

SECOND HOMES IN THE HINTERLAND OF PRAGUE AND POSSIBILITIES OF THEIR TRANSFORMATION FOR PERMANENT HOUSES

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Abstract: The main goal of the contribution is outlining of the possibilities of transformation of second homes towards permanent housing in the hinterland of Prague. The data were obtained from questionnaire surveys prepared by Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Faculty of Sciences, Charles University Prague. The surveys were held between 1991 and 1997 in 55 registered units in former Central-Bohemian Region. The main conclusions are concerned with an increasing interest of second homes' owners for the transformation. The most important factor for the changes is the location of the second home, the state of the house and personality of the owner seem to be secondary factors.

Keywords: second homes, hinterland, transformation for permanent houses, questionnaire and field surveys

1. INTRODUCTION

The hinterland of Prague and its southern part above all represents the territory with highest amount of individual recreational houses in the whole Czechia. The river valleys in the Prague surrounding were the first places where this type of houses was established with corresponding recreational activities. Prague has been the principal and biggest source of owners and users of second homes during all periods.

There are a lot of definitions for second homes (Fialová, 1999) and many different approaches for studying relevant processes. Second homes can be considered a part of settlement structure or a part of to household pertinent facility. Second homes' activities should be always connected to a specific life-style. However, the first interests should be given to discovery of number of such homes in a selected territory.

The significance of second homes in the hinterland of Prague is shown in the following Tables 1 and 2. The hinterland in wider meaning is represented for simplicity with the area of former Central-Bohemian Region as an administrative unit. In shorter meaning, it is the area of two districts - Prague-East and Prague-West.

Table 1 Comparison between the hinterland of Prague and the Czech Republic (in %)

	Region Central-Bohemia	District Prague-East	District Prague-West
Area	14,00%	0,76%	0,80%
Population	10,80%	0,91%	0,74%
Permanently inhabited houses	14,72%	2,09%	1,67%
Second homes	26,98%	3,71%	5,92%

Source: Statistický lexikon obcí České republiky 1992

Table 2 Share of second homes from total number of buildings (in %)

Territory	Percentage
Czech Republic	19,90%
Central-Bohemia Region	31,28%
District Prague-East	30,63%
District Prague-West	46,86%

Source: Statistický lexikon obcí České republiky 1992

Second housing does not mean the only existence of individual recreational houses but also different ways of their using and activities of their owners, their families, relatives, friends (Vágner, 1999).

2. METHODS

The primary data on second homes are those prepared by the Czech Statistic Bureau published in the Statistic Lexicon. They give information on number, and partly on type of second homes related to the exact date of the census. Other data, e. g. on the size of houses, the name, the address and the age of owners are available from continually completed databases conducted by the Czech Geodetic and Register Office. These data do not give any information on time of using, state of the houses and their owners. More detailed data can be obtained only from field surveys or specific interviews. For the purpose of some quantification and more general conclusions questionnaire surveys are done.

Our specific questionnaire was prepared in the beginning of the 90s. It was an attempt at an arrangement for getting wider information about recreation in so called BIR (Buildings for Individual Recreation) - see Bičík, Fialová, 1997, Fialová, 1999.

The main goal of the survey was to obtain information on the present state of the BIR, time of using, various activities, to get data on the age structure of the owners, their permanent apartments. The most important goal, however, was to verify our hypothesis on possible changes of functions of the second homes towards permanent housing sometimes in the future. This should be a very interesting trend for the acceleration of suburbanization processes, and for solving the problems with housing shortage in big agglomerations in relation with a steep decline of building new flats and with the absence of free real property market.

The field surveys focused on the BIR owners were done during 1991 - 1997 in 55 land-registered (cadastral) units (Fig. 1). The principal standards of the selection were the location, the total number of second homes, the prevailing building-up period etc. For more detailed description of the methods see Fialová, 1999. The survey was done in 1025 second homes, which represent 11 % of all those in selected units.



