

POST-MILITARY AREAS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND THEIR REVITALIZATION – EXAMPLES OF THE TOWNS OF HODONÍN AND UHERSKÉ HRADIŠTĚ

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Abstract

One of the basic transforming processes of the period after 1989 is the process of demilitarization. Among other things, one of its consequences is the emergence of abandoned military buildings and areas – so-called military brownfields. This kind of brownfield has a large number of specifics, to which subsequent revitalization necessarily must be adapted. As a large portion of these areas is situated within municipalities or is directly adjacent, it is essential that the revitalization of these sites must be approached with great sensitivity. Two examples of an approach to the revitalization of former barracks sites located within cities are shown in the submitted article.

Key words: revitalization, post-military areas, Czech Republic, Hodonín, Uherské Hradiště.

INTRODUCTION

Political, social and economic changes following events occurring in Central and Eastern Europe at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s became impetus for a number of transformation processes. One of them was the process of demilitarization that can be understood as a partial or complete loss of the area's military function (Matlovič et al. 2007). Regions most affected by the process of demilitarization in the last more than two decades were countries of the post-communist central Europe, which ranked with the most militarized states of the developed world thanks to their high strength of national armies and Soviet troops staying on their territories. The process of reducing the number of military grounds, or rather departure of the army, can be observed immediately after the end of the Cold War also in many other countries, e.g. in the United

States or in the federal lands of the former “West” Germany. Although the intensity of these changes, their course and a number of other aspects differ for individual countries or regions, the departure of the army from the territory had always brought a whole range of social and economic impacts for the concerned locality, which had to be faced (see, e.g., Dardía et al. 1996). One of impacts most striking at first sight is the coming into existence of abandoned military grounds, so-called military brownfields.

DEMILITARIZATION AND POST-MILITARY BROWNFIELDS

The emergence of military brownfields is a phenomenon not at all new. In history we can find a number of towns where the departure of armies resulted in the emergence of abandoned buildings and premises. Examples may be the towns

of Hradec Králové or Olomouc. Having had lost the status of strongholds in the second half of the 19th century, the towns succeeded in not only getting rid of the last obstacle to their sprawl but there were also numerous premises and objects left by the army. The towns in question became possessors of these sites and gradually dictated their new peace use (Šilhánková et al. 2006).

However, the current process of demilitarization of the territory of the Czech Republic and the consequent emergence of military brownfields is much more extensive. The fact follows out namely from the post-war development when heavy militarization occurred particularly on the part of the so-called Eastern block due to the starting of the Cold War (a maximum of 297,500 soldiers in the Czechoslovak People's Army during the first half of the 1950s) (Ministry of Defence 2004). As a result of the fundamentally changed military doctrine, general democratization of the Czechoslovak army and its conversion from the offensive to peace defensive army a considerable decrease of soldiers was observed after the year 1989 (from about 200,000 in January 1989 to about 150,000 in October 1990)¹. The decrease continued in the following years. The army of the Czech Republic amounted to 131,956 persons (of whom 106 thousand were soldiers) on the date of its coming to existence 1 January 1993 (AČR 2010). In the following years, the number of persons in the Army of the Czech Republic was further decreasing due to other changes in the department of defence (see Figure 1). A massive reduction was recorded as a consequence of the abolished compulsory military service by which the Army of the Czech Republic became fully professional in 2005.

In connection with the transformation and reform of the Czechoslovak (later Czech) Army and as a consequence of staff reduction in the sector of the Ministry of Defence a great number of military grounds and buildings were abandoned, which resulted in the emergence of many military brownfields. In the period between 1992 and 2008, the

Army of the Czech Republic abandoned a total of 128 garrisons (without military administrations) and tens of individual objects across the country's territory (see Figure 1). According to the National Strategy for the Regeneration of Brownfields, there were 151 military brownfields in the territory of the Czech Republic in 2007, the total area of which was 2,394.1 ha (CzechInvest 2008).

Nevertheless, the departure of the national army was not the only cause to the emergence of military brownfields in the Czech Republic's territory. Similarly as in other post-communist countries, a great amount of military brownfields came to existence due to the departure of the Soviet Army troops at the beginning of the 1990s, which counted a total of 73.5 thousand soldiers and about 40 thousand dependants from 67 localities (Pecka 1996). These abandoned sites and objects are very specific both in terms of their functional scope (from military grounds to purely civil objects such as shops, apartment houses, schools, etc.) as well as in terms of their size and rate of environmental burden. All these sites were taken over by the Czechoslovak (later Czech) Army, which either transferred the property to public administration bodies or self-governments after necessary decontamination or sold them directly to private entities. The most frequently used method of changing the owner was gratuitous transfer of property to municipalities.

