Scottish Geographical Journal

Sacred Structures in the Landscape: The Case of Rural Czechia

Tomáš Havlíček & Martina Hupková

Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Faculty of Science, Charles University, Prague, The Czech Republic


To cite this article: Tomáš Havlíček & Martina Hupková (2013): Sacred Structures in the Landscape: The Case of Rural Czechia, Scottish Geographical Journal, DOI:10.1080/14702541.2012.754931

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14702541.2012.754931

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
Sacred Structures in the Landscape: The Case of Rural Czechia

TOMÁŠ HAVLÍČEK & MARTINA HUPKOVÁ
Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Faculty of Science, Charles University, Prague, The Czech Republic

ABSTRACT This paper examines the development of sacred structures in rural Czechia (former Czechoslovakia). Sacred structures could be associated with the creation of important symbols and distinctive rural regional identities in Czechia. Rural Czechia is not uniform: it represents several different rural landscapes. This paper considers whether sacred structures support the idea of multiple and fundamentally different rural areas existing in Czechia. In rural areas and small municipalities, sacred structures often present the only significant culture feature for a tourist. This research found that most residents of Czechia’s rural areas identify with sacred structures, in spite of the fact that representatives of local government often perceive such items as cultural–historical symbols in the landscape rather than religious structures. Five types of rural, religious landscapes were identified, supporting the idea that multiple types of rural areas exist in Czechia.

KEY WORDS: sacred structures, rural Czechia, religious landscape, cultural landscape, regional identity

Introduction

With the growing significance of cultural geography since the 1980s and the return of religious topics to social and geographical sciences, more attention has been given in the recent years to research on sacred structures. Henn (2008) points out that one of the greatest mistakes of modern social theory was the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. Modernization and Marxist theory professed that religious expression was primarily part of the private sphere of individual faith. Scientific realism, which attempted to demystify reality and objectivity, also contributed to this exclusion. Therefore, studies on religion found little application in philosophical debates. Religious (sacred) beliefs are central to the construction of identities and the practice of people’s lives, from the habitual (e.g. the food that is eaten) to the structuring of the vital events of births, deaths and marriages (Holloway & Valins 2002). Geographical (Park 1994; Pacione 1999; Kong 2001; Matlovic 2005b) and sociological (Berger 1999; Riesebrodt 2001) research was, as a result, incapable of explaining the structure and development of reality, without considering religion and religious expressions in space.
The ‘cultural turn’ in geography provided an opportunity for geographical sciences to return to research on religion (Hampl 1998). In Czechia, such topics have been explored since the fall of the communist dictatorship in 1989 (e.g. Danek & Štěpánek 1992; Frajer 1997; Havlíček 2005; Havlíček & Hupková 2008). The former Marxist paradigm, which was concerned with the functioning of society and emphasized simplified economic conceptions, is now considered inadequate. Post-communist Czech geographical research has been catching up with current trends in international geographical research, including for example post-positivist approaches. A shift in research activity from describing localized phenomena towards the analyses of problems, and from the study of objects towards studies of subjects has taken place (Hamp et al. 2007).

The research presented here lies at the intersection of traditional (the Berkeley School) and new cultural geography (e.g. Peach 1999; Paasi 2003). Old cultural geography is based on a traditional concept of ‘Landschaft’ (landscape), which includes both the natural as well as the cultural landscape, particularly from a historical–anthropological standpoint. Emphasis here is focused on questions of where, when and what. This paper draws on traditional cultural geography, principally due to a lack of previous research on sacred structures in Czechia. However, principal ideas from new cultural geography, including the construction of reality through the formation of representation and identity, were taken into account when evaluating the role of sacred structures in the process of formulating rural regional identities and the construction of religious landscapes (Holloway & Valins 2002; Kong 2004; Henkel & Knippenberg 2005; Havlíček & Hupková 2008; Hupková 2010).

The term religious landscape (Zelinsky 2001; Knippenberg 2005) is perceived mostly as both territory and society within a selected larger territorial unit which is influenced by general religious impacts and through individual sacral objects completing, forming or even defining the character of landscape of a given region (e.g. sacral structures can be considered as dominants in a rural landscape).

Catholicism has been the dominant religion in Czechia during the last three centuries. Before the Hussite movement and Reformation Protestantism in the fifteenth century, Roman-Catholicism was prevalent across the Kingdom of Bohemia. During the sixteenth century, reformed protestant religion became more influential, including, for example, the Czech Brethren (Herrnhuter) in Eastern Bohemia. After the defeat of Catholic Habsburgs in the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, the Czech countries were again subject to re-catholicization. Frequent alternation of the main religious streams and the heterogeneity of religious beliefs have been influenced strongly by politics. The transfer and re-settlement of 3 million mainly German Catholics from the Czech border areas after WWII dramatically changed the landscape of the rural borderlands of Germany and Austria (Havlíček & Hupková 2008). The formation of a closed border zone destroyed many villages and sacred structures along the Iron Curtain and the new immigrants did not have any meaningful affinity with Catholic sacred objects. During the second half of the twentieth century, Czechia was exposed to a strong pressure from the communist dictatorship to eradicate God and the supernatural from people’s thoughts. Judaism does not play an important role in the history of religious landscapes in rural Czechia because the majority of Jews lived in the cities and Jewish sacral structures (synagogues and Jewish cemeteries) were built in urban locations. Therefore, in contrast to other European countries, a strong religious tradition has not been formed in Czechia (Nešpor 2004).