Fig. 1 The map of the area of presented questionnaire surveys

3. TRANSFORMATION OF SECOND HOMES TO PERMANENTLY INHABITED HOUSES

In the framework of the social and economic changes after 1989, most of experts expected quite a fast revival of suburbanization tendencies, corresponding with common economic relations and with natural increase of Prague attractiveness as well. (Ptáček,

1998). On the other hand, a wide range of negative factors can be seen. Housing policy is absent, the mortgage system still does not exist and housing saving system has a low effect. Rents are under regulation, which does not force the inhabitants to move away from excessively expensive locations. The prices of lands and estates are extremely inadequate to the purchasing power.

Despite of all this negative trends, the intensity of house-building (measured e.g. with the number of finished flats per 1000 inhabitants) in Prague suburban districts is many times higher than in the rest of the Czech Republic.

Some developments in housing functions can be done in the following ways:

- ♦ extensions, additional storeys, reconstruction and modernization of houses
- ♦ new buildings - individual or supplied
- ♦ transformation of second homes

Our focus is given to the third point. In our questionnaire, there were some relevant questions prepared, e. g. "What are your ideas about future of your second home?" More than 14 % respondents replied that it is "Permanent living", 49 % respondents do not refuse this possibility sometimes in the future and other 25 % conditioned permanent living on reconstruction of the house. Very interesting are the replies related to the age of respondents (tab. 3).

Tab 3 Preferences for future of second homes according to age groups

Ideas for future / age group	31 - 40	41 - 50	51 - 60	above 60
recreation	73.9 %	67.3 %	71.5 %	83.9 %
permanent living	21.6 %	23.4 %	16.6 %	7.5 %
permanent living is not refused	60.2 %	63.4 %	57.5 %	42.5 %

Source: Questionnaire surveys, KSGRR PŘ UK Praha, 1996, 1997

There is a frequent assumption of the public supported by media (e.g. MF Dnes daily, 26.4.1999) that ideas about transformation towards permanent living are a privilege of the retired people. On the other hand, our surveys can not confirm these assumptions. The most intensive ideas about transformation are visible from the questionnaires of respondents in the age group 41 - 50, mostly couples with highest incomes, with older children or childless.

Other goal was to find out conditions for possible transformation towards permanent living. Are the characteristics of owners, his social status, incomes etc. more important than quality of his permanent living or state and equipment of his second home? As a statistic method, we applied correlation coefficient. It was shown that there is now fixed relation between above mentioned characteristics and possibilities for transformation of second homes.

With comparison of responses with field observations, we may conclude that location of the second home is the most principal factor. Good accessibility by car and at least fundamental infrastructure and services nearby seem to be the most important determinants, the state of the house and characteristics of owners should be considered

case by case. These conclusions should be confirmed with the results from the Dolní (Lower) Kocába Region.

3.1. Dolní (Lower) Kocába comparative study

Perspective splitting of the region into two separate parts seems to be appropriate. For the purpose of our survey, the first subregion is called "Valley", situated just at the banks of the Kocába River and close slopes. The second subregion is called "Above the Valley" covering the rest of the region more distant to the river.

"The Valley" subregion consists (except of a part of Štěchovice municipality) of almost continuous belt of recreation settlements the origin of which was in tramping camps built since the 1920s. The settlements mostly lack public utilities with some exceptions as a sports ground or a log cabin - often the only cultural facility and a pub. Such settlements were electrified recently, drinking water comes from public or individual wells. 80 % of houses are wooden log cabins.

"Above the Valley" region is composed of several rural permanently inhabited settlements with incident public utilities and infrastructure. A lot of recreation houses, log cabins and cottages can be found in the intravilans, nevertheless rural cottages were not objects of our survey. Lots of log cabins are spread outside the settlements in extravilan, but not just in the river valley. The recreation houses are of very different exteriors and adjacent lands are usually enclosed with fences. More detailed results from the questionnaire surveys can be seen in Tab. 4 in relative numbers suitable for comparison of different subregions.

As concerned to physical and technical features, bigger walled and wooden houses and larger adjacent pieces of lands" are typical for "Above the Valley". Wooden log cabins prevail enormously in "The Valley". About 20 % houses have their origin in the 1920s and 1930s, while 25 % in the 60s. Almost 70 % of houses were built before 1970. On the other hand "Above the Valley" 70 % of houses were built after 1960 and 30 % during the 60s. These facts can demonstrate the biggest boom of second homes due to prolonging of weekends and increase of private cars in the whole Czech Republic.