Thus, municipalities had acquired smaller or larger sites, the adequate use of which they were or still are looking for. Their potential use is affected by a range of factors – site location (intravillan or extravillan of the municipality), size and economic power of the municipality, quality of the elaborated area development study, capacity of the municipality to harvest funds from national and European sources or from a private developer of good reputation, functional structure of the site, its size and environmental burden. Examples of municipalities in which abandoned premises came to existence due to the departure of the army and whose general high-standard revitalization would significantly contribute to their development can be the Moravian towns of Hodonín and Uherské Hradiště.

¹ Approximate number of soldiers in the territory of the Czech Republic in January 1989 and October 1990 was ca. 160,000 and 120,000 respectively.

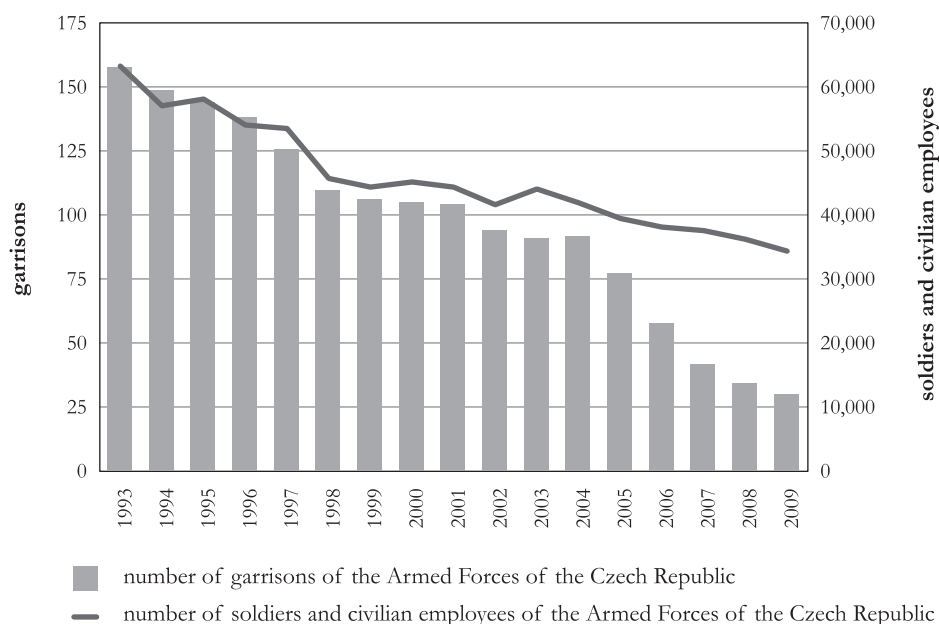


Figure 1 Development of the number of garrisons and of the number of soldiers in the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic in the period 1993-2009. Source: Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic and Armed Forces of the Czech Republic.

MILITARY SITES IN HODONÍN

There are four former military sites of varying size and character in the territory of Hodonín: on the boundary of the cadastral territories of Hodonín and Rohatec, there is a site called water exercise area (6 hectares), about two kilometres from the border of the urban area, there is a 100-hectare exercise area (shooting range) and northwest from the town centre there are core sites called the Great Barracks (24 ha with 33 facilities) and the Dukelská Barracks (4 ha with 9 facilities), that are typically surrounded by urban buildings. This also partially determined the further use of these areas (Malát 2009).

The history of military barracks in Hodonín begins to unfold since the early 1880s. From that time also originate some buildings still standing (mostly used as hostels for officers and the enlisted men, store-rooms or riding halls), that are, for their form, a significant element of building of this area and so the city allowed from the very beginning for their full preservation and sensitive reconstruction (Figure 2).

Besides these older buildings, many other buildings, such as hostels for the enlisted men, car park buildings, stores, workshops, etc., were gradually many other buildings, especially in the second half of the 20th century.

The garrison of Hodonín was dissolved in 2002, which resulted in the departure of the remaining troops and removal of all movable property from the barracks. The town was informed in advance of the planned departure and had thus relatively time enough to prepare the takeover of the precincts. The town council began somewhat in advance with an urban study and then with an overall concept of their functional use and development. From the very beginning, we have tried to involve the wide public in the process of the sites revitalization, which could get more familiar with the greater site thanks to the open-door day, as well as to comment upon the future use of both premises. Unlike other towns that hired specialized companies, the town of Hodonín carried out this whole process practically alone (from concept production to sale of buildings).



Figure 2 Example of a well revitalized building in the “Great Barracks” (today a restaurant).

Photo: Jan Hercik, 2011.

The Town Council decided for dividing the Great Barracks into different sectors according to three major functions: living, services with small production (commercial), or sport and leisure. Based on the developed concept, they started the process of change of the zoning plan and proprietary steps to sell each building (Malát 2009). Later, the three main functions were supplemented by a fourth one, educational (see Figure 3).

