

# NEW RURALISM AS AN INSPIRATION FOR CZECH RURAL PLANNING

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Theme of the dissertation: Village of 2050

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**ABSTRACT:** New Ruralism represents an effort to extend the familiar principles of New Urbanism to non-urban areas with an emphasis on farmland protection. Various sources dealing with New Ruralism (mainly from the North American context) were analyzed using the desk research method. The regulatory and economic instruments of land development were described in detail. Using the example of New Ruralism, it was shown that economic instruments can appropriately complement standard land-use planning instruments even in the case of rural and agricultural planning. This finding can be an inspiration for rural planning in our environment.

**KEY WORDS:** new ruralism, spatial planning, rural areas, regulatory and economic instruments

## Introduction

According to the United Nations projections (2019), two-thirds of the world's population will live in cities and urban regions by 2050. How will the remaining third live? In today's rural areas, we can identify problems and challenges, the solutions to which are in many cases beyond the capacity of existing spatial planning procedures. General concerns about the expansion of development and the loss of quality agricultural land are leading to the creation of innovative planning frameworks for sustainable development. One such framework is New Ruralism, which combines farmland pro-

tection with sustainable rural development. The American New Ruralism movement can also be simplistically understood as an effort to extend the familiar principles of New Urbanism to non-urban areas (Newman and Saginor, 2016).

The article explains the concept of New Ruralism, its main principles and tools. Since it is still an evolving concept with generally established principles and thus enough implementations cannot be evaluated, various sources dealing with New Ruralism (mainly from the North American environment) were analyzed using the desk research method. The research approach consisted of a comprehensive summary of what is known about New Ruralism and then answering the research questions: What is New Ruralism? Can some of the tools of New Ruralism be used in our environment?

## **A review of the literature**

The term “New Ruralism” was first used by William N. Ellis in 1977 in *The Futurist* magazine to describe the future of rural areas in an era of post-industrial technological change. The current meaning of New Ruralism refers to the sustainable development of rural areas and the protection of agricultural land from urbanization processes. In her manifesto, Kraus (2006) defines New Ruralism as a framework for preserving and enhancing the importance of urban fringes and rural areas that are indispensable to the economic, environmental, social, and cultural vitality of cities and metropolitan regions. Moffat (2006) is positive about the potential contribution of New Ruralism to rural development but warns of the risk of exploiting the popularity of the new movement without applying its basic principles and tenets.

Kraus (2006) sees New Ruralism as linking the principles of sustainable agriculture with the concept of New Urbanism, although the principles of New Urbanism cannot always be easily applied in a rural setting. Their common features are increasing density, mixed land use and an emphasis on minimising the taking of agricultural land for non-agricultural uses. Moffat (2006) sets out two guiding principles of New Ruralism. First, each rural area should have its own identity rooted in the economic, ecological, and cultural values of its surrounding environment. This identity would contribute to a wider perception of the area through local products, rural activities, distinctive landscapes, etc. Second, the main use of agricultural land should be small to medium-scale agriculture integrated with wildlife areas and the surrounding countryside.

## **Tools to promote the principles of New Ruralism**

The most common type of farmland protection is direct regulation through land-

use planning. Standard zoning tools allow local governments to regulate and restrict building height, size of buildings, location and use of structures, percentage of land development, etc. Agricultural Protection Zoning (APZ) preserves agricultural land by restricting non-agricultural land uses in designated areas. Only agricultural and related activities are allowed in Exclusive Agricultural Zones. In these zones, a minimum agricultural lot size (Large Lot Zoning) may be established to limit development and create sufficient space to meet the needs of farms.

In the North American environment, the use of market-based and economic land development tools to protect agricultural land and ensure sustainable rural development is under discussion (and in some places already applied). Agricultural zoning can thus be appropriately combined with, for example, the Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program (ACEPP). Local governments purchase agricultural conservation rights from farmers who thereby commit themselves to exclusive agricultural use of the land for a certain time. Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) is a voluntary program that compensates agricultural landowners for permanent restrictions (agricultural use conservation easements) on their land. Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a land-use planning tool that uses market mechanisms to extend concepts known primarily from emissions trading to the land-use sector. The owners of agricultural land in conservation areas can transfer development rights to developers who need to densify development in conservation areas. This allows farmers and farmland owners to financially value protected farmland. In several areas, lower property taxes are provided for agricultural land and open space land that is open to the public. These voluntary programs provide landowners with tax relief for land that is not developed but do not preclude the later sale of farmland for development..

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

New ruralism is based on the principle of sustainable land development, the provision of which is declared in our land-use planning. However, some of the objectives of sustainable land development have been slow and difficult to implement in local practice. Since the 1990s, spatial planning in the Czech Republic has focused mainly on the regulation of the functional use of land at the local level and thus covers only part of the management of spatial development (Maier, 2010). Recently, there has been a broad consensus that regulatory land-use planning tools can only be effective to a certain extent in protecting agricultural land from overdevelopment and in promoting the principles of sustainable development. Therefore, innovative approaches are sought that combine traditional land-use planning tools with other, most often market-oriented, and economic tools, e.g., Vejchodská, Felcman, and Šindlerová (2019).

Using the example of New Ruralism, it is shown that economic tools can complement standard spatial planning tools even in the case of planning rural areas where farmland protection is linked to sustainable agricultural development. This finding is a valuable contribution to further research on rural planning. Due to the limited scope of the article, not all aspects of New Ruralism (ecological aspects, sustainable forms of recreation, local food systems, educational programs, community aspects, participation of residents, etc.) and its limitations were discussed.

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