

Regional differentiation of second housing transformation in Czechia

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Abstract

The contribution deals with possible transformation of second housing regarding conditions for shift towards residential function or commercial use of the houses in the framework of rural tourism. These topics have been under research for longer period at the Department of Social Geography and Regional Development with emphasis on the Central Bohemian Region and close hinterland of Prague. The study is associated with the project "Regional Differentiation of Second Housing in Czechia and Relations to Other Forms of Tourism" backed by The Grant Agency of the Czech Republic. The author is a collaborator in this project. The transformation of second housing is studied all over the republic and it is possible to find out and explain regional differentiation.

Key words: second housing, transformation, settlement structure, recreation, suburbanization

Introduction

Second housing is defined as a term for a building which is a place of transient stay of owners or users, who use this building for the recreational purpose above all and at the same time also as an expression for phenomena and processes associated with this building (Vágner 1999). There are several possible approaches to second housing research:

- a) a part of settlement structure (Fialová 2000, 2001);
- b) a specific form of tourism;
- c) a part of landscape and environment;
- d) a component of life style of a significant segment of population.

For more detailed comments on methodical approaches see "Transformation of Second Housing (in Prague Hinterland) (Fialová 2000) and in the study "Approaches to Second Housing Studies in Czechia (Fialová 2003). 20% of all dwellings are used for second housing and second housing activities form an important part of life style for 25% of Czech population.

Second housing can be split into two main forms:

- 1) Cottage activities ("chalupaření") with their roots and long-term tradition in stays in the rural countryside. They formed a part of cultural attitudes to the landscape as early as in the period of Roman emperors (Augustus) with the revitalization in the

era of romanticism. In Czechia the interest in the countryside can be seen since the era of the National Revival with the importance of the reflection in culture above all. As early as in the first half of the 20th century some intellectuals and artists owned rural estates with strong connections not only to family history but also as an analogy to the life style of the 19th century artists (Librová 1987, Fialová 2000). Broader extent of cottage activities can be seen since the 1950s. Traditional or even culturally protected buildings (cottages) have been used and reconstructed with the use of other houses (barns, corn-lofts, dry kilns) joined to traditional rural society or to some special crafts and activities (mills, game keeper's lodges, glass manufactures in the surroundings of Železný Brod) or even some rarities and curios (churches, chapels, frequency divider, firemen houses etc. (Bičík 2001)). Generally said buildings with a conversion of function (residential, productive) towards recreational ones are in interest.

Cottage activities can be split again to two types according to their evolution. The first subtype is represented with the use of buildings abandoned after the transfer of former residents after the World War II. Cottages like those are located mainly in the border regions but also in a part of the inland which was used as military training zones (e.g. Neveklov Region). High natural landscape is a common feature of these regions (e.g. Česká Lípa region). The second type was associated with the socialist industrialization and urbanization with strong migration from countryside to urban agglomerations. Only the old generation was left in peripheral rural areas which devised their houses to their descendants. They frequently changed the function of the building towards the recreational one. Such a type of cottages can be met all over the republic, even in localities with very low natural landscape potential.

Both types of cottage activities are extremely important for a specific conservation of landscape style and morphological quality of rural settlements because the cottage owners prefer conservation and maintenance to complete modernization and reconstruction and keep a sense for a historical building monument and its bonds with the surroundings. Recreational houses are frequently the best-kept folk architecture monuments. Cottages create nowadays 10% of all dwellings in Czechia (Fialová, Marada, 2003).

- 2) A similar number of second homes was built up with primary recreational purpose and serve for weekend-houses activities ("chataření"). The roots can be revealed as early as in the 1920s when also lower class was inspired with the life style of re-emigrants from America and legion-soldiers who had been forced to survive in very close contacts with wild nature and established a specific life-style called "tramping".

Scouting and other similar movements (e.g. woodcraft) influenced too. Wooden log-cabins were built up in very attractive localities, in deep river valleys above all. Cheap public railway was heavily used too. It should be pointed out these activities represented the only possible and financially acceptable form of recreation for many inhabitants from agglomerations in boom. Other impulses for weekend-house activities came with the boom of automobiles in the 1960s and with shorter working week. The

volume of leisure-time and mobility increased. This period can be defined as a breaking point between the dominance of hierarchic and spatial (neighbour) diffusion. Another impulse for massive favour for second housing came with the normalization process in the early 1970s. Outgoing tourism was limited, many people had to change their jobs, lost chance for self-realization and started to escape to different environment out of the cities with more private activities in leisure-time. Second homes enabled also to invest money. Second housing has been spread also to lower recreational potential areas (Vágner 1999, Fialová 2000, Bičík, 2001).

An increasing interest in second housing issues could be seen in our country at first in the 1960s (Gardavský 1968) and 1970s above all corresponding with maximal increase of new second homes. Second housing life style has been considered as an ordinary one (Vystoupil 1981). Further wave of interest in the early 1990s is associated with political, economic and social changes and supposed transformation of second housing and its importance in the hierarchy of social values. Researches have been aimed at possible transformation changes of second housing in the hinterland of Prague as an example of the principal space for diffusion of not only second housing innovations (Fialová 1999). Also methodical approaches have been worked out at the Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Faculty of Science, Charles University in Prague.

These methods are being used also in interuniversity project No. 403/01/0726 "Regional Differentiation of Second Housing in Czechia and Relations to Other Forms of Tourism" backed by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic. The attention is given to the whole territory of Czechia.