After remediation of environmental damage, a first investment was made by the city. The investment served to build the basic technical infrastructure and to reconstruct two selected historic buildings in residential houses. As a result of these investments, the attractiveness of the entire complex increased, which opened possibilities for the sale of most other buildings to private investors. In 18 months, the buildings were rented or sold based on market valuation with a repayment period of five years. In this phase, private investors were only offered buildings and plots on which they were standing, because of the need to complete the infrastructure on the whole site, after which the plots could be sold to

private investors. The town was to keep only a few key plots, one whole building and a share in cooperative apartment houses. The town of Hodonín gained more than 41 million CZK by the end of 2008 after having sold the buildings and by 2013, this amount should increase up to 90 million CZK (Malát 2009). The town, however, had considerably invested in the site. It mainly included the demolition of inadequate buildings, the construction of the above-mentioned technical infrastructure and the reconstruction of selected buildings. According to the Town Council information, the town spent 30 million CZK there and received other 45 million CZK from the national budget.

This money mainly went to the renovation of three apartment buildings (37 million CZK), which gradually formed 80 cooperative dwellings. Next to these residential houses revitalized by public funding, some private development projects gradually emerged, within which two buildings were reconstructed in the central part of the site for habitation needs. According to the plans of developers, a total of 87 apartments should come to existence. The

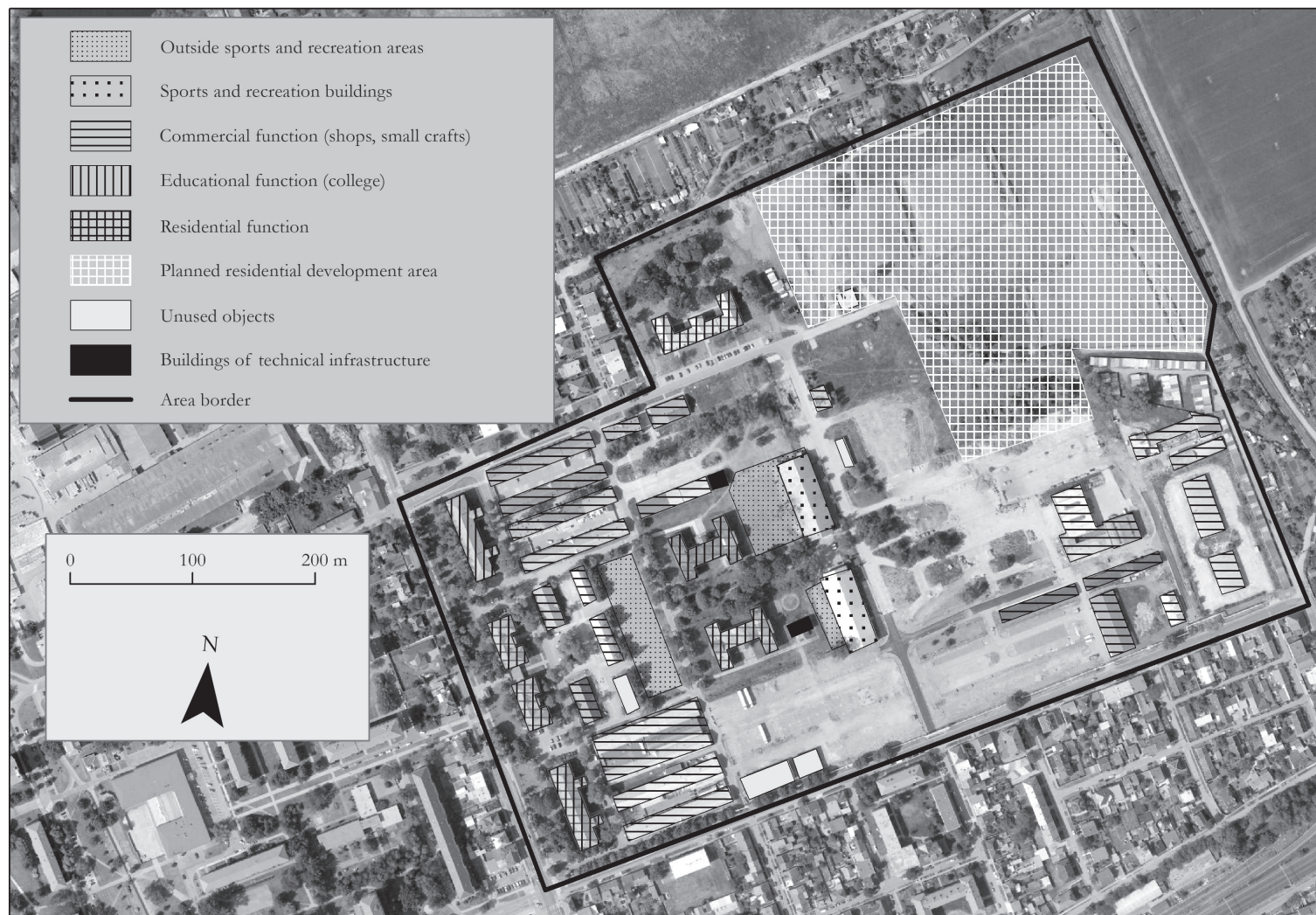


Figure 3 Scheme of the functional use of the Velká kasárna (Great Barracks) in Hodonín (basic data Geoportal CENIA.cz; own processing)

residential function has also been attributed to the north-eastern part of the site of 6 hectares, where the construction of flats and houses is already being realized or prepared by a private developer. A total of 66 terraced houses, eight semi-detached houses, seven atrium houses, five detached houses and five apartment buildings with a total of nearly one hundred apartments should gradually emerge on this site.

