

## Sites without Awareness

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### Abstract

*The paper deals with the topic of searching for the strategy of architectural restoration of abandoned places in the landscape of the South Moravian border region. The chosen issue was explored in the form of an exploratory multi-case study, to which the principles of the research by design method were applied. Based on this process, we have defined five basic types of lost attachments of men to a site. All types were found in researched area. The work also proposes possible solutions for individual cases. The results are usable in the field of architecture for restoration of deprived places.*

**Keywords:** *baroque cultural landscape; heritage; monuments; small sacral architecture; restoration; revitalization; reanimation; place attachment; abandoned places; South Moravia.*

### Introduction

The chosen location is placed at border of South Moravia (Czech Republic) and Lower Austria in Central Europe. These are areas where two different cultural currents have merged and intertwined significantly in the border countryside. In the late 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Central European cultural landscape was shaped by powerful cultural and religious sentiment into a new economic, aesthetic and spiritual form, the shape of which still determines our cultural landscape, even if covered by deposits of later interventions and changes.

This landscape, delimited by the disasters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (World War II, expulsion of original German inhabitants, collectivisation of agriculture), has largely lost its historical memory. While the cultural landscape was a matter of course for Baroque man, its creator and steward, this active bond has weakened and most people enter the landscape as passive observers. Today's man is rather a visitor than an old settler and creator. That is why the rediscovery of contemporary man's relationship to the landscape, its rich history and specific aesthetics requires both the re-identification of fragments and remains of the former cultural landscape and the reinterpretation of its meaning for today (Homola et al. 2016).

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### Typology of Losses

Our research focuses on the loss or disruption of place attachment from an architectural perspective. In previous paper (Ponešová and Foretník 2018) we have tried to characterise the different types of attachment and to seek strategies for the restoration of these broken links. The meaning and character of each new place attachment have been considered, as well as scenarios for its further possible functioning over time. It should be remembered that new attachment has been formed on the basis of knowing how these attachments and sites functioned historically. Their "replication" was obviously not possible in many cases, but new projects often worked with or referred to the meaning or symbolism of the original site.

Gradually, we have realised 14 exploratory case studies. Having analysed them, their most significant common element is the ties of the inhabitants to a particular site, or their absence. It can be stated that it is missing place attachment that best define the "sites without awareness".

We have tried to define and characterise these attachments with our case studies. When describing them and looking for possible answers, we discovered a connection with the existing environmental-psychological concept of place attachment (Scannell and Gifford 2010 or Niesner 2014). Although our viewpoint as architects differs from that held by psychologists (being interested in the site as such rather than in an individual), we use the same terminology, especially the term "place attachment" itself.

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The following selection presents five definitions of the various losses we encountered in our previous research. The definitions are supplemented with recommendations for their elimination (therapies) and are presented as model cases. In this paper we provide wider variety and more deeply described model cases. The key for wider selection was to discover and describe two boundary solutions for each loss. Thus, it is possible to understand the whole variety of possible solutions.

## Loss of Form

### Definition

The site has lost its (architectural) form due to a natural disaster or human activities while its significance and function have been at least partly preserved. Some place attachments have suffered but many others remain. This is the simplest case in terms of the site's possible architectural restoration.

### Therapy

To find the existing attachments, supplement them with other possible functions and propose a suitable form given the intended use, significance and character of the site.

### Case studies

The loss of form is frequent in the South Moravian border area. It is often interconnected with other losses of place attachments. We have selected the projects of a new bridge near the village of Slup and the restoration of the defunct village of Ječmeniště as model cases. The original architectural form has been partially or completely destroyed in both localities, but the sites still work in the existing structure of social links. The model cases present two different approaches to the restoration of form: the return of the original structure to the site (though through a modern construction) or the insertion of a new form that indirectly refers to the original shape of the defunct village – through its meaning.

Other sites suffering from a loss of form we have encountered include the former Chapel of St. Roch on Liščí Hill near Dunajovice and the farmyard in Jaroslavice.

