

Countryside, tourism development and national heritage revitalisation

Venkov, rozvoj cestovního ruchu a oživení památkového fondu

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Abstract: The society has deepened its reflection on the future of the Czech countryside – not only in connection with the multi-functional agriculture but mainly with regard to the actor of service. It seems that this reflection went relatively far especially in the tourism industry where an understanding of a need for complex legislation defining the tourism industry as a long-term interest of the whole society (especially in connection with regional development) was reached. Since in the Czech countryside, national heritage monuments constitute both the key attraction and the axis of the inhabitant structure, tertiarization of the countryside cannot take place without strengthening of the revival strategies with regard to the national heritage monuments. However, among the heritage protectors themselves, no reflection in this sense has yet taken place.

Key words: countryside, tourism, revival of national heritage monuments, tertiary sphere.

Abstrakt: Ve společnosti se prohlubuje reflexe o budoucnosti českého venkova, nejen ve vztahu k multifukčnímu zemědělství, ale zejména vzhledem k odvětví služeb. Tato reflexe zřejmě urazila nejdlejší kus cesty v rámci odvětví cestovního ruchu, kde se dospělo k pochopení nezbytnosti celkové legislativní úpravy, která by definovala cestovní ruch jako dlouhodobý celospolečenský zájem zejména ve vztahu k regionálnímu rozvoji, převážně strukturálně postižených regionů. Protože v rámci českého venkova představuje fond kulturních památek klíčovou atraktivitu a zároveň osu sídelní struktury, terciarizace venkova se neobejde bez posílení strategie oživení památkového fondu. V tomto smyslu ale reflexe v samotné památkářské obci ještě nezačala.

Klíčová slova: venkov, cestovní ruch, oživení památkového fondu, terciární sféra

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning, allow me to quote two documents speaking about the importance assigned by the society to farming which present the possibilities of how far the interconnection between agricultural activities and the services sector can go. It is very clear indeed, that of this merger between multifunctional agriculture and tertiarization of countryside, a new countryside shall arise and that this new countryside will have to be viewed by the society in a new manner, perhaps a more encouraging one.

Let me quote from the document prepared for the Government of the CR called “Analysis of the Expedience and Economic Efficiency of Agriculture Support in 1995–1998” stating that:

- the protection of the Czech agrarian market is minimal (vis-à-vis other comparable countries);
- the Czech Republic is among countries providing the lowest support to agriculture;
- a decisive part of the agricultural support goes to the maintenance of the farmers income, re-structuralization and modernization of agriculture. On the other hand,

the part of support which goes to strengthening of the role of agriculture in landscape and countryside shaping is small;

- the fraction of re-structuralization used for grassland and aforestation is very small;
- the fraction of agriculture as a producer of renewable energy is very small (Hájek, Jech 2000).

However, the 2001 National Development Plan lists in the part focusing at SWOT analysis of the sectoral part as the *strong points*:

- provable and documented division of the territory into intensive regions with efficient production agriculture and to regions with extensive agriculture where business activities focus mostly on landscape protection and development on non-production function of agriculture;
- landscape in extensive regions, mainly of montane and submontane areas which could be used for recreation and free time activities, high recreational potential of the rural areas (see www.mmr.cz).

Both documents were prepared at different times; during the in-between period, the Czech Republic made evident a decisive step towards the future EU accession.

These documents therefore differ also in what importance they assign to non-production functions of agriculture. However, it is also interesting that in the Sector Operation Plane, support of non-production activities of agriculture stops being *quid pro quo* or a pure redemption after the previous decades of devastation but a connection between values of cultural landscape and tourism industry become more visible, especially in its soft (and therefore of course minor) forms. We could even use an euphemism (and it would not be a wrong statement) that these documents search for a new program for the Czech countryside after its original agricultural focus stops being the only basis for its survival.

We may say, that the creation of cultural landscape and the renewal of traditions as an attraction for tourism are very important circumstances of the situation described by the Reflex magazine in a very radical (and the future shall show if correct) manner as “Countryside is dead, long live the countryside!” (Feřtek 2001). How significant shall this circumstance be, whether tourism will be able (especially the forms of countryside residential tourism) to become a decisive economic and psychological complement of multifunctional agriculture activities, only future will tell. Although on a global scale, tertiary and quaternary sector are gaining importance, tourism industry is still considered as an experiment, although the International Cultural Tourism Charter states that “it is an essential part of many national and regional economies ... Tourism ... presents many challenges and opportunities” (International Cultural Tourism ... 2001). Many analysts still strongly feel its dependence on a peaceful international environment as well as its tendencies towards mass forms and fluctuating consumerism nature which destroys the natural and cultural basis on which it is built (this is expressed in a plastic manner in the Resort Cycle concept – destination life cycle).