The differences in the structure of owners are very low. It is not possible to elevate any specific age, educated or economic group.

Significant differences, however, should be seen in future perspectives. "The Valley" should keep fully its recreational function. Only 2 % of respondents thought about possible permanent living and 76 % eliminated such ideas completely. On the other hand, "Above the Valley" with its complementary recreational function should develop its permanent housing function in quite close future. 20 % of respondents are going to live permanently in their second homes and more than a half do not eliminate this possibility after some repairs and improving of infrastructure and services.

Table 4 Comparison of second homes in "The Valley" and "Above the Valley"

	"The Valley"	%	"Above the Valley"	%
Number of respondents	79		169	
Average size of land (m ²)	552		843	
Average size of house (m ²)	49		56	
Average number of beds	5		5	
Way of obtaining - heritage	11	13,9	291	7,2
purchase	32	40,5	43	25,4
construction	35	44,3	95	56,2
The house was built until 1940	16	20,3	12	7,1
1 950	10	12,7	18	10,7
1 960	8	10,1	13	7,7
1 970	19	24,1	54	32
1 980	6	7,6	27	16
1 990	11	13,9	24	14,2
after 1990	4	5,1	14	8,3
The building:				
walled	10	12,7	72	42,6
walled with wooden facing	5	6,3	16	9,5
wooden	66	83,5	73	43,2
prefabricated (standard)	2	2,5	31	18,3
ground floor only	31	39,2	84	49,7
more-storied	43	54,4	54	32
with cellar	23	29,1	77	45,6
with loft or attic	23	29,1	51	30,2
Number of residential rooms				
1	8	10,1	12	7,1
2	34	43	65	38,7
3	20	25,3	49	29
4 and more	17	21,5	43	25,5
How long is the location visited	33 years		28 years	
Ideas about permanent living	2	2,5	33	19,5
Refusing permanent living	60	76	81	47,9
Age of the respondent - 15 - 20	2	2,5	5	3
21 - 30	3	3,8	13	7,7
31 - 40	10	12,7	14	8,3
41 - 50	13	16,5	34	20,1
51 - 60	16	20,3	32	18,9
61 - 70	19	24	37	21,9
above 70	16	20,3	34	20,1
children below 15 in the household	12	15,2	45	26,6
Education tertiary	9	11,4	21	12,4
tertiary and secondary total	43	54,4	96	56,8
one household member' s income				
below 3 000 Kč	16	20,3	32	18,9
3 000 - 5 000 Kč	37	46,8	76	45
5 000 - 7 500 Kč	14	17,7	30	17,8
7 000 - 10 000 Kč	5	6,3	10	5,3
10 000 - 15 000 Kč	3	3,8	5	3
above 15 000 Kč	0	0	5	3

Source: Questionnaire surveys, KSGRR PŘ UK Praha, 1996, 1997

3.2. Ohrobec - Development case study

For the purpose of discovering trends in a time-line results from the questionnaire surveys done in two periods during the 1990s were discussed. The surveys were done in the fifty same second homes in the units Ohrobec and Lhota u Dolních Břežan in 1991, resp. 1997

The selected microregion is situated in very close hinterland of Prague just behind its southern administrative edge on the right bank of the Vltava river. The settlements are easily accessible by the road Praha - Dolní Břežany - Jílové u Prahy (by Prague Integrated Public Transport System buses - ROPID) or by the railway Praha - Vrané n. V. Construction of new family houses for permanent living is typical here since the mid-90s on recent agricultural land but also on the places of previous recreational houses, which are completely constructed or even pulled down totally.

The results of the questionnaire surveys are seen in the Fig. 2 and 3.