### Model Case 1: Bridge near Slup / Summer Semester 2015

#### Situation

The locality can be found between the villages of Slup and Valtrovice. To this day the place is used as a ford, mainly by farmers and tourists. There used to be a bridge, torn down by the flood in 1853. Its traces – the mound on the left bank – can still be found.

The assignment for the students was to design a bridge or a footbridge that would not disturb the natural character of the site. Water level fluctuations during spring floods had to be considered. The design has been consulted with Monik a Petříčková.

#### Project: Tensegrity Footbridge / Petra Buganska

*“I have designed a footbridge featuring a system based on the tensegrity structure. I have opted for this system for its optical lightness and the economic use of material... As the tension members of the structure are significantly less tangible, it may seem that the thrust members levitate over the river - as if the tree trunks in the floodplain rose above the water and continued to the other bank. The footbridge should serve pedestrians and cyclists...”* (author's project report)



Fig.1: Tensegrity Footbridge / Petra Buganska

*Other projects*

Other students (Jaroslav Matoušek and Tereza Novotná) who worked on the same assignment chose different structural systems but, like Petra Buganská, they tried to suppress the form itself. They did not restore the original function in its entirety but only as a footbridge. The newly proposed form does not refer to the original bridge, its shape or material.

**Model Case 2: Ječmeniště / Summer Semester 2014**

*Situation*

The topic for the Ječmeniště project was the village of the same name founded in 1787 and depopulated in the spring of 1952, then made part of the border zone and razed to the ground. The original chapel (now a listed monument, but dilapidated and unused) is its last remnant. The students were to search for new ways of reviving or recalling the sites. We addressed the loss of form and the loss of home (see below).

*Project: Ječmeniště / Norbert Obršál*

*“The open chapel welcomes us upon arrival in Ječmeniště. We enter. There are stairs inside; we climb them. A view of the former square opens upstairs, full of statues; we ask ourselves ... Where do so many statues come from and what has happened to the village? The only inhabitant and administrator patrols Ječmeniště at sunrise and sunset. A hermit who hides in the privacy of his home during the day.”* (author’s project report)

In his project, Norbert Obršál combines the site that has lost its form and statues that originally stood in the open landscape. He interlinks the fate of a defunct village with a story of sculptures that lost their places when small arable plots were consolidated and tracks ploughed up. Some of these statues were saved and gathered in church gardens. The arrangement of statues around the newly designed biotope resembles the plan of the original village.



Fig.2: Ječmeniště / Norbert Obršál

*Other projects*

Other students working on the same assignment did not work with the original form at all or only to a limited extent. They typically restored only the chapel and its bell tower. Additional projects working on the restoration of the loss of home and loss of spirituality in Ječmeniště are described below.

**Loss of Purpose**

**Definition**

A site loses its purpose either through moral obsolescence or by displacement of the indigenous population in the case of the border region. Loss of purpose is frequently accompanied by subsequent degradation of form.

**Therapy**

Based on a survey of functions already active or missing on the site, “attractors” should be introduced in the deprived site; i.e. additional features supported by the new form (even if only temporary in the first phase). It is also possible to use the strategy that functions that exist in the neighbourhood but in unsuitable facilities can be transferred and concentrated at the “treated” site.

**Case studies**

The site’s loss of purpose often means a gradual degradation of its form. We have found such abandoned complexes in both the heart of functioning communities and open landscapes. The selected projects demonstrate

two extreme approaches to site therapy: Finding a different purpose through incorporation of new features into the site or restoring its original function.

We have identified a loss of purpose quite often among the cases investigated: on the island of Portz Inzel, in the barns in Dyjákovice, at Devět Mlýnů, at the abandoned farms in Šatov and in the non-functional wine cellars in Seefeld-Kadolz. Loss of purpose could be mentioned even in other cases where other losses prevail, such as the former brickworks in Jaroslavice.