The largest number of buildings was assigned a commercial function. Buildings were acquired by small tradesmen and smaller businesses who have gradually established their business premises (manufacture of windows and doors, furniture, wafers or sale and installation of plasterboard systems) there. These premises are primarily located in historic buildings in the western part of the site. A smaller part of the premises is then located in the south-eastern peripheral part. Most local businesses have already carried out the construction of interiors and, in some cases, the exteriors of the buildings. The reconstruction of the exteriors is often carried out very carefully with regard to the historic character of the buildings and the overall character of the site.

Apart from trade and production activities, a private investor has converted one of the historic buildings into a restaurant, which is conveniently located in close proximity to both houses and most buildings with manufacturing and business functions. This restaurant has to become the centre of the planned commercial and social centre of the whole site. Its eastern half, where sport fields and relaxation zone emerged, has already been adapted.

Besides fields representing sports and recreation function, there is also an area for horse riding, which includes an outdoor and indoor riding school, horse paddocks and stables. This should also include an offer of accommodation. Although the site is still under construction, considerable criticism appears now on the part of residents living nearby who complain about the smell that comes from the sports complex. It was later decided that some buildings in the area of the former Great Barracks should also serve as public offices and institutions (so far, the

district court is temporarily placed). The location of the contact point of the Employment Agency is also part of the plan.

The educational function in the area is represented today by a detached workplace of the European Polytechnical Institute headquartered in Kunovice, which is situated at a distance of forty kilometres. The building of this private college is located on the northwest border of the campus. The college offers, both full-time or combined degree courses, Bachelor study programs in Economics, Computer Science, Electronic Computers, Finance and Tax Management and Marketing of the Foreign Trade.

The overall revitalization of the former Great Barracks would create a multi-functional urban area. The site is very easily accessible. There is a bus stop located close to it, and a train station is only a 10-minute walk from there. But the actual site and its surroundings have no amenities (nearby, there is only a nursery school). This shortcoming could become an impulse for a town that has more opportunity to influence the future face of the complex, which is still waiting for revitalization. These are mainly some still unrepaired or not destructed buildings, a large part of the greenery and, above all, untreated larger or smaller areas (this is particularly true for large areas in the southern part of the site, which was created after the demolition of the former car park, where new car park and buildings for small tradesmen are planned).

The revitalization of the smaller Dukelská Barracks, which have a smaller area and less buildings, were of course far easier than the revitalization of the six-times-larger Great Barracks. The character of this site, where residential and office buildings were dominating, together with its small size allowed for a relatively rapid revival. However, even here some buildings had to be removed (9 buildings). The site was developed with a new Museum of Oil Extraction and Geology, with a multi-functional building with offices, which is the headquarter of the regional radio and with the Roma community centre, whose renovation was co-financed with funds from the Ministry for Regional Development. The commercial function in the area is represented

