees beside the village-common gateways into farm buildings, 3 – trees preventing against fire beside barns, 4 – backyard orchards, 5 – fruit-tree alleys in landscape), E – mill on the river with a frequent garden enclave between the stream and the race, F – mill on the water-course with a typical garden enclave between the river and the mill-race, G – mill below the pond with traditionally high vegetation along the dike and mill-race

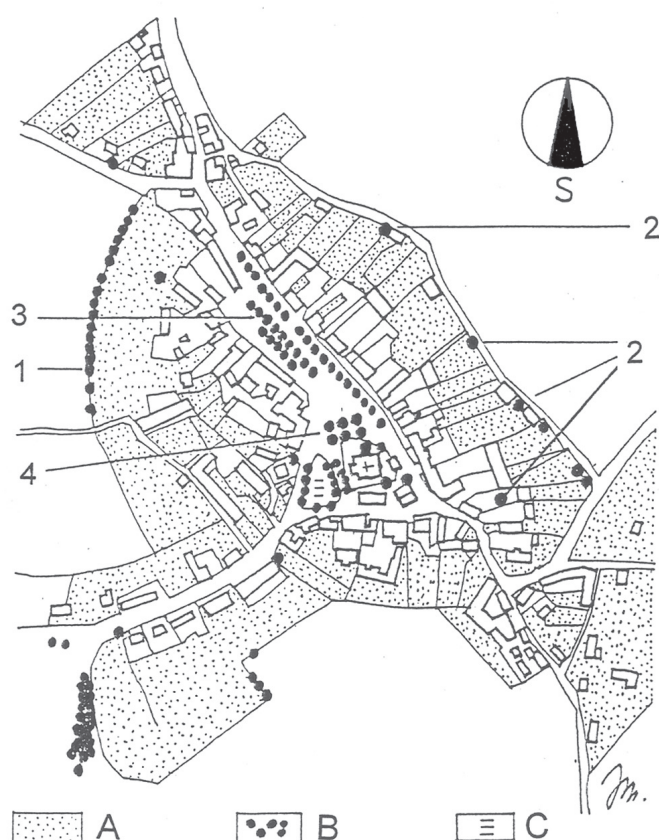


Fig. 3. Different causes of the origination of formations of high tree vegetation in the village intramural area

1 – windbreak strip that originated as a system of high trees on the edges of adjacent gardens, 2 – system of wide-crown trees planted as protection against fire close to barns or their original positions, 3 – tree alley planted as a cultural and social object of the design of a large village common, 4 – historically gradually created spatial embellishment of the village historical centre (A – gardens, high non-fruit trees, C – pond on a village common) Heraldice 1960

elements, their functional systems, types of village patterns and to their landscape environment. The assortment composition was evaluated on the level of the species, and in fruit-bearing trees exceptionally on the level of the variety. The landscape value was assessed by the five-point evaluation system according to MACHOVEC (1984). Terrain assessment was carried out in selected localities of Central, North-eastern and Southern Bohemia. In this study background materials of the project participant from the years 1954–2005 and local archival documents of municipalities were

used. The processing of results was done on commented photographs, graphical documentation and maps.

#### Accompanying vegetation of selected objects

Particular structures: residential and farm buildings, church buildings, historical buildings, cemeteries, bridges, roads.

Partial combinations of structures: estates, mills, presbyteries and vicarages, homesteads, village historical centre.



Fig. 4. Coverage of a barn by tree crowns as protection against the spread of fire. Management principle of customary practice. Olbramovice 2004



Fig. 5. Marked harmony of architecture and accompanying vegetation. Application of the symmetry principle as a compositional form. Cultural and social principle of customary practice, folk aesthetics. Votice area 1957



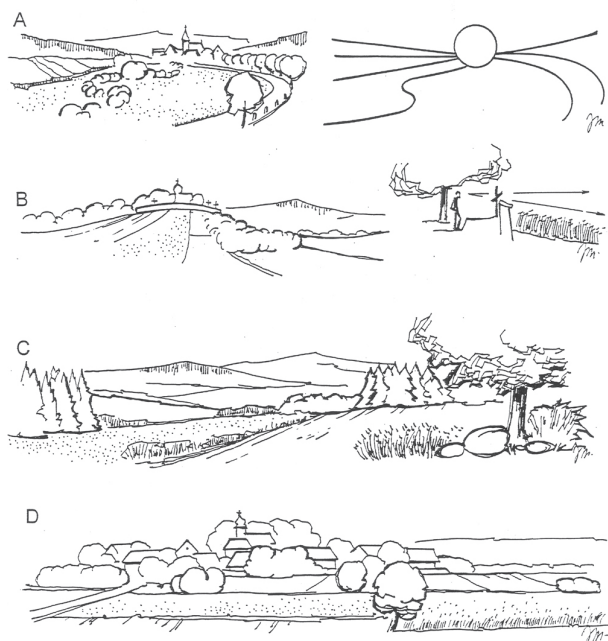


Fig. 6. Some works of folk landscape architecture in rural landscape:

A – dominant landscape position of a village that was built at the point of intersection of converging lines created by human activity. Operationally technological and artistic relation (point of special interest), B – localisation of buildings at important places in landscape, impression of genius loci into a large landscape space, spiritual strength of views from cemeteries over the native land of the dead, C – definition of the landscape composition scale by means of a local form of agricultural activity and the related system of scenic greenery while important landscape details are maintained, D – continuous relationship between the village and external landscape environment created by the contemporaneous scale of village spatial structure and related spatial segmentation of variously used agricultural land

Intramural area of the village and its parts: various types of village patterns, mainly common- and street-type villages, partial village spaces – common, street, village backyards.