Objectives and hypotheses

Recent surveys confirmed the transformation trends of second housing towards residential function above all. Surveys in the Prague hinterland revealed the facts: "Transformation of second housing towards residential function is clear in some parts of the Prague hinterland. This change is just running or is highly likely with 14% of second homes. The owners are at the age group 41–50 – couples with higher incomes with children who finished their primary education. Generally said chances for transformation of second housing to residential function are related primarily to the localization of the building with good access, at least basic infrastructure and services. Factors associated to the personality of the owner and equipment of the houses are secondary" (Fialová 2000, p.115). With regards to the extension of surveys to the whole territory of Czechia some specific questions on regional differentiation of second housing arose:

- What is the relation between regional differentiation of second housing and:
 - distance of second home and place of residence?
 - size of the nucleus hinterland of which is surveyed?
- Is the process of hierarchical diffusion still running during the transformation?
- What is the role of the type of second home for transformation process?

Some hypotheses are outlined on the bases of recent surveys:

Hierarchical diffusion of sources of demand was important in the roots of second housing (with an example of about twenty years' delay of second housing boom in Ostrava hinterland compared to Prague). Transformation of second housing is supposed to copy the hierarchical diffusion but with increased speed.

Transformation of second housing is associated with recreational cottages (with original residential function) above all in the minds of general public. But transformation of the other type of second homes - recreational houses can be seen in localities with suitable conditions for suburban constructions as well.

Methods

Basic data on second homes, their numbers and spatial distribution can be found out in two primary sources – Census and Realty Cadastre. In the Census 1991 buildings for individual recreation (BIR = OIR) were under evidence, i.e. cabins, recreational houses and cottages extracted from Residential Fund and also cottages not extracted from the Fund where a note “serve for recreational purposes” was added. These data can be got at the level of the basic settlement units. The units are not delimited as an area and that is why for getting data of density of second homes and other indices data from the Realty Cadastre must be used, based on cadastre unit level that cover all the territory. Data for basic settlement units must be agglomerated according to adjacent cadastre units (one cadastre unit usually consists of more basic settlement units) (Fialová 2001). When both data types combined areas with the densest concentration of both types of second homes can be revealed with further stress. Then field surveys and questionnaire surveys with the owners are essential to get known about real state and possible trends of second housing. Localities under surveys were selected both in the hinterland of agglomerations (majority of cabins and recreational houses with the owners of the nucleus) and in typical recreational regions (artificial lakes – cabins, hilly regions – cottages). Localities with lower recreational potential were surveyed too (cottages of the second evolutionary type – see above).

Questionnaire surveys were conducted in the selected localities by educated questioners (geography students) in the form of interview with owners or users of second homes. The selection of the respondents was at random but related to the number of recreational houses in the locality. A standardized questionnaire was used (Bičík, Fialová 2001) which had been verified in previous surveys. The questionnaire form is large and consists of several parts – the lot, the building and its usage, place of residence and features of the respondent. Three questions are essential for information about transformation of second homes. Precise questions and offer of possible responses are given:

- *What are your ideas for future use of your second home?*

Possible responses:

Residential function

Recreation

For rent

I do not know

Necessary terms for permanent living:

Reconstruction

Job opportunity

Accession with public transport

Own means of transport

Better services and supplies

Good roads

Water and sewage system

Other

No will for permanent living on any terms

• *What terms will you accept for possible renting of your second homes seasonally?*

On no terms

Temporary exchange for a house in different location

For payment in CZK

For payment in hard foreign currency

Other

The results can be quantified at the level of localities, cadastre units, municipalities etc.

Results

Table 1 indicates a summary of results from all questionnaire surveys conducted 1991–2002 (accessible data to 30. 5. 2003)

Tab. 1 Questionnaire survey results

Period	Region	Respondents	Permanent living (%)	Not out of the question (%)	Commercial use out of question (%)
1991–1999	Střední Čechy	1025	14	53	90
1997–2001	Jižní Čechy	336	13	47	91
2001	Not specified	230	11	50	80
2001	Olomoucko	307	17	65	91
2001	Plzeňsko	218	26	46	74
2001	Prostějovsko	290	9	49	80
2002	Vsetínsko	100	12	40	73
2002	Jičínsko	138	21	65	–
2002	Chrudimsko	176	24	66	–
2002	Kutnohorsk	73	33	71	88
2002	Kokořínsko	103	28	66	89
2001–2002	Jeseníky	221	20	70	81
2001–2002	Beskydy	656	16	59	62
2002–2003	Liberecko	70	24	62	–
	Total	3943	19	58	82

Questionnaire survey results represent the opinions of about 8% of all owners of second homes in Czechia and can be considered representative. Possible transformation of second home towards residential function was proclaimed by 19%. The regional differentiation is quite large – 9% in the Prostějov region (recreational hinterland of a district and smaller regional centre with high share of cabins and original recreational houses) and 33% in the Kutná Hora district (recreational hinterland of Prague, high share of cottages of the second evolutionary type). Share of responses when permanent living is not out of question is generally higher in cottage regions.

Shift to permanent living is not the only possibility of transformation. Other chances are in commercial use, especially renting for domestic or even foreign tourists. 20% of respondents do not exclude this option. The important factor was not only location but also time of survey. The earlier survey the more negative responses about possible commercial use.

Conclusions

Several general conclusions can be pointed out on the bases of survey results:

- Possible transformation to residential function is more frequent with the cottages – houses with original residential function where younger generations left country for urban areas.
- Transformation of cabins and recreational houses is running in the very close hinterlands of big cities as a part of suburbanization processes.
- New era of hierarchical diffusion was not revealed. Transformation can be seen all over Czechia.

Necessity of more detailed analyses must be mentioned to be able to verify the hypothesis about the relation between transformation of second home and its distance from the permanent address, the size of the nucleus etc. Other questions associated with second housing should be discussed in the conclusions of the above mentioned projects and planned publication “Regional Differentiation of Second Housing in Czechia”.

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