Since in the area of development and structural stabilisation of affected regions, tourist industry is rather an experiment (even though a revolutionary one) and since we cannot rule out the possibility that a migration wave from overcrowded cities towards the countryside shall occur, I am not going to use in this text the metaphor of “substitute program for the countryside” but rather the term “tertiary regeneration program for the countryside”. We cannot rule out the possibility that in future, countryside shall return to its traditionally dominant agricultural functions and we also must not overlook the current need for utilisation of the countryside for multifunctional agriculture as well as services. In this text, we are exploring whether the society sufficiently reflects the need to ensure conditions for the “tertiary regeneration of the countryside”, even though formulations of the National Development Plan mean only a shade of understanding seriousness of the problem.

HOLOVOUSY AS AN EXAMPLE

In my opinion, a good illustration example demonstrating the complexity of the problem is the issue of the vil-

lage green at Holovousy, a village near Hradec Králové. The village green reconstruction is to improve the current state characterised by green plants typical for housing settlements – consisting mainly of junipers and white spruce (so characteristic for many Czech villages). The aim of the project is an urbanistic solution, which includes planting of a historical park in the village intravilan. The park should include regional varieties of fruit trees among which the decisive part should be represented by the Holovousy Raspberry Apple. The mayoress of the village, Mrs Bedrychová, hopes for the following: “I hope that here will be created a centre of regional tourism, the main attraction of which will be a historical park in the village intravilan consisting of fruit tree varieties characteristic for the Krkonoše submontane region. The renewed park (which used to be there until the 1980’s) should become a centre of both renewed and newly established traditions (spring feast, fairs, autumn fruit fairs), a centre for recreation and a tourist facility.”

However, this project – looking very logical and appropriate from the point of view of Czech countryside strategy – faces a number of obstacles. The first one is a psychological aversion of local residents towards any changes; it takes the shape of questions such as “And who shall sweep away the leaves? Who shall remove the fallen-down apples? We will not be able to see through the village green!” (The author of this text participated in a public discussion on this proposal and can therefore guarantee the authenticity of these sample questions). Another obstacle was that for a long time, it was difficult to find financial tools, which could support the project preparation. Financial resources of the Countryside Renewal Programme are under huge pressure, the Tourism Support Program currently focuses mainly on the support of Czech spa resorts (and facilities for sports and recreation). In the end, it seems, that support could be gained from the Ministry of Environment (ME) Program for the Support of Greenery in Urbanised Environment, which has been newly established by the ME and under which the project preparation could be implemented.

Let us suppose now that approximately in the mid-2002 the project documentation would be ready, that it would include (besides planting tree species) also actions such as the consolidation of the local pond dike, reallocation of the St. John of Nepomuk statue, lighting and resting places and that the question of how to implement this project arises. Planting of tree species could probably be supported (even though this case is not a standard one) from the Regeneration Programme for Urban Landscape of the State Environmental Fund. More problems can be expected in the case of mobile items and lighting since the State Tourism Support Program intends to support countryside tourism only further in the future. However, it seems that even these problems could be overcome and that the project could be successfully implemented (e.g. under the SAPARD program) which should generate a “demand” for village green maintenance derived from the economic evaluation of the new image of Holovousy reflected in the life of local inhabitants.

If we decide in this text to intentionally abstract from re-allocation of the tax (especially in the case of legal persons), we can see two basic conditions for the economic evaluation of investments into the Holovousy village green: first, the ability to regulate the tourism industry on a long-term basis as well as its effects, mainly in the sense of “friendliness” towards local residents and the respect towards the local natural and cultural base. The historical park shall start functioning as an attraction only after other historical monuments in the region (e.g. castle in the case of Holovousy) are revitalised – Holovousy is an integral part of its surrounding. Do we have, in the frame of heritage protection, sufficient tools to ensure revitalization (“measures and procedures through which neglected and forgotten monuments come back to life” – Pacáková-Hošťálková 1999) or reanimation (“measures and procedures giving to monuments new functions which bring them back to life” – Pacáková-Hošťálková 1999) of regional historical monuments through which we could strengthen the stability and return of the original investments into the village green reconstruction – e.g. in Holovousy?

The development of these tools may strengthen the general long-term economic and social profitability of the tertiary regeneration of the countryside.

REFLECTIONS REGARDING THE TOURISM

In the last year, a survey called “Survey on the Tourism Industry Management in Municipalities” was carried out on the sample of approximately 200 municipalities selected of all destination types. Conclusions of the survey indicate a “significant non-systematic attitude and incompleteness in the monitoring of the tourism development and a very low efficiency with regard to the monitored statistical information. It is remarkable that many municipalities gather lots of statistical information, which remain unused later on. Naturally, the data collectors feel overburdened when the legislation asks them to collect additional information, these are in their opinion useless duties” (Pásková, Matoušková, Hájek 2001).

This unprecedented survey of its kind, implemented by the Ministry of Environment and the Society for Historical Seats in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia (with the support of the Department of Tourism Support and Implementation of the Ministry of Regional Development), demonstrates one fundamental hypothesis on the basis of which the survey was carried out – that “probably the biggest drawback of the tourism development with regard to the long-term sustainable development and economic efficiency is the insufficiency or even lack of strategic planning and monitoring of the status, development and effects of the tourism industry” (Pásková, Petržílek, Hájek 2001). It seems obvious that the planning on national level does not have a complementary antipode in the tourism industry development planning on a local level.