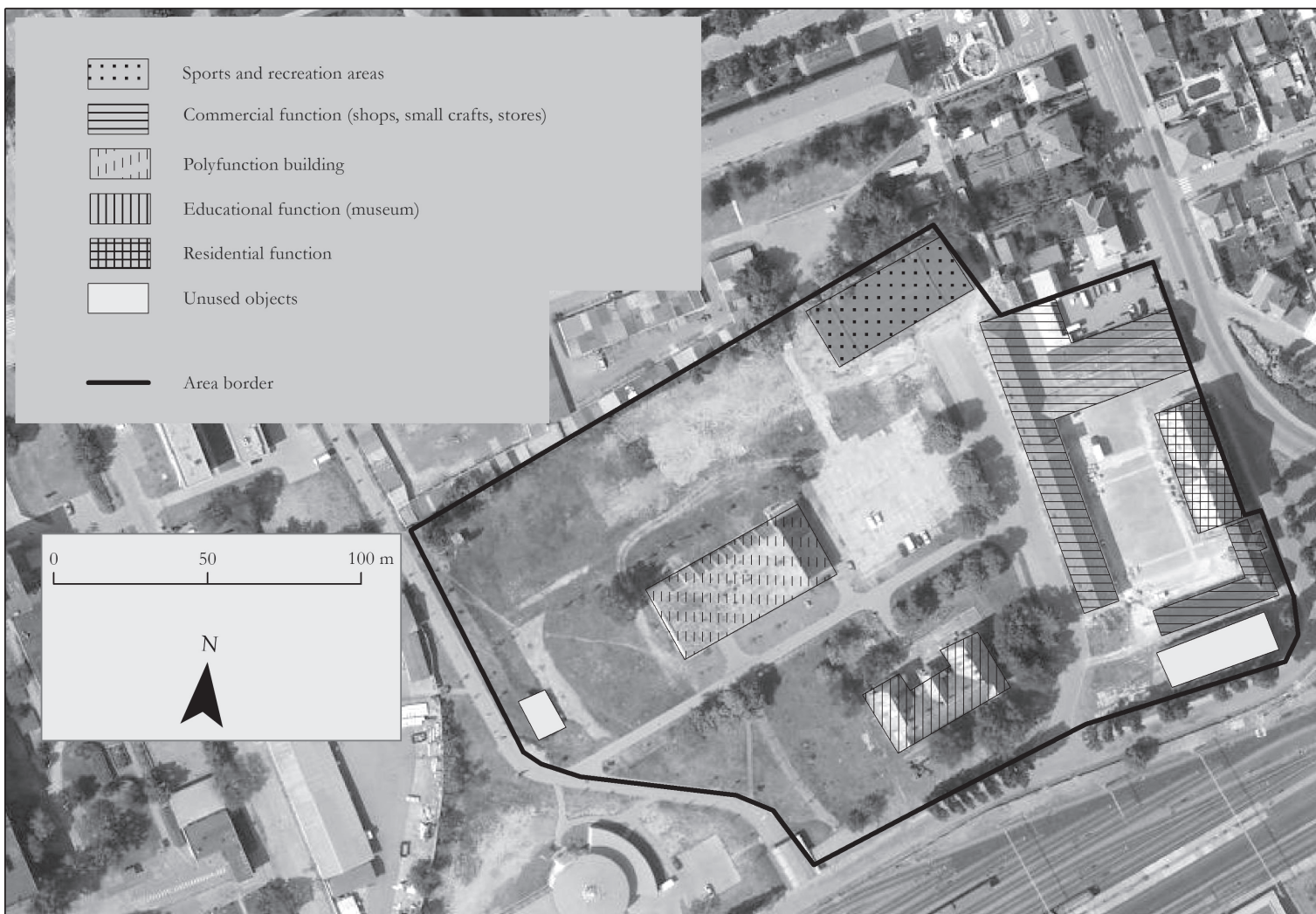


Figure 4 Scheme of the functional use of the Dukelská kasárna Barracks in Hodonín (basic data Geoportal CENIA.cz; own processing).



Figure 5 Example of an unused building in the “Great Barracks”.

Photo: Jan Hercik, 2011.

largely by furniture stores, garden equipment and solar systems. Through the reconstruction of other buildings, some spaces for small crafts and a sports hall were created. The adjacent plots should be gradually converted into tennis courts (see Figure 4). As in the Great Barracks complex, there was also introduced a residential function (Malát 2009). The Town Habitation Authority, which is owned by the town of Hodonín, has become the investor of the reconstruction of the historic barrack building, which has been converted into 24 residential units. However, some buildings on the site are still deteriorating and waiting for demolition or reconstruction (Figure 5).

MILITARY SITE IN UHERSKÉ HRADIŠTĚ

In terms of history, the army is linked even more to Uherské Hradiště than to Hodonín. The history of the modern barracks of Uherské Hradiště has started, however, to unfold after the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia. The then Ministry of National Defence had already approached in 1919 the town representatives with a proposal to set up a

military garrison. The construction of the barracks themselves, which was located on the north-eastern edge of town, began in 1930 and was completed two years later (Čoupek et al. 1990). A continuous complex of technical and barracks buildings thus came to existence, with a total area of 17 ha, which the army used until its departure in 2001.

In April and September 2002 (Bičan et al. 2006), the town of Uherské Hradiště took over, in a free-of-charge form, the area of barracks as well as the exercise area Rochus (approx. 60 ha). When taking over the whole site, the town was fully aware of the risks but also opportunities that arise from this act. As in the case of Hodonín, the army has only performed here redevelopment works and had left to the town buildings that were often in dilapidated state. As a similar issue was solved one year before in Hodonín, the situation in Uherské Hradiště was easier. Furthermore, the change in the ownership of the military site took place alongside with the preparation and negotiation of a new town zoning plan. The new zoning plan has been incorporated to take over new uses of the transferred site, which