For several decades, Czechia has ranked among the most secularized countries of the world (e.g. Hamplová 2000; Lužny & Navrátilová 2001; Tomka 2001; Havlíček 2005;
Knippenberg 2005) and its rural landscape continues to be characterized by the presence of religious symbols and structures (religious landscape). The number of these religious elements has increased both qualitatively and quantitatively (Havlíček & Hupková 2008). Religiosity (the portion of adherents within a given territorial unit) and its related spatial manifestations are internally diverse within Czechia. They appear to be polarized, resulting in a profane northwest and a sacred southeast (Havlíček & Hupková 2008). Nevertheless, increasing religious heterogeneity is also evident, both in society and in terms of territory.

This study aims to contribute to discussions surrounding the study of Czechia’s religious landscapes, by exploring the condition, development and role of sacred structures in the country’s rural areas. Detailed research on this topic has appeared only during the last 10 years in Czechia (Nusek & Svoboda 2001; Valencík 2006; Havlíček 2006; Nešporová 2008, etc.). Also within Central Europe more generally, religious landscape research has intensified after the demise of communism in 1989; particularly at the University of Krakow, where research has focused on Catholic pilgrimage sites (Bilska-Wodecka 2003; Matlovič 2005a). These studies are, by nature, inventories of sacred structures and they only hint at the broader connections behind the changes concerning sacred structures in rural Czechia.

Rural areas in Czechia were subject to a number of structural problems during the transformation from Communism. A significant decline in the number of job opportunities in agriculture has meant increased unemployment and related socio-economic problems such as emigration, especially of young people, into larger cities (Havlíček et al. 2008). This is not to say that urbanization processes did not occur during the period of communist rule; however, significant subsidies for agricultural activities kept rural Czechia’s population relatively stable (Bíčík & Jančák 2003). After the fall of communism, rural areas in Czechia began to differentiate more dramatically. Now, it is increasingly common in Czechia to speak not of one all-encompassing rural area, but of multiple rural areas with distinct characteristics and development trajectories (Perlín et al. 2010).

In addition, during the second half of the twentieth century, the present state, and future of rural areas, was perceived negatively, primarily due to their status as economically lagging regions when compared with cities and their surrounding hinterlands (Cloke 1997). At present, however, rural areas in Western Europe, as well as in Czechia, are experiencing something of a renaissance (Valentine 1997). Rural areas are, for the most part, viewed in a positive light and are seeking, or constructing, their own identity in the new, broad conditions of a social-market society.

Sacred structures can also contribute to the formation of religious identity and perceptions of stereotypes. In addition, they are often an integral part of our expectations for an idyllic rural space (Cloke 1997), a relationship that is reinforced by the depiction of sacred structures on postcards (Mayes 2010).

One of the objectives of this study is, therefore, to analyse the role of religion, and in particular of sacred structures, in the construction of new rural identities in Czechia. We expected local resident’s participation (Felber Rufer et al. 2007) in the restoration of smaller religious structures, the renewal of which is financially feasible. Such examples of the connectedness of residents play a significant role not only with the area’s cultural–historical development, but also with its cultural landscape in general (Kučera et al. 2008). In relation to this, we ask to what degree do the findings of this research on sacred structures support the idea of multiple and fundamentally different rural areas existing in Czechia (Perlín et al. 2010). In other words, does the regionally diverse condition and
development of sacred structures, or sacred sites, also have an impact upon the regionally
diverse construction of rural identities? In spite of the fact that, after 1989, the secularization
of society continues, sacred structures remain as visible elements in the landscape and play
a significant role in the formation of rural space and its associated identities. Sacred objects
indeed shape the present character of Czechia’s cultural landscape as they did in the past
when their visual impact was empowered, for instance, through baroque layouts of pilgrim-
age pathways and sacred sites (Havlíček & Hupková 2008). In the eighteenth and nine-
teenth centuries, many pilgrimage routes were established, most of which were added at
intersections with sacred objects, and extended thanks to the planting of trees and hedge-
rows, where these paths visible elements in the landscape.

Not surprisingly, the restoration of these religious structures is frequently not merely a
result of religious motivation, but can also be motivated by cultural and historical objectives
(Havlíček 2005). A no less significant motivation for their restoration is their role as tourist
attractions. Sacred structures often present the only significant cultural tourist feature in rural
areas and small municipalities and thereby offer opportunities for economic development.

Religion, Space, Sacred Structures

For the most part, geographical research on sacred structures has focussed on the conflicts
associated with the construction of new religious structures (Schmitt 2003; Bauschke
2009), which affect both faith-based as well as secular institutions, or on the significance
of religious symbols and structures for the identity of people (Palmer 2002) concentrated
in a certain area (Kong 2004; Henn 2008). Sacred structures often reflect the dominance
of a specific religion in a given area; in Czechia, the Roman Catholic Church, more than
any other denomination, holds such a position.

During the transformation period, religious heterogeneity increased in Czechia, not only
in society (Havlíček et al. 2009), but also in terms of sacred structures (Havlíček &
Hupková 2008). This study explores traditional religious structures, but it does not overlook
new types of sacred structures, including for instance, roadside memorials (Nešporová
2008), or certain quasi-religious symbols, such as memorials from WWI and WWII,
which are frequently found in central locations of rural municipalities. The study entirely
avoids any discussion of the phenomenon of profane, ‘holy’ sites, or new post-modern
temples, which could include shopping centres and football stadiums which are typically
found in cities and are rarely a feature of rural space (Havlíček 2006).