In 2001, in an extensive public discussion, it was found useful to prepare a so-called complete legal act on tourism. These discussions (and I can confirm this fact as one of the participants) have been “decided” by unions such as “Ho-re-ca” (Hotels, restaurants, cafés) which feel the need to establish tourism as an independent industry (though it reaches many areas) based on a reasonable utilization of natural and cultural heritage of the CR but especially as an industry independent political representation changes. Up to now, it seems that the law shall, *inter alia*, focus on two sets of problems, which could have a significant impact on the tertiary regeneration of the countryside within the framework of a long-term sustainability. A system of monitoring (and use) of the CR potential shall be established – for which municipalities with extended jurisdiction should be responsible – and a direct dependence between the total income from tourism and the amount of resources provided by the very first explicit tourism support subsidy program shall be created: the Tourism State Support Program (it is proposed that it should contain 1% of the foreign income from tourism).

Should this idea of strengthening the non-mandation resources for subsidy activities in the tourism industry be implemented and should the support system really focus on rural tourism, it may bring a significant impulse for the tertiary regeneration of the countryside program.

REFLECTIONS REGARDING THE STATE HERITAGE PROTECTION

However, the relatively positive shift in the strategic perception of the tourism industry and its functions, which took place during the last two years, probably needs a harmonised action in the area of cultural heritage utilization for tourism, particularly when among the main attractions of the “incoming” tourism are Czech spa resorts and when we consider as the dominant form of the tourism industry the cultural and cognitional tourism. The tourism industry is slowly departing from the concept of spontaneous tourism which does not have to be channelled in any way and which intensively connects tourism with the development of structurally affected regions – as we could have seen during the nomination of the Czech Paradise region into the UNESCO List of World Heritage (this region’s intentions are to prevent the outflow of inhabitants and the decay of culture landscape by development of tourism). For instance Hrabánková illustrates the importance of the Structural Funds for Countryside Enhancement in her book “The Structural Funds”, where she mentions the tourist industry among the significant sources of the development (Hrabánková 1999).

However, the state natural heritage protection, with its legislation, institutional and personal equipment, still has to make a fundamental step – to declare that the aim of the state heritage protection is not only the preservation (conservation and restoration) of historical monuments

but also systematic efforts in the area of controlled re-generation (reanimation and revitalisation) of the cultural heritage – among other, also for tourist purposes.

The entry of the state subsidy policy into the process of heritage reanimation for tourism purposes is necessary also since the transfer process from a historically valuable site (e.g. chateau, castle) into a hotel meeting modern standards is long and financially demanding. Even though from a medium-term point of view such a strategic shift is inevitable, the Czech heritage protection has not yet solved the fundamental dilemma – should we preserve historically authentic but uncontrollably decaying monuments or should we prefer (under certain conditions) the reanimation of protected sites for the tourism purposes and stabilize it from a construction point of view, even though a part of its authenticity and genuineness may be lost? We may even say that the heritage protection authorities treat this dilemma as a sort of unchallengeable taboo. A purely conservationist, art-historical view of Zdeněk Wirth still prevails over the holistic approach towards preservation and evaluation of historical monuments.

If we take into account the financial circumstances of recent years, e.g. under the framework of the Regeneration Program of Municipal Protected Heritage Areas and Municipal Heritage Zones, we cannot be optimistic in the sense that the state would invest significantly larger resources into heritage protection. Moreover, all over the Europe (especially within the framework of agro-tourism), there is a still growing demand not only for accommodation at historical sites. We may say that unless a shift in the theory and practice of the heritage protection towards a controlled reanimation of historical monuments takes place, the prospects of the tertiary regeneration of countryside are not very cheerful (even though I will not dare to assess the chances of one or another option).

Unlike in the tourism industry, reflections on how the heritage protection may promote the tertiary regeneration of the countryside have not yet taken place, even though, for example, in Germany (based on initiatives of ecologists in the document called “Grüne Initiative zur Stärkung des Denkmalschutzes”) (Eichstadt-Bohlig, Vollmer 2001) or in the United Kingdom (document “Power of Place, The future of historic environment” prepared and published by the English Heritage in 2000) (Power of place... 2000), there are relatively frequent discussions on the need to open national heritage to modern functions.

CONCLUSIONS

This text does not discuss the complete contribution of the so-called Landscape Enhancement Program of the

ME established in 1990's (mainly the Landscape Protection Program and the River Systems Revitalisation Program) and the programs of the Ministry of Agriculture strengthening the multifunctional functions of agriculture. The document shows that at least within the framework of reflections (and legislative initiatives), the time is ripening for a deeper look at the stabilisation of rural regions, especially through the symbiosis of multifunctional agriculture and the services sector mainly with regard to tourism. This contribution focuses on the description of reflections mainly in the area of tourism planning and monitoring and the reanimation or revitalization of historical monuments, which intentionally does not deal in more detail with problems such as connections recording the development of organic agriculture, as a prerequisite of the agro-tourism development.

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