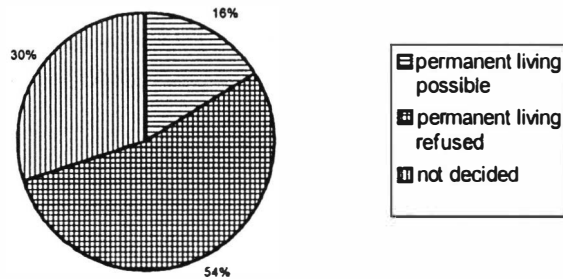


Fig. 2 Ideas about future of second homes in 1991

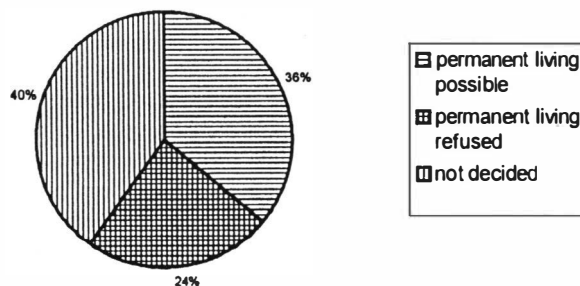


Fig. 3 Ideas about future of second homes in 1997 Source: Questionnaire surveys, KSGRR Pff UK Praha, 1991, 1997

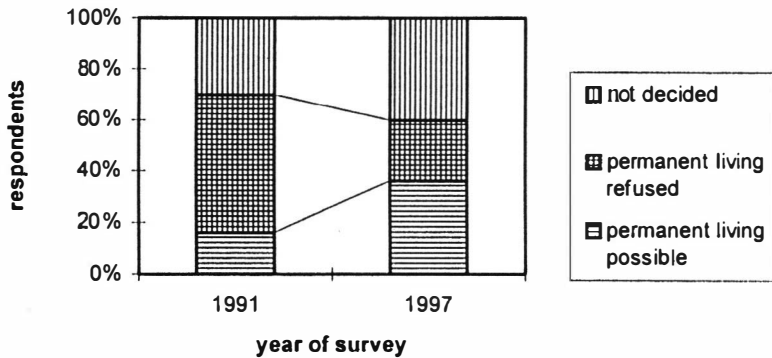


Fig. 4 Changes of ideas about future of second homes 1991 - 1997
Source: Questionnaire surveys, KSGRR Přf UK Praha, 1991, 1997

Figure 4 demonstrates the changes in minds about perspectives of second homes' functions after 6 years. The percentage of people with ideas for permanent living is increasing at the expense of people that completely eliminate possible permanent living.

4. CONCLUSION

From all above demonstrated surveys in selected parts of the hinterland of Prague, it seems that some possibilities for transformation of second homes towards permanent housing really exists and they can be increasingly seen during the 90s. Location and type of locality is the most significant factor. Good accessibility by car and basic services and infrastructure in the surroundings (electricity, water supply, sewage system, and gas systems) are of great importance. The personality of the owner and second home facilities and equipment are secondary determinants in particular cases. The biggest interest for transformation is shown by 41 - 50 age group, mostly couples with higher incomes and with older children or childless. Further changes can be expected after generation changes of owners but only in some specific types. In present development towards transformation, some parallels can be seen with original coming of second homes into existence between the two world wars. River valleys and railway lines were of primary importance in that time, at present road system and its quality is a dominant factor (see also articles in the monograph *Second Homes in the Czech Republic* (Bičík ed., 1999)

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Resume

Druhé bydlení v zázemí Prahy a možnosti přechodu na bydlení trvalé

Příspěvek se zabývá možností přechodu druhého bydlení v zázemí Prahy na bydlení trvalé. Vychází z výsledků dotazníkového šetření prováděného KSGRR PFF UK Praha v letech 1991 až 1997 v 55 katastrálních územích bývalého Středočeského kraje.

Podrobnější data jsou získána z regionu Dolní Kocába a z katastrálních území Ohrobec a Lhota u Dolních Břežan. V posledně jmenovaných došlo k šetření ve shodných rekreačních objektech ve dvou časových horizontech v rozmezí šesti let.

Základním zjištěním je postupné zvyšování zájmu majitelů rekreačních objektů o možnost přeměny objektů na trvalé bydlení. Obecným předpokladem pro takovou změnu funkce rekreačního objektu je umístění a charakter lokality ve které se nachází, a až v konkrétním případě hraje roli osoba vlastníka a samotný rekreační objekt.