Czechia’s cultural landscape exhibits a relatively dense network of religious symbols,
primarily in the form of small religious structures (mainly crosses, small chapels, Calvaries,
pictures of saints, etc.), the construction of which was mostly completed during the eight-
eenth and nineteenth centuries (Valenčík 2006). This so-called Baroque sacralization (a
process leading to an increase in sacred manifestations) of the cultural landscape of rural
areas was typical of all Catholic areas of Austria-Hungary. Small sacred structures shape
the rural landscape in Czechia, and throughout Catholic Central Europe, they contribute
to the formation of ‘genia loci’ of Czech rural areas and as individualized localities
(Norberg-Schulze 1992). Larger religious structures, such as churches, chapels or bell
towers are often the primary landmark of rural settlements (Havlíček & Hupková 2008).
They are generally located in the centres, carrying out religious as well as social and cultural
functions. In contrast, small sacred structures mainly exhibit significance as memorials.
They were established, primarily, along local and regional roads, at intersections, or to
mark the borders of an estate or an administrative boundary. These structures often memorialize a tragic event connected with their unique location. In some cases, however, a structure symbolizes an event that occurred in a different location, but, for religious or aesthetic reasons, the structure’s site was selected as being more appropriate. The construction of these structures also conveyed significant religious or missionary undertones during the period of the Christianization of Czech rural lands in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Nusek & Svoboda 2001). The construction of small Christian structures sometimes builds upon earlier pagan elements in the landscape, such as candleholders for the dead – stone column-shaped objects, in which lights were placed in memory of the dead. During the counter-reformation in the seventeenth century, these structures were often converted into Calvaries (Nusek & Svoboda 2001).

Baroque sacralization or sacralization implemented under subsequent cultural approaches or aesthetic vantage points (e.g. during classical, romantic or functionalist periods) was characterized by the extensive construction of religious structures in the landscape, particularly in rural areas, up until the establishment of an independent Czechoslovakia. At present, the vast majority of Czech rural areas no longer play host to the construction of new sacred structures, but rather are sites of restoration. A discrepancy is often pointed out between the increasingly secularized society after 1989, and the ‘new’ sacralization of the cultural landscape, characterized by the renewal of these Christian symbols which were neglected during the communist period and, in many cases, wilfully destroyed (Havlíček 2004). This restoration work is generally not religiously motivated; rather, the motivating factors are historical or social (contributions from German or Austrian residents tracing their roots to the Sudetenland) and cultural (financial subsidies from the state for the restoration of historical sites). Sacralization also manifests itself in the construction of new religious structures or the conversion of existing secular structures into buildings that serve religious purposes. Examples of this can be found in new or growing religious communities (e.g. the Brethren Evangelical Free Church, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc.). It can be assumed that the overall situation will continue to evolve, incorporating increasingly diverse religious structures (Wunder 2005). As noted above, sacred sites and structures play a significant role in the formation of rural regional identities (e.g. Kelley & Francis 1994; Chromý & Janů 2003; Valk 2009). Private and public spheres frequently work together in these identity formation processes and the various sacred structures help to shape the cultural and social values of rural areas. The actual formation of local identities in rural space can, therefore, be strengthened, for instance, by the production of postcards (Mayes 2010), which, in Czechia, portray sacred symbols (churches, chapels, crosses, etc.). The personal feelings of postcard producers are, in this way, often reflected at the public level and become collectively shared (Rose 1995).

Model Rural Regions

Regional-geographic research on sacred structures in Czechia did not begin until after the fall of the communist dictatorship in 1989, at which point it built primarily on local studies from the beginning of the twentieth century (Brož 1924). Such studies have been typically descriptive in style and parochial (Nusek & Svoboda 2001; Valenčík 2006), although these studies do attempt to formulate a typology of sacred structures in Czechia. A more comprehensive study was first attempted by Havlíček and Hupková in 2008 and included field research of sacred structures in more than 20 micro-regions in Czechia, in both cities and rural areas.
The findings confirm the previously assumed differences in the significance of sacred objects along a west–east gradient. Regions in Moravia, particularly along the border with Slovakia, exhibited a higher degree of sacralization of the religious landscape, i.e. through the careful maintenance, utilization and construction of new sacred structures, than areas in central and northern Bohemia. Among other objectives, this study attempts to analyse these earlier findings in greater depth in six model regions within Czechia (Figure 1). Five of the model areas (the Kolešovice, Strání, Pyšely, Srbská Kamenice and Sušice–Šumava regions) are rural areas and the sixth (Tábor) is a city, to facilitate comparisons and the identification of unique characteristics of sacred rural landscapes (Table 1). The five rural model territories illustrate the unique types of rural areas found in Czechia (Perlín et al. 2010):

1. The Kolešovice region is a rural area in the country’s interior, which saw the transfer of its inhabitants following WWII and the subsequent settlement of residents with Eastern Orthodox roots (the Volyn Czechs). It is an area within the internal periphery (a lower than average GDP and low human capital) in the northwest of Central Bohemia. The area is characterized by a general lack of interest among residents in religion and religious sites as well as the poor physical state of a large portion of the structures. In spite of the significantly above-average portion of adherents to Orthodoxy (20% of all adherents), Orthodox sacred structures are practically absent from the area (Havlíček 2007).