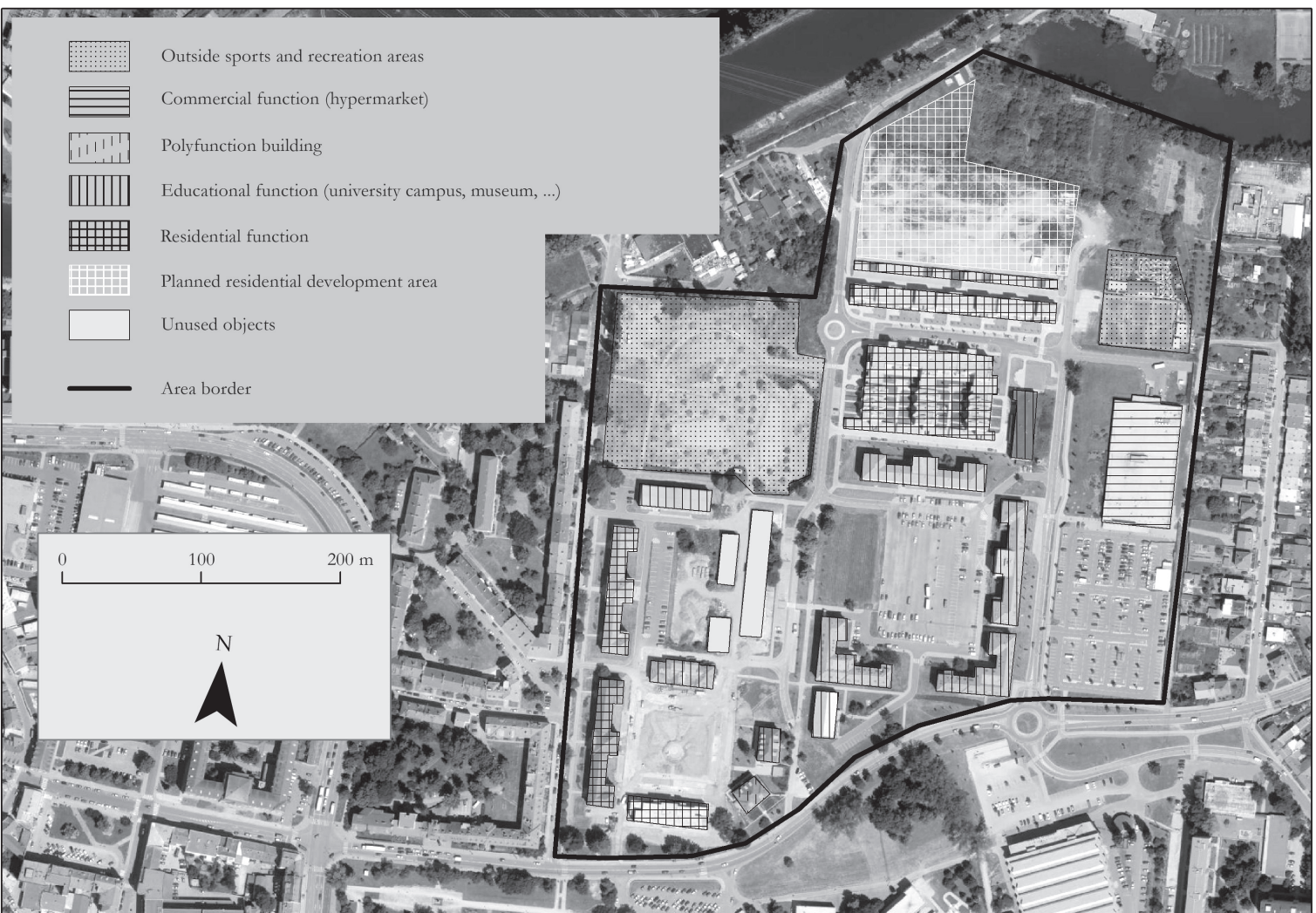


Figure 6 Scheme of the functional use of the former barracks in Uherské Hradiště (basic data geoportal Geoportal CENIA.cz; own processing).

is limited in the north by the river Morava, in the east by a residential housing area, on the west by a row of residential buildings and in the south by an extensive sports and recreation area.

Future use predetermined both the character of the surrounding buildings and especially the location of the site near the centre of Uherské Hradiště. The developed urban design allowed for the division of the territory into three functional plots: educational, residential and commercial (Figure 6). As in Hodonín, the town needed to do an initial investment into the technical infrastructure, too. At that moment, it was proved to be a strategically very suitable offer to sell a part of the site (commercial zone) to a private investor who built a small hypermarket there. The investor promised the town not only to implement partly the public technical infrastructure, but also to build its own access road to the whole site including the construction of a roundabout intersection. The investor was forced to implement the car park in front of their retail store with a reserve of 100 parking places dedicated to users of adjoining sports facilities. The construction assumed by the private investor was very fast, so part of the site was in the form of a car park new hypermarket with a large car park and was opened at the end of 2004.