Landscape environment of villages: arrangement of agricultural land, road network, access roads to villages, engineering structures in landscape, memorable places.

The spatial, assortment and value relationship of accompanying vegetation to the given objects provided a background material for the definition of its specific function at that time. This functionality was categorised into the group of management (fire-belt, road, residential, engineering type of vegetation), ownership (boundary trees and their stands) and cultural and social (memorable and family trees, folk aesthetics) needs.

## DISCUSSION

1. Spontaneous folk activities that can be defined in general as folk landscape architecture substan-

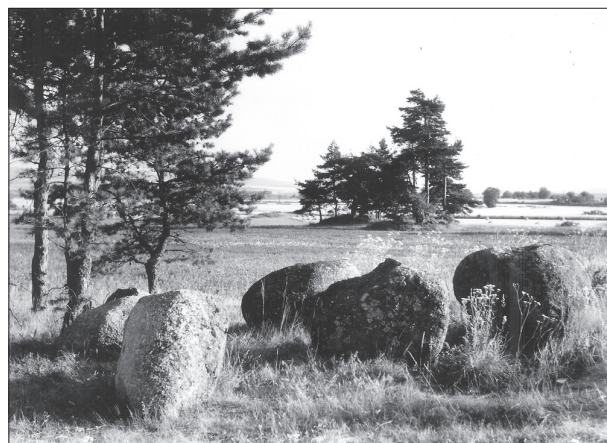


Fig. 7. Identity of the place based on the conservation of typical natural elements. Cultural and social and environmental principle of customary practice. Pocoucov 1971



Fig. 8. A great contemporary challenge in the creation of identity of our landscape is the application of relevant pieces of art in direct contact with cultivated agricultural landscape – The Grandmother's monument (J. Gutfreund, P. Janák 1923) in the meadow in the Grandmother's valley in Ratibořice, 1982 (MAREČEK 1954–2005)

tially contributed to the creation of permanent vegetation of villages and landscape environment. "Folk landscape architecture is the activity of the rural population creating rural landscape and villages in definite geographic, economic and cultural and social conditions that correspond to the needs, opinions and traditions of the given time period."

2. Folk landscape architecture reflected the regional customary practice of utilisation and arrangement of the given environment. Such customary practice comprised mainly management and cultural and social needs (Figs. 1 to 5).
3. Folk landscape architecture is a significant phenomenon of Czech landscape showing the cultural progress of the rural population. It documents specific differences in the concept of vegetation systems in rural and urban areas (Figs. 6 and 7).

4. Specific regional (local) forms of folk landscape architecture should be considered in land-use plans of village development and in complex landscape plans. The respecting of these "peculiarities of the place" is of special importance in the contemporary planning of rural microregions.

### CONCLUSION

A characteristic feature of folk landscape architecture is its close connection with nature, technologies of agricultural production, type of village pattern and with the system of related engineering structures and facilities.

Folk landscape architecture should be considered as a living phenomenon that will develop and will be formed in changed conditions. In the historical rural environment almost identical, i.e. historically true applications should be used. In the contemporary environment its application only in general and stylised forms may be suitable (Fig. 8).

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## Lidové krajinářství jako významná hodnota české krajiny

**ABSTRAKT:** Tvář českého venkova byla v minulosti velmi významně utvářena hospodářskými a společenskými aktivitami venkovských obyvatel. Tyto činnosti, vztahované k přírodním prvkům a k utváření krajiny v širším smyslu, lze charakterizovat jako lidové krajinářství. Jeho předmětem je především prostorové uspořádání a sortimentální skladba vegetace a její funkčnost ve venkovských sídlech a v jejich krajinném prostředí. Článek tyto aktivity definuje jako časově vymezené krajové (lokální) zvykovosti hospodářsko-provozního a kulturně společenského charakteru, projevující se zejména v prostorovém uspořádání a v sortimentální skladbě vegetačních prvků. Vegetační a ostatní přírodní prvky jsou hodnoceny jednak jako funkční jednotlivosti, jednak jako funkční soustavy v konkrétní vazbě na jednotlivé stavby, půdorysný typ obce a stav okolní krajiny. Kromě metodického utřídění hodnocených objektů jsou stanoveny i zásady pro jejich využití v různých formách územního plánování. Významným výsledkem práce je definování lidového krajinářství jako projevu životního stylu venkovských obyvatel, v němž se odráží nejen minulost, ale i budoucnost venkovské krajiny.

**Klíčová slova:** krajina; krajinný ráz; vesnice; krajinářská architektura; trvalá vegetace; dřeviny; zvykovost

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