2. The Srbská Kamenice region is an area in the resettled borderlands of northern Bohemia with, typically, a very low level of religiosity but a relatively large collection of sacred structures that were constructed primarily by Catholic Czech Germans and Jews. Unclear ownership combined with a complete lack of interest from local residents in the structures often leads to their decline. In some municipalities, efforts to renovate sacred structures have occurred.

Figure 1. Religiosity by municipality in Czechia (2001) and the location of model territories. 
### Table 1. Selected information about the model regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>model regions</th>
<th>population (2001)</th>
<th>area (km²)</th>
<th>population density (people/km²)</th>
<th>rate of religiosity (2001)</th>
<th>index of secularization (1991/2001)</th>
<th>number of structures</th>
<th>number of municipalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tábor (city)</td>
<td>35,769</td>
<td>62.21</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>25.95</td>
<td>31.66</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolešovice region</td>
<td>2636</td>
<td>84.08</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>16.35</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyšely region</td>
<td>3638</td>
<td>47.92</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>28.15</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srbská Kamenice region</td>
<td>2375</td>
<td>84.08</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>12.59</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strání region</td>
<td>6795</td>
<td>84.36</td>
<td>80.5</td>
<td>83.88</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sušice–Šumava region</td>
<td>13,097</td>
<td>253.61</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>36.92</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes: Index of secularization \( (I_s) = 100 \times (a^{01} - a^{91})/(1 - a^{91}) \). \( a^{01} \) – portion of people without religious affiliation in 2001. \( a^{91} \) – portion of people without religious affiliation in 1991. Rate of religiosity = portion of people which claim affiliation with a church divided by the total population.
3 The Sušice region is a relatively large, heterogeneous area extending from the former Iron Curtain to the micro-region’s central area – the town of Sušice. It includes both resettled (Šumava) and permanently settled (internal) areas, represented by the town of Sušice (11,000 inhabitants) and its hinterland. Due to the presence of the historic Iron Curtain and military areas, many settlements in the area, including their sacred structures, were entirely abandoned. Thanks primarily to the initiative of numerous civic associations a gradual renewal of the religious landscape is occurring which is stimulated by non-religious motivations.

4 The Strání region is a more religious area in southeast Moravia. It exhibits a strong regional identity, with continuous settlement for several centuries, high religiosity coupled with a low index of secularization and a partially peripheral geographic situation within Czechia as it is located beyond the main ridge of the White Carpathian Mountains on the border with Slovakia. Sacred structures are in excellent repair having been reconstructed and maintained primarily thanks to the initiative of local residents, but also in cooperation with municipalities and the Roman Catholic Church. Approximately one quarter of the structures have been built since 1989. Given the small size of municipalities, the sacred structures (churches and chapels) are relatively large in size (Figure 2).

5 The Pyšely region characterizes suburban areas in the hinterland of cities (e.g. a suburb of Prague), with increasing population growth. However, a corresponding rate of

![Figure 2](image-url)  
*Figure 2.* An example of an almost destroyed large sacral object in the internal periphery (Kolešovice region). Church is in a weak structural condition and it is also not utilized anymore.
construction of new sacred structures, which often symbolize the regional, rural identity of local residents, is not evident. New sacred structures are, nonetheless, being constructed, but only in municipalities with active residents and interested patrons. These new structures comprise close to one-tenth (8.7%) of all sacred structures in the micro-region.

Data Collection

Field research was conducted in the summer and autumn of 2008. Inventories of actual sacred structures and structured interviews were undertaken. Two key personalities in each territory were interviewed. One was a church representative (the sacred sphere), while the other was a representative of the cultural committee of a municipality or its mayor (secular sphere). A collection of previously mapped structures from the Czech Office for Surveying, Mapping and Cadastre, published in 2007, provided a reference point to monitor and create the inventory of sacred structures. This database provided information about the location of the structures but no data about their type or size. As a result, it was necessary to search out and document all of the structures in the field. Statistical data for the model territories were taken primarily from the two most recent Population and Housing Censuses, conducted by the Czech Statistical Office in 1991 and 2001.

In order to facilitate cross territory comparisons, categories of sacred structures were defined, on the basis of the field research, to describe their physical state, period of original construction and period of reconstruction (qualitative categories, Figure 3). Sacred structures are subject to natural forces and human agents (vandalism or the removal or

![Figure 3. Sacred structures according to their age and physical state (as a per cent of the total number of sacred structures in the model regions).](image_url)

Notes: (a) New structures built after 1989; (b) Structures built before 1989 and restored after 1989; (c) Structures built before 1989 and not restored after 1989; (d) Relict structures.
movement of crosses as a result of construction, agricultural or other types of work). If the structures are in a highly devastated state (ruins) and this state precludes their use for religious purposes, we consider them to be relict structures. This category does not include sacred structures that have lost their original religious function and now serve secular purposes. Additional categories include structures built before 1989 that have not been restored, structures built before 1989 that have been restored and new sacred structures built after 1989. It is also possible to find sacred structures that are currently undergoing restoration work. Such structures have been classified with structures restored after 1989.