Some buildings were reserved for a residential function in the western part as well as the space created by demolishing of some buildings in the northern part of the site. The new use of the revitalized buildings in the western part of the area surrounding the newly formed Green Square office did not follow the residential function of the area. Some buildings in this section serve as a museum, educational or medical facilities or restaurants. Other buildings, however, continue to deteriorate and are waiting for demolition, after which a new sport and relaxation centre should appear, according to the plans of the town in their place. Nearly 150 residential units were created in this part of the site up to now, particularly in buildings, where the reconstruction was implemented with the support of the national budget by the town of Uherské Hradiště, which remains the owner of these buildings. The two buildings have a specific character. It is a house

with protected apartments, which are designed for citizens with special needs (43 apartments) and a residential building with so-called 40 starting apartments for the young generation. The other residential projects are already the subject of investments of purely private developers who bought from the town the relevant buildings or plots and they built apartment houses in their place. We can mention as an example a residential house situated at the very southern edge of the site. Inside, there are 25 apartments, which are not yet all sold and a part of them is used as offices. The ground floor has commercial premises. A residential development is planned in the north-western and northern parts of the site near the Morava river, where a complex of family and apartment houses should emerge according to the plan. Currently, a part of this plan has already been carried out. A private investor built there two blocks of flats with more than 150 apartments.

The biggest challenge for the town was the implementation of projects within the educational zone. The town carried out here two projects that were designed to attract students who would potentially remain in the town and help to increase the educational structure of the town.

The key project was the “Regional Training Centre”. It is a campus, which included a construction of selected buildings for the needs of the high school (classrooms, dormitories and a canteen). The town received a grant from the European Regional Development Fund for the project. The town tried to attract one of the public universities. Finally, it was successful with the Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín, which gradually moved the Faculty of Logistics and Crisis Management and the Institute of Visual Arts. Besides the TBU, the VSB-TU of Ostrava entered the site and transferred part of its Faculty of Economics. The reconstruction of the whole site started in 2005 and was completed in September 2006. The last part of the campus, which should be constructed as a completely new building, is the University Library. The ERDF also supported a related project, which was called “Lifelong Learning Centre.” The selected building was reconstructed in 2006 and now serves fully to the education of citizens of the town and its surroundings.

Table 1 Structure of financial resources in the revitalization of the barracks sites in Hodonín and Uherské Hradiště (in %). Source: Špačková (2011).

	Hodonín	Uherské Hradiště
Private sector	71	58
EU funds	3	28
Contributions from the state budget of the Czech Republic	12	7
Sources from towns and regions	14	7

Besides these two previously completed projects, a project of the private company Marlin was recently designed for the reconstruction of one of the former military buildings, where the “Centre of Further Education” will be located (again supported by the EU). The reconstruction should be completed in 2011.

In addition to the individual buildings, most of the open spaces were reconstructed in the barracks. It was specifically the projects implemented in 2010, which were “Transformation of the former military shooting range in a town park” and “Revitalization of the Green Square”. Both projects were based on an integrated development programme of the town that was prepared already in 2008.

The revitalization of the former barracks of Uherské Hradiště created a multi-functional complex, which has a great potential to contribute significantly to the development of the whole town and to the surrounding region thanks to the education centre. The necessary basic amenities occur near the site or even inside.

CONCLUSION

Despite the different strategies chosen by the towns, the revitalization of the barracks in both compared towns can be evaluated as very successful. Hodonín as well as Uherské Hradiště devoted major attention to the development of the residential function. The town of Hodonín placed a greater emphasis on the development of commercial services, Uherské Hradiště focused on strengthening the educational role of the town. Hodonín preferred selling buildings and plots to private operators while Uherské

Hradiště left a far greater part in its own assets, from which a part has been rented. A private investor has the highest share in financing the conversion of the barracks in both cities (71% in Hodonín, 52% in Uherské Hradiště). EU funds provided a contribution of 3% to Hodonín so far. In the case of Uherské Hradiště, the share of these funds has been very high (28%). The proportion of funding from the national budget was higher in Hodonín (12%) than in Uherské Hradiště, where it amounted to 7%. The rest of the financing of the urban revitalization came from town or regional budgets. According to Špačková (2011), about 20 million EUR were invested in Hodonín and 30 million EUR in Uherské Hradiště by the end of 2010 for the revitalization of military facilities.

The success of the revitalization is indicated also by results of a questionnaire survey focused on the perception of army and evaluation of the current condition of barrack premises conducted in May 2011 (150 respondents in Hodonín and 150 respondents in Uherské Hradiště). Decent awareness about the use of the former barracks was reported by 138 persons in Hodonín and by 146 persons in Uherské Hradiště. The current use of the former barrack sites was valued as positive by 122 persons in Hodonín (i.e. 88.4% of persons who had known the purpose for which the objects of the former barracks are used now) and by 134 respondents (91.8%) in Uherské Hradiště. Two negative evaluations were recorded in Hodonín and three in Uherské Hradiště. All other respondents expressed neutral attitude. If the respondents were to evaluate good or poor functioning of the former military grounds, most positive were their opinions concerning the use of these sites for

housing purposes (40% in Hodonín and 29% in Uherské Hradiště). The positive evaluation of the function is emphasized by the perception of these sites as highly attractive for dwelling. In addition to the housing function, respondents from Uherské Hradiště pointed out their very positive educational function (21%). An interesting finding is that the educational function is not perceived (neither positively nor negatively) by citizens in Hodonín where a high school resides within the premises of the former barracks.