### **Model Case 1: Tasovický Mlýn / Summer Semester 2015**

#### *Situation*

The abandoned complex of the desolate mill (mlýn) is near the centre of Tasovice. Its history dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, while the oldest preserved parts are from the Renaissance. A fire in 2009 left most of the buildings roofless and major structures are missing or disintegrating. Having analysed the specifics of the community and the possibilities of the site's functional use, the students proposed several alternative scenarios for its renewal.

#### *Project: Tasovický Mlýn / Martin Surovec*

*"I reject 'neologisms' and significant interventions in the construction during the early stages of the project. Only the certainty of operation can justify distinct interventions in the structure. The idea that any treatment of the current state is an improvement is I believe untrue. The strategy motivated by doubt is based on a simple principle – the magnitude of intervention in a historically valuable structure is determined by the certainty of functionality of the embedded purpose and by the possibility of overlapping to the next phase. Randomness and uncertainty thus become part of the project. Knowing that development cannot be based on direct programming, I am after a tool where results are controlled by users."* (author's project report)

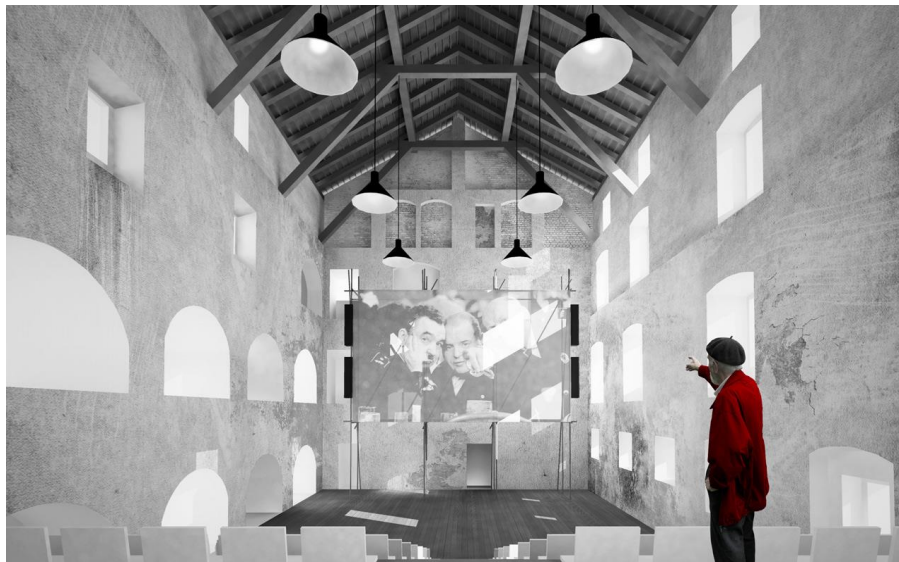


Fig.3: Tasovický Mlýn / Martin Surovec

#### *Other projects*

Martin Surovec like his classmates (Marie Brabcová and Jakub Stýblo) tried to restore purpose to the site by building a space that could host different functions in time – according to the wishes and needs of the local population. Only Antonín Popelka proposed restoring the original economic purpose by converting the mill to a brewery and craft workshops.

### **Model Case 2: Annahof / Summer Semester 2016**

#### *Situation*

Annahof (Ann's Farmyard) used to stand between the villages of Hevlín and Laa an der Thaya, near the state border. Only torsos have survived of the original three detached buildings. The assignment was to reanimate the original farm complex. In the first stage students were to find a suitable function to revive this completely degraded complex and then to design its specific architectural form.

#### *Project: Cannahof / Václav Mihola*

Václav Mihola, in his work, builds on the locality's agricultural tradition. He suggests growing and processing medical cannabis, which the site's remoteness and climate suits. The production of cannabis products would make it economically sustainable.



Fig.4: Cannahof / Václav Mihola

*Other projects*

Other projects developed for the site (Norbert Obršál, Jaroslav Matoušek, Tereza Novotná and Petra Buganská) worked with new functions of the site. They found new uses as a rentable tower (see below), a forest cemetery, a monastery/hospice and a climate research station. All projects responded to the site's remoteness giving it new completely different purposes to the original.