A size-significance classification of sacred structures was also determined to distinguish nine categories (Figure 4): (1) structures of extra-regional significance (pilgrimage sites and Ways of the Cross); (2) community centres, parsonages, chaplain houses; (3) churches; (4) chapels; (5) small chapels, statues, bells, other structures of similar size, i.e. large Calvaries, arrangements of crosses; (6) crosses, other rather small sacred structures (smaller Calvaries, sacred pictures in the landscape); (7) cemeteries; (8) memorials to the victims of accidents and tragic events; (9) structures (pictures, signs) placed on other structures (houses, trees, rocks).

Figure 4. The proportion of various types of sacred structures as a percentage of all sacred structures in the model regions.

Notes: (1) Structures of extra-regional significance (pilgrimage sites and Ways of the Cross); (2) community centres, parsonages, chaplain houses; (3) churches; (4) chapels; (5) small chapels, statues, bells, other structures of similar size, i.e. large Calvaries, arrangements of crosses; (6) crosses, other rather small sacred structures (smaller Calvaries, sacred pictures in the landscape); (7) cemeteries; (8) memorials to the victims of accidents and tragic events; (9) structures (pictures, signs) placed on other structures (houses, trees, rocks).
Selected Aspects of the Qualitative and Quantitative Regional Differences in Sacred Structures

The field survey data presented in Figures 3 and 4 uncovered significant territorial differences in sacred structures in Czechia’s rural areas. In contrast with the urban region of Tábor (20.8% of all structures), rural areas lack structures of extra-regional significance. This fact attests to the very local nature of sacred structures. Nearly half of all sacred structures in Czech rural areas (47.1%) are small sacred structures (crosses, smaller Calvaries or pictures), which are distributed throughout the model territories in built-up and undeveloped areas. Higher concentrations, nonetheless, tend to be found in central areas of settlements (Figure 5).

Although only accounting for about one quarter of all structures (Figure 4), larger sacred structures (churches, chapels, cemeteries) are very significant symbols of Czechia’s rural landscape. They can be found on nearly every municipality or micro-region postcard or website. In addition, both local residents and government representatives identify with these larger sacred structures to a significant degree (Hupková et al. 2012).

Structures placed on houses and memorials to the victims of accidents and tragic events were observed in all of the regions at similar level although both categories are more prevalent in Pyšely. This area lies within the hinterland of Prague and has a high portion of second homes (Fialová 2001). An above-average portion of sacred structures occur on houses (15.2%, compared with 6.6% across all five rural territories). This could indicate the desire of local residents and/or recreational users to retain the original rural architecture with its sacred symbols for aesthetic reasons. This area also has an above-average portion of roadside memorials (4.3%), which corresponds with the greater volume of traffic and the presence of more significant roads in the hinterland of a large city.

While significant regional differences are not so evident in the types of sacred structures within the model areas (Figure 4), they are much more apparent when comparing the structures’ age and physical state (Figure 3). Relatively strong regional differentiation exists between areas with high religiosity in eastern Czechia (the Strání

Figure 5. A small chapel in a village near the city of Tábor in a bad condition. New inhabitants of this suburb do not have a relationship with this original sacred structure.
region) and areas in northern and western Czechia (Kolešovice and Srbská Kamenice regions), which are unique primarily due to the removal and replacement of nearly all their residents after WWII, when most inhabitants of Germanic origin were sent to Germany or Austria. The new post-WWII inhabitants of these regions often came from very different cultural environments (Havlíček 1999). They did not identify with the cultural heritage left behind and often failed to maintain or even destroyed some of these structures (Havlíček & Hupková 2008). The old border (of the 1930s) originally between the Czech and German settlement areas (Figure 1) still manifests itself today, even when considering sacred symbols. In the resettled territories of Kolešovice and Srbská Kamenice, for instance, approximately half of the sacred objects have not been restored and nearly 10% are now relic structures (Figure 3). Moreover, these areas exhibit a nearly complete absence of post-1989 sacred structures. For example, in the Strání region, new sacred structures account for more than a quarter (26.5%) of all structures (Figure 3) and there are very few relic or unrestored structures. Average values were recorded in the rural territory of the Sušice-Šumava region (Figure 3), which lies along the border of the continuously settled and resettled areas (Figure 1) and is, consequently, influenced both by its traditionally Czech population as well as by post WWII immigrants.

In general, we can conclude that Czech rural space is, in terms of sacred structures, more differentiated between the religious (southern and eastern Czechia) and secular (northern and western Czechia) territories, and also between resettled and continuously settled areas.

Factors Influencing the Number and Physical State of Sacred Structures

One of the most important factors explaining the physical state of sacred structures is the motive behind the initial decision to restore (reconstruct) a sacred structure. Whilst we can distinguish between religious and cultural motives for the restoration of sacred structures, it is not always possible to explicitly define the type of motivation. Because it acts, for the most part, as a continuum, the degree of dominance of one or the other of these motives can be subjectively determined on the basis of specific indicators in a given region (Collins-Kreiner et al. 2006). Cultural motives include a broad range of incentives for the restoration of sacred structures. Two types of the most commonly recognized motives are either cultural-historic or cultural-economic. The increasing significance of cultural motives arises out of the decreasing religiosity of Czech society.