It can be concluded that with only some minor exceptions, the result of the revitalization of the former military grounds is perceived very positively by citizens and business entities of the two towns in spite of the fact that strategies chosen for the revitalization differ. It follows that the two towns can serve as model examples to other municipalities that are or will be tackling the revitalization of former military objects in their intravillans.

Acknowledgement

The paper was prepared within the framework of project *Manifestations of environment change in the Earth's landscape sphere* (PROGLEZ), which is funded by Masaryk University Brno and aims to support student projects at MU (MUNI/A/0966/2009) and project *Landscape as a Geosystem: Changes in the Temporal and Spatial Structure and their Main Mechanisms* (Krajina jako geosystém: změny v časové a prostorové struktuře a jejich hlavní mechanismy; 913105021/31; PrF_2011_006), which is funded by Palacký University Olomouc.

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Résumé

Postmilitární areály v České republice a jejich revitalizace – příklad měst Hodonína a Uherského Hradiště

Jednou z otázek, se kterými se potýkají současná česká města, je i otázka rekonverze a revitalizace opuštěných a často chátrajících vojenských areálů. Těch na území České republiky v důsledku odchodu okupačních sovětských vojsk či v souvislosti s redukcí početního stavu Armády ČR vznikly v posledních dvou desetiletích desítky a stovky. Někteří čeští a slovenští geografové řadí tento proces redukce armád dislokovaných v území mezi základní transoframční procesy, se kterými se střeoevropský postsocialistický prostor musel po roce 1989 vypořádat (např. Matlovič et al. 2007) a nelze jej tedy považovat za něco ryze českého. Podobný proces lze jasně identifikovat jak v dalších zemích postsocialistické střední Evropy, tak v poněkud jiné podobě a intenzitě i jinde ve světě (SRN, USA ad.).

Pro většinu bývalých vojenských areálů (s výjimkou VVP) na území ČR je charakteristické, že po nejnutnější sanaci byly tyto areály velmi často bezúplatně převedeny na obce. Většina obcí si byla od provotopátku vědoma významu těchto nově nabytých nemovitostí pro jejich další rozvoj. Velká část těchto areálů se totiž nacházela ve vnitřních částech obcí, což na jedné straně zvyšovalo jeho atraktivnost avšak na straně druhé kladlo na obce vyšší nároky na vhodný přístup při jeho rekonverzi a revitalizaci (funkční využití apod.).

K příkladům takovýchto obce patří i moravská města Hodonín a Uherské Hradiště. V přístupu k rekonverzi, resp. revitalizaci nalezneme mezi oběma městy hodně podobného. Obě města převzala vojenské areály složené z řady budov různé funkce i různého stavu. Obě města si v době převzetí kasáren či těsně poté vypracovala strategický plán jejich rozvoje. Ty do jisté míry směřují k vytvoření nových polyfunkčních městských čtvrtí. V obou případech také tyto plány počítaly nejen s využitím původních budov, ale i s výstavbou zcela novou (především rezidenční), kterou zajišťují výhradně soukromí developři. Odlišnosti nalezneme především

ve funkční struktuře revitalizovaných areálů. Zatímco Hodonín šel spíše tradiční cestou kombinace především rezidenční funkce s dominantní funkcí komerční lokálního významu, tak Uherské Hradiště zvolilo cíl poněkud jiný. Již od začátku šlo město do rekonverze areálů s představou, že jednou z dominantních funkcí (vedle především funkce rezidenční) se stane vytvoření vzdělávacího centrum regionálního až nadregionálního významu. Zcela odlišně obě města přistoupila také k financování samotné revitalizace areálů. Zatímco v Hodoníně zvolili cestu prodeje většiny objektů soukromým investorům, kteří zajišťují veškerou obnovu objektů (často za pomoci fondů EU), tak Uherské Hradiště si velkou část využitelných budov ponechalo ve svém vlastnictví a za pomoci různých dotačních titulů (EU, MMR ČR) je samo zrevitalizovalo.

Obě města však spojuje především úspěšnost revitalizace bývalých kasáren. Ta je patrná především z výpovědí místních obyvatel dotazovaných v rámci dotazníkového šetření. V něm v obou případech cca 90 % respondentů hodnotilo současné využití areálů pozitivně. V rámci revitalizace těchto areálů vznikly a ještě dále vzniknou v obou městech desítky nových bytových jednotek. A v neposlední řadě je nutné zdůraznit ekonomický přínos těchto areálů, který vyplývá z vytvoření desítek nových pracovních míst, díky čemuž se do určité míry podařilo smazat i snížení počtu pracovních míst v důsledku odchodu armády.