

Rural development and land use changes in Czechia after 1990

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Introduction, aims

Important socio-economical and social changes have been taking place in Czechia since 1990. Most of them have had an impact on rural space, its inhabitants, activities in the countryside and the environment.

The aim of the presentation is ***to identify important factors which played a crucial role in forming of new functions and new identity*** (perception) of ***Czech countryside*** in last 20 years.

As a result we expect a ***delimitation of different phases in development*** of the Czech countryside from 1990 to this day. We would like to ***discuss key factors, processes and actors*** in each phase.

Totalitarian period until 1989

1989: only 1,5% of arable land was owned and used by individual farmers, ca 65% by COOP's, ca 30% state farms, the rest share by army and agricultural school farms;

High amount of chemicals used in agriculture (240kg pure NPK/ha in 1988, herbicides, pesticides etc.);

Progress in mechanization, three generations of machines in 30 years, most of machines were produced in Czechia or East Germany; creation of the socialist agro-complex

Bad influence of agriculture on the environment (NPK in ground as in surface water, application of huge plots unsuitable for most of the landscape in Czechia, much higher water erosion, bad care for the field way, ponds etc.);

Socialization deeply influenced rural society, there started deviding responsibility (and in the result very weak), lost of control for the environment;



Classification of changes in rural space

There are *two* different **kinds of factors which have formed character** of the Czech countryside:

1. **Outer** (political and economical) **factors**

a) geopolitical and economical changes after the breakdown of communist regime

b) changes in socio-geographical organization of the Czech society

⇒ Rural communities are not able to effectively influence this kind of changes.

2. **Inner factors** (public administration, activities, human sources, ...)

⇒ The changes are influenced by activities of particular actors in the countryside

The factors are such as: agency of local governance, concentration of the agri-production, abandoning of arable land, changes in employment, activities of new farmers and new agro-complex, forming of the new wilderness, etc.

Socio-economical shift

Restitution = returning ownership to former owners and their relatives (arable land, pastures, forests, buildings or value of socialized private property in CZK)

⇒ opportunities for small business in service sector

Privatization = process of selling state ownership to individual owners, often with lower than market price

⇒ opportunities for new agri business

Transformation = adaptation of former communist cooperatives to a new one coop's of owners in different economic rules.

Creation of the new **agro-complex**: system of activities joined with agriculture (industry, services, transport etc.)

Agriculture

The phases in Czech agriculture development:

(according to Bicik, Jancak 2004)

- I. Transformation 1990 – 1994
- II. Differentiation (in size, spatial)
1995 – 2003
- III. European 2004 – 2012
- IV. ??? After 2012 \Rightarrow opening of the market
with agriculture land

Land use changes

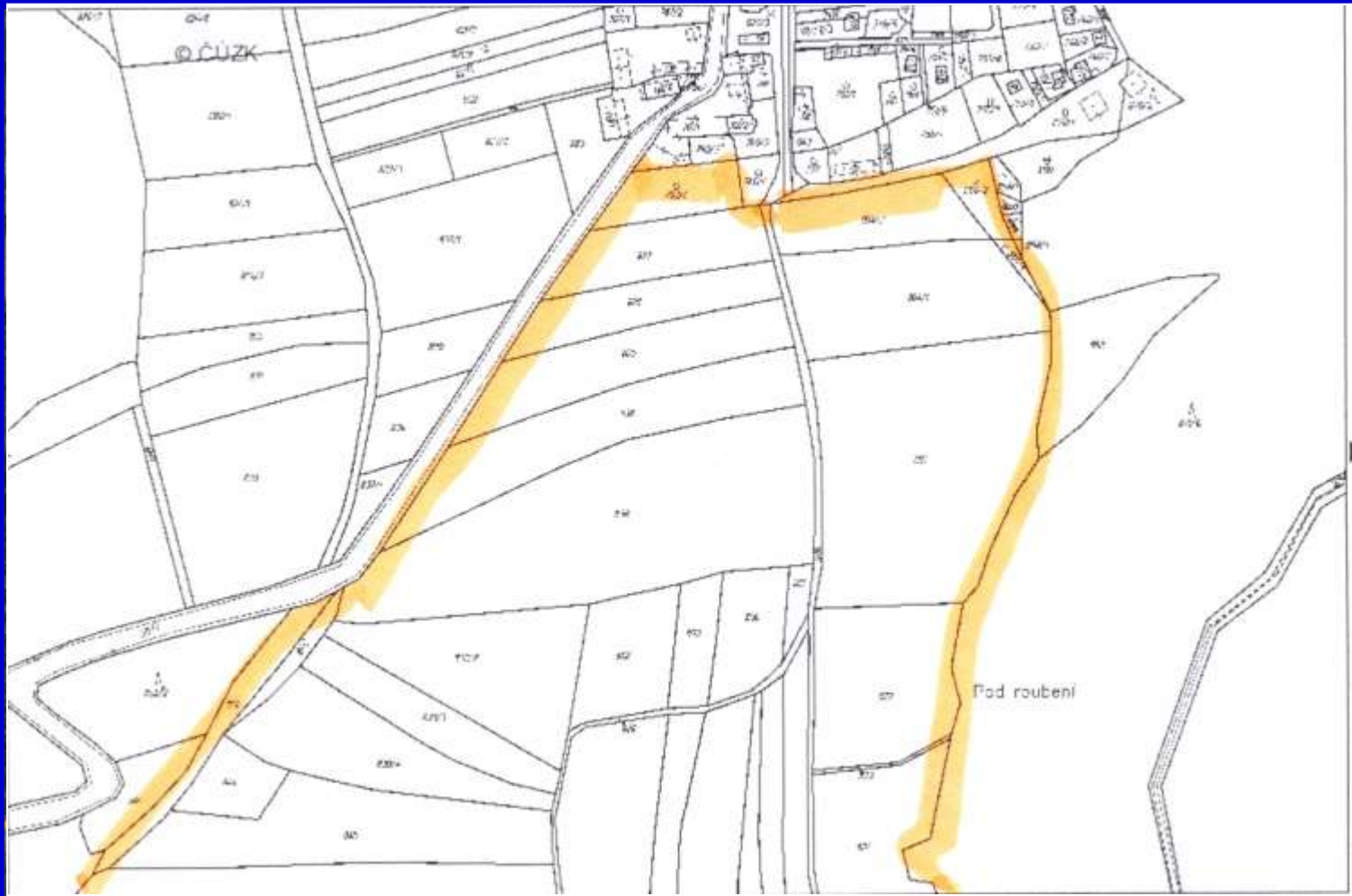
There is *not clear evidence of agriculture land*, significant differentiations between statistical evidence and real situation