Religious motives for the restoration of sacred objects are utilized in strongly religious as well as more secular areas. The motives for the renewal of sacred structures can be more easily distinguished in secular areas, due to the generally poorer physical state of sacred structures, the smaller number of restored structures and the more selective approach to structure restoration. Clearly, the restoration of sacred structures in Czechia is not a standard activity in the Kolešovice and Srbská Kamenice regions, whereas in the strongly religious Strání region, religious motives for restoration are dominant. Cultural and other motives are difficult to distinguish. Faith is deeply embedded and religion is viewed as a part of everyday life, by all residents, adherents and non-adherents. In such areas, the Roman Catholic Church is very active in the local cultural life of rural communities. According to the pastor in Nivnice (Strání region, see Hupková 2008), it is difficult to distinguish incentives
(motives) that are religious in nature from others that are more cultural, due to the fact that religion is strongly connected to residents, the location and their history. It is a deeply embedded tradition, which was initially based in the religious convictions of residents and now is more a community tradition practiced among people living and interacting in a certain location.

Religious Motives

In the Strání region where religion is strongly connected with the lives of residents, this relationship is manifested in sacred structures and the way in which such structures are used. Sacred structures are in a very good physical condition, including even those structures with a more peripheral location, i.e. those outside of settled areas, removed from main pathways or in the open countryside. Reconstruction is often carried out with the help of local residents, including financial assistance, manual and skilled labour. Sacred structures are also subject to regular use. Field investigations confirm that sacred structures in such settlements are well-maintained and decorated. In some cases, there are even ‘duty rosters’ for local inhabitants to decorate and clean structures for major religious holidays. Sacred structures outside of settlements are also subject to decoration and frequent maintenance. Frequently trampled grass or maintained footpaths leading to a site can be considered as evidence of the frequency and regularity of visits to such a place. Sacred structures are ingrained in the minds of local residents. Structures become landmarks and are used for orientation or in the creation of geographical names (e.g. in the Strání region, consider the place names: Jarmila or U zabitého Žida [At the killed Jew]). As landmarks, sacred structures are also quite frequently depicted on postcards (Mayes 2010) and in official presentations of municipalities or micro-regions. Local songs, poems and legends about the establishment of sacred structures are passed down the generations. Residents perceive sacred structures not merely as structures, but also as an integral part of local history and culture. Consequently, sacred sites take on living characteristics (Chromý et al. 2011).

Cultural-Historic Motives

Cultural-historic motives are very unique and they are especially common for the borderlands, from which residents of German nationality were removed after World War II. It is in these borderland regions that cross-border cooperation, utilizing the financial resources of a variety of funds and grants, is most frequently applied in the renewal of sacred structures. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, removed Czech Germans and their descendants began to strengthen their relations with the home of their ancestors; for example, by supporting the restoration of sacred structures. The region of Sušice-Šumava, where cross-border cooperation is intensively developing, is a good example of this trend. A project to develop and restore a mountain synagogue into a memorial of Czech-German-Jewish coexistence in Hartmanice in 2006 (Figure 6) received extensive support. This restoration project was carried out with contributions from a variety of sponsors, funds (including foreign funds) and thanks to Bohemian-Bavarian cross-border cooperation.
Cultural-Economic Motives

In Czechia’s rural areas, it is common for a sacred structure (for example, a church) within a built-up area, which is one of few architecturally valuable structures, to help shape the silhouette and aesthetic value of the municipality. It is desirable to maintain this status as a dominant landmark by appropriately directing and managing additional construction through territorial plans. Efforts to maintain such structures in a good physical state also arise out of the structures’ aesthetic function and their direct impact on the positive image of a municipality and can be classified as cultural-economic motives. A municipality’s image and aesthetics represent one factor that could determine the quality of life and of the environment for local residents, visiting tourists or entrepreneurs. Cultural-economic motives are, therefore, initiated primarily by municipalities. Cultural-economic motives are clearly evident in Figure 7, which shows the physical state of sacred structures in the municipality of Sušice (area 46 km², population 11,500, religiosity 36%). Seventy-nine such structures can be found within the municipality’s territory. Since 1989, 52 of these have undergone restoration work and 2 entirely new structures have been built. Out of the 25 remaining structures, which are in a poor physical state and which have not been restored after 1989, only 4 are located in the centre of the municipality. The concentration of reconstruction and restoration of sacred structures is, therefore, typical primarily in the centres of towns and rural municipalities, particularly in town and village heritage preservation zones. Figure 7 also presents evidence that additional reconstructed structures, outside the main settlement area, are located in...
central parts of smaller subordinate settlements (e.g. a chapel on a village square). Sacred structures located outside of settlement centres or beyond the main area of population concentration are in an unsatisfactory physical state. The Tábor model territory follows this pattern. Great efforts and financial resources have been applied in the town centre, while with increasing distance from the centre, sacred structures are not subject to the interest of residents or community representatives. In Tábor’s case, however, the pattern is somewhat disrupted by the presence of Klokoty, a pilgrimage site with a Way of the Cross, west of the town centre. The presence of a pilgrimage site is a factor that encourages the careful maintenance of structures outside primary settlements.

Summary of Factors

From field research in the model territories and information gleaned from interviews with local representatives of religious and administrative spheres, we can conclude that the development of sacred structures is a result of the religious climate in a locality along with the functioning of additional internal and external factors. Based on the interview results, we present a general typology of factors that impact the development of sacred structures in a given territory. We then proceed to evaluate these factors in the model territories, recognizing that the various factors may act both positively and negatively (Table 2).
The extent and type of religiosity is a fundamental factor, which predetermines the nature of the religious landscape in a territory. It describes the proportion of religious adherents and the structure of religious denominations in a given area.