Broken ownership

Decrease of the arable land areas in two steps:

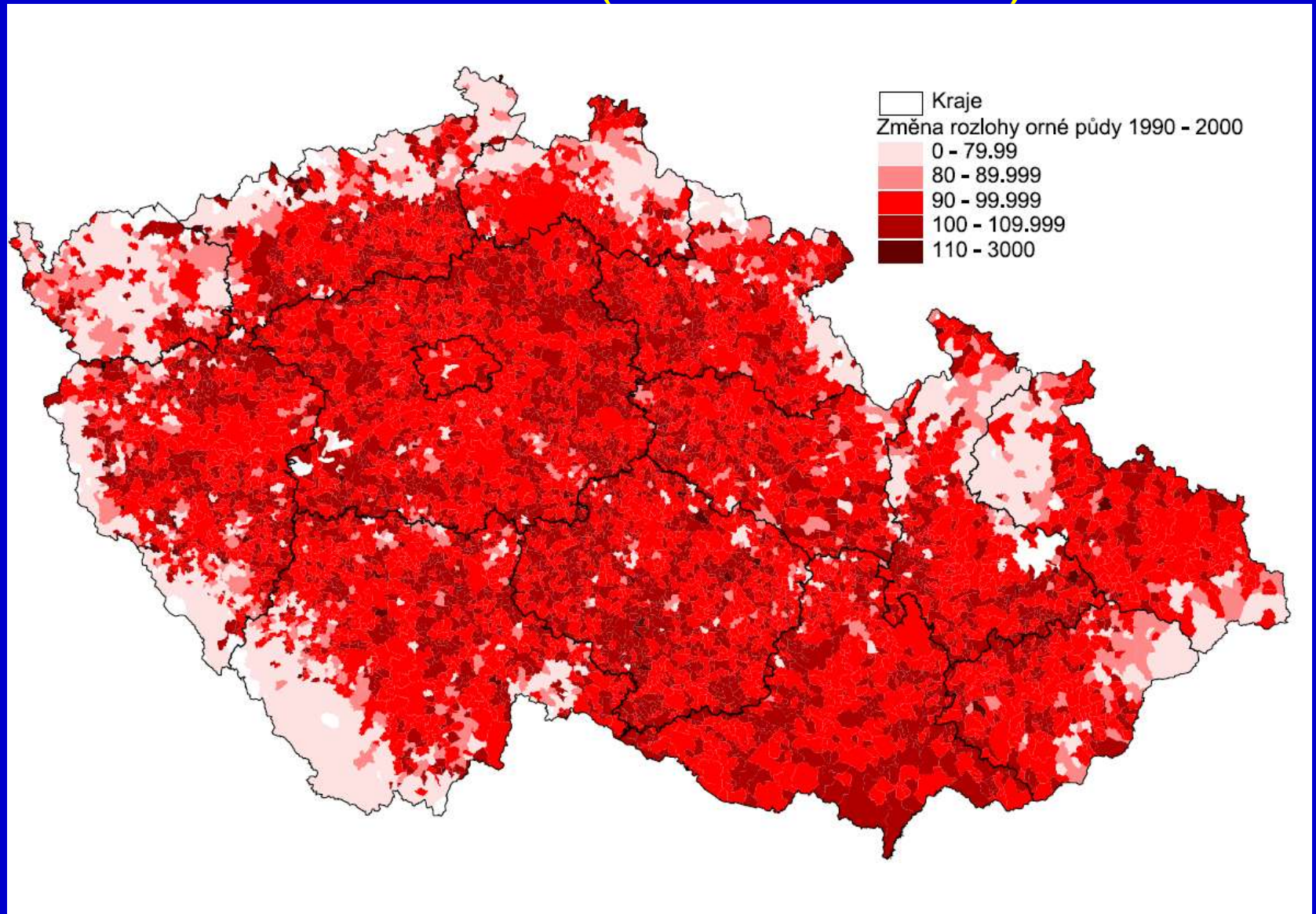
- built-up and grassland areas instead of arable in lowlands in core regions
- grassland are replaced by forests in peripheral regions especially in slopeness region and higher altitude