Ownership relations

The ownership of sacred structures plays a significant role in their restoration. The owner’s disposition and capability to secure external funds for restoration, and possibilities for co-financing are of particular importance. Unclear ownership of small structures in the open countryside can be a formal obstacle to restoration. At present, this issue is resolved by issuing a general challenge for ownership of the structure in question to be verified. If no owner steps forward to verify ownership, the measures of Section 135 of Act No. 40/1964 Coll., the Civil Code, dealing with lost or abandoned items, are brought to bear. The law states that after a period of time has elapsed, the item in question becomes the property of the municipality in which it is located.

Size of the municipality

The size of a municipality is primarily an economic factor. It reveals information concerning the size of the municipality’s budget. This, in turn, reveals the municipality’s potential to (co-) finance restoration. It also gives a general indication concerning possibilities for the personnel structure of the municipal authority, especially the willingness of people to take advantage of subsidies and grant opportunities. In Czechia, there are many small rural communities (less than 500 inhabitants) that have such a low budget; they are unable to pay for a full-time mayor. More than 54% of rural municipalities have a part-time mayor (Havlíček 2010). This factor does not take into account other potential burdens on the municipal budget resulting from, for example, flooding, construction of a

---

**Table 2. Primary positive and negative factors, which are most evident in the various model territories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>model territory</th>
<th>positive factors</th>
<th>negative factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tábor (city)</td>
<td>Rate and type of religiosity (Hussite tradition)</td>
<td>Distance of a structure from the centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Size of municipality</td>
<td>Activity and interest of residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolešovice region</td>
<td>Activity and interest of residents (civic associations, active mayor)</td>
<td>Rate and type of religiosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cross-border cooperation</td>
<td>Ownership relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship between local government and church</td>
<td>Relationship between local government and church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activity and interest of residents (selective)</td>
<td>Rate and type of religiosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srbská Kamenice region</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ownership relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Activity and interest of residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strání region</td>
<td>Rate and type of religiosity</td>
<td>Rate and type of religiosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship between local government and church</td>
<td>Ownership relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personality of the parson</td>
<td>Activity and interest of residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activity and interest of residents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyšely region</td>
<td>Activity and interest of newly arriving residents</td>
<td>Rate and type of religiosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The role of patrons and sponsors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Šumava–Sušice region</td>
<td>Cross-border cooperation</td>
<td>Rate and type of religiosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activity and interest of residents (foundations, associations)</td>
<td>Ownership relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Distance of a structure from the centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

(1) Extent and type of religiosity

The extent and type of religiosity is a fundamental factor, which predetermines the nature of the religious landscape in a territory. It describes the proportion of religious adherents and the structure of religious denominations in a given area.

(2) Ownership relations

The ownership of sacred structures plays a significant role in their restoration. The owner’s disposition and capability to secure external funds for restoration, and possibilities for co-financing are of particular importance. Unclear ownership of small structures in the open countryside can be a formal obstacle to restoration. At present, this issue is resolved by issuing a general challenge for ownership of the structure in question to be verified. If no owner steps forward to verify ownership, the measures of Section 135 of Act No. 40/1964 Coll., the Civil Code, dealing with lost or abandoned items, are brought to bear. The law states that after a period of time has elapsed, the item in question becomes the property of the municipality in which it is located.

(3) Size of the municipality

The size of a municipality is primarily an economic factor. It reveals information concerning the size of the municipality’s budget. This, in turn, reveals the municipality’s potential to (co-) finance restoration. It also gives a general indication concerning possibilities for the personnel structure of the municipal authority, especially the willingness of people to take advantage of subsidies and grant opportunities. In Czechia, there are many small rural communities (less than 500 inhabitants) that have such a low budget; they are unable to pay for a full-time mayor. More than 54% of rural municipalities have a part-time mayor (Havlíček 2010). This factor does not take into account other potential burdens on the municipal budget resulting from, for example, flooding, construction of a
waste water treatment plant, etc. It also fails to consider the quality of human capital possessed by the municipality’s representatives (e.g. the abilities and initiative of the mayor).

(4) Distance of a structure from the centre of a settlement
The distance of a structure from the centre of a settlement can determine the degree to which a municipality or other stakeholders will be interested in pursuing the reconstruction and restoration of a given structure (for example, Sušice Municipality, Figure 8).

(5) Relations between local government and church
The religious climate of a territory, i.e. the degree to which the (Roman Catholic) church is involved in everyday community/municipality life, is one indicator of the local government–church relationship. It can, however, also be defined by possibilities for the secular utilization of sacred structures. Such possibilities frequently depend on the mutual agreement of owner and future user. An example can be seen in the attempts of Kolešovice’s mayor to implement the voluntary conveyance of the Church of St. Peter and Paul into the possession of the municipality, with the aim of restoring the church and then using it for cultural events in the municipality. The local priest, who administers the church, is against this idea, expressing concerns that if the church is used for non-religious purposes, it will lose its original function. The lack of cooperation between the municipality and the church creates tension and limits their ability to work together.

(6) Cross-border cooperation
This factor is illustrated above as a cultural–historical motive for the restoration of sacred structures. In addition to the Šumava region, examples of this can be found in the Kolešovice region, where some reconstruction projects receive financial support from Germans, whose descendants originated from the micro-region.

Figure 8. The physical state of sacred structures in Sušice Municipality (although physical reconstruction does not always mean restoration or improvement of religious functions).
(7) Personality of the parson

In the case of religion, the human factor is very important and can have a key impact on the role of religion and the church in a community as well as on the development of sacred structures. The personality of the priest is an important prerequisite to cooperation between a municipality and the church and for improving relationships between the church and non-affiliated residents or the public. An intensive and mutual cultural life among adherents and non-affiliated residents within a rural community can manifest itself positively with increased solidarity and sense of belonging among village residents (e.g. the Strání region).

(8) Activity and interest of residents

An engaging and open personality on the part of the priest is necessary to encourage local residents to participate in the maintenance and restoration of sacred structures. The establishment of a variety of association and interest groups is one of the most significant factors influencing the restoration of sacred structures in Czech rural areas. Considering the typology of structures in rural areas (Figure 4), it is evident that smaller structures, which require less money to restore, can be financed from the resources of local residents. Construction of the Church of St. Ludmila during the 1990s in Suchá Loz (900 residents, outside any model territory in a municipality bordering Strání) is an exception to the assumption. This church (Figure 9) was built with significant financial donation from all the residents in the village. In highly religious rural areas, the presence of a church in each settlement (not merely in each municipality) is very desirable. Moreover, a village church is a significant element or component of local identity and patriotism. Acquiring financial resources from local residents is easier in rural areas, due to the general ease of communication and agreement (neighbourly relations) and, thanks to lower levels of anonymity; it is easier to monitor the behaviour and activity of individuals and families (pressure to be active).

Associations and interest groups can initiate collections for restoration projects or apply for subsidies from public sources as well as fulfilling an educational function (the promotion of sacred structures). The role of associations and interest groups is evident in the Kolešovice region where, with the notable exception of ‘Zderaz’, a civic association, local residents display a lack of interest in sacred structures, most of which are in a dismal state of repair.

Figure 9. Church of St. Ludmila in Suchá Loz.
Local artists and tradesmen can find publicly beneficial personal fulfilment in the restoration of a sacred structure. For example, local tradesmen making crosses and placing them along bicycle paths at sites where crosses were located in the past. Reconstruction projects of sacred objects by local artists have many aspects and connections to local community development. They reflect a human will to create something permanent – memory in the landscape. These types of projects help local people to experience their neighbourhood and their past through sacral objects.

This factor did not manifest itself in the model territories studied. It describes financial aid from an individual from the region or even outside the region, for instance, a political representative, business leaders, etc.

Conclusion

For Czech rural areas, sacred structures represent a significant pillar in the formation of regional identity. Nearly every rural municipality presents itself visually on the Internet or in postcards predominantly with images of its sacred structures (churches, chapels, etc.). Most residents of Czechia’s rural areas also identify with sacred structures, in spite of the fact that representatives of local government often perceive such items more as cultural–historical symbols in the landscape than as religious structures. Key personalities of a given rural area frequently take part in the restoration or construction of sacred structures, because they recognize their significant role in the formation of local identity and a sense of belonging with historical–cultural connections. Sacred structures, therefore, aid in constructing the character and image of Czech rural areas and are a significant, often dominant, part of the same.

The findings of field investigations of sacred structures also support the idea of the existence of multiple types of Czech rural areas and the important role religion plays in the construction of rural areas. On the basis of earlier studies of the religious landscape of Czech rural space (e.g. Havlíček & Hupková 2008) and the research analysed above, five types of rural, religious landscapes were identified.

The first type (Kolešovice region) is characterized by a general lack of interest in religious faith and religious sites. There was registered a new hope for the future on the activities of civic associations and active mayors. In the second type (Srbská Kamenice region), with many destroyed and relict sacral structures, we identified a small number of active residents and below the average of restored structures. The third type (Sušice region) represents an area with many relict sacral structures, but thanks to cross-border cooperation with Bavaria and the high importance of tourism such structures are slowly being restored. The fourth type (Pyšely region), a suburban area is characterized by an above-average number of new sacral structures and very important role of patrons and sponsors in the restoration activities. The last type (Strání region) in the borderland to Slovakia is representative of strong religious identity by residents, underscoring the excellent physical state and increasing number of new sacred structures and also an activity and interest of local population.

Sacred structures in the Czech rural landscape, therefore, represent a significant phenomenon connected to regional identity. However, perceptions of such structures have often changed from religious motives to historical–cultural motives, a transition that was confirmed by the findings of surveys of secular and religious representatives. It is also clear
that, to better understand the broader issues related to the significance of sacred structures for the formation of rural regional identity, it would be appropriate to carry out qualitative research with local residents directly and not just with selected representatives of local spheres of interest (Felber Rufer et al. 2007).

Research on sacred structures in rural space is, therefore, necessary, both according to the thoughts of traditional cultural geography as well as within the framework conditions of the new cultural geography. It is in the combining of these two approaches that we recognize a significant contribution to geographic knowledge of rural areas, or more specifically, of Czech and Central European rural space.

Acknowledgements

The research was funded by the Grant Agency of Czech Republic (project number P410/12/G113), and by Grant Agency of Charles University (project number 165110). The authors thank the sponsors for providing their financial support.

References

Sacred Structures in Czechia