Broken ownership



1 field, 24 plots, 59 owners – only 1 family from the village,
maintained by Agri company – head office is 50 km far

Changes in area of agricultural land 1990 – 2000 (1990 = 100%)



Source: LUCS Prague database

Starting position of the Czech countryside (1990)

The identity of the Czech countryside is a *space for intensive socialistic agriculture production and recreation*

- predominant employer: socialistic cooperative farm (5–7 % economically active inhabitants)
- program of unification of rural space
- very intensive commuting to local centers
- Disaggregated settlement structure in rural areas
- “central settlement structure” – less activities in small villages, concentration them to bigger rural centers (600 rural centres, 4000 municipalities, 11 000 villages)

Periods of changes in countryside and land use changes in Czechia after 1989

General overview

1st phase = Transformation (1990 – 1992)

A period of instability, big shift, great changes

The re-establishing of local self-government

Disintegration of rural municipalities (from 4000 to 6200 mun.)

Transformation of agriculture

Refusal of old identity of rural space and searching for new one

Main actors:

New active members of the rural assemblies, new entrepreneurs

The first phase - transformation

- Price shock 1990-1991 of food products, lost of export, and rapid decrease of intensity in all Czech agriculture;
- Use of chemicals decreased to the fifth of the level of the year 1988!! (NPK from 240 to 40 kg in 1992);
- Decrease of employment in the agricultural sector: 1989 = 600 000,
2004 = 200 000 employees;
- No problem in food supplying of Czechia, production and consumption of food decreased significantly;
- Big changes in the structure of food products consumption
- Restructuralization of agrocomplex; structure and territorial differentiation in agricultural production and regional organization of the food industry begun;
- Lower intensity of agriculture influenced better care and controlling for environment, creation of new preserved areas;
- New owners are having interest to control own property;
- New social stratification in rural space

2nd phase = Stabilization (1992 – 1996)

Finalization of basic legislative and economic changes

Agriculture without subsidies

Low level of cooperation between municipalities, very first beginning of municipal networking

Residual influence of former communist structures

Discussion about the future role of the countryside, conflict between images and functions (the space for production, the landscape protection, the space for active life, the hinterland for cities)

Main actors:

Active and succesful mayors

Abandoned agri-farm after 1994 agri-brownfield



3rd phase = Strategic 1997 – 2004

After 1997 in the process of *preparing for joining EU* new strategic documents (municipalities) and new subsidy titles for municipalities and for agriculture were emerging

Establishing of local and regional networks of municipalities to adopt new EU grants (very formal “co-operation”)

Establishing of agri –lobby (Chamber of farmers, Association of private farmers, several associations of producers)

Main actors:

Mayors, local and regional associations of rural municipalities, big agriculture companies agri - lobby

Changes in agri-sector and landuse

- Agriculture had the highest productivity (90%) in the year of joining EU in comparison with other branches of the Czech economy;
- Total different is structure of owners and users of land (most of farm are using hundred hectares, but most of this land is rented);
- The areas with limited economic activities were increased on ca 25% of all state territory (national parks, preserved landscape areas, natural reservations, biospheric areas, regions with protection of ground water etc.);
- Grassing up and afforestation were typical processes of landscape changes (ca 65% of all cadastres are characterized by one of those processes);
- New functions are giving to rural areas and they started be multifunctional (habitation, recreation, environmental protection, production, water and forest economy etc.);

New functions of villages in peripheral regions (South Bohemia, 650 m a.s.l.), typical second homes village



4th phase = Developing 2004+

Entering EU

- new possibilities for grants and subsidies
- more intensive impact of outer factors

Several efforts in developing of rural institutions

- opening a discussion about new “Rural ministry”
- new political lobby “The association of local municipalities” – redefinition of sources for budgeting, cooperation on scale of administrative regions

Main actors:

LAG, regional and national representatives, agri – lobby on national level

Conclusion

Outer factors influence the development of the countryside in more intensive way. They have ***the same impact on the whole rural space*** in Czechia.

Inner factors produce great ***differences in the countryside*** (in activity, success). Human factor, social networks (social capital), local communities play the crucial role.

The ***tendency to change*** the Czech ***rural space identity*** is visible – from agri production to space for life. Nevertheless the subsidies are still oriented mostly to agri-sector.

The tendency of political institutionalization of the countryside – to enforce common interest, lobby. The final institutionalization of the countryside according to Paasi's model would not be possible – countryside is not one homogeneous region. But rurality has become a strong political topic and there will be further discussion about new rural representatives.

Thank you for your attention