**Loss of Home**

*Definition*

Local inhabitants have disturbed their emotional attachments based on their rooting in the site. The sites are stripped of their regular rituals related to housing and the territorial behaviour of humans is disappearing.

*Therapy*

In the short term, form can be brought back to the site, highlighting its qualities and encouraging longer stays (of both locals and tourists). In the long term, sufficient success is the return of the locality into the consciousness of the locals, which may, over time, initiate a deeper interest in incorporating the site into considerations of their own territory.

*Case studies*

The loss of roots happened practically in all the cases investigated by us, due to the expulsion of the original German population 1945. The new population, moved in from the Slovácko region or from North Moravia, built its relationship to the locality rather slowly. The loss of social ties is still apparent in the border region. The case of a village razed to the ground for political reasons is an extreme example of the loss of home associated with the loss of form. Here again we offer two extremes of therapy: building either a temporary accommodation facility for newcomers (tourists) or a home with a new identity.

**Model Case 1: Ječmeniště / Summer Semester 2014**

*Situation*

See above.

*Project: Continuity Without Distance? / Tereza Novotná*

*"The characters of individual buildings refer to the layout archetypes of home (living room, study, bedroom, bathroom, observation room, kitchen with dining room and garden located in the original chapel). The*

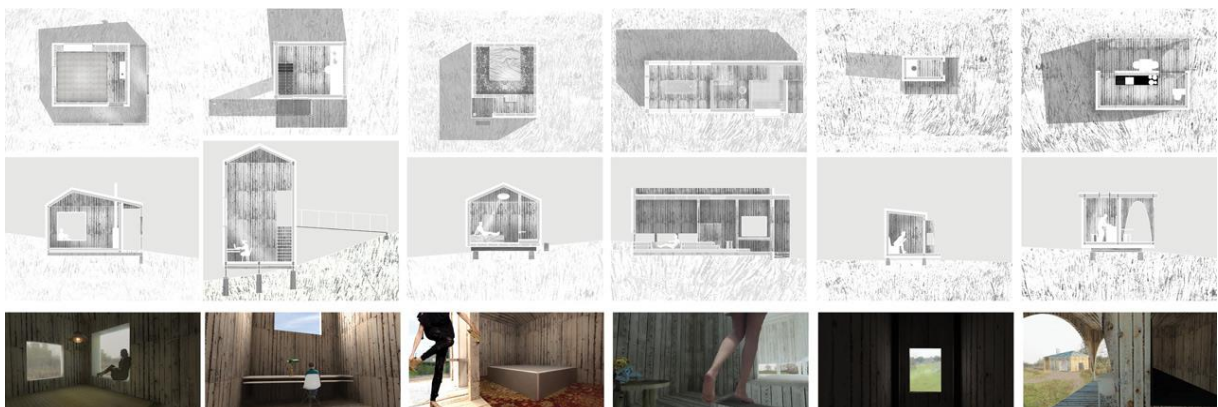


Fig.5: Continuity Without Distance? / Tereza Novotná

*guest enjoys not only the rooms but also the landscape between them and around them during the stay. The landscape becomes the corridor and the courtyard.*" (author's project report)

This interesting concept of Tereza Novotná redefines the residential function of the site. It creates a "minihotel"; the new typology derived from the site's character.

*Other projects*

Other projects on the given topic work with housing function restoration only to a limited extent (shelter for a hermit) or not at all. They find the spiritual significance of the chapel more important and that is what they develop (see below).

**Model Case 2: Infill Site in Mikulov / Summer Semester 2013**

*Situation*

The assignment has been a house embedded into a vacant gap (between houses Nos. 17 and 19) in the historical environment of the Jewish Town, Husova Street, Mikulov. The beginnings of Mikulov's Jewish community date back to the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Gradually it became one of the most important in Moravia which is why the institution of the Moravian rabbi was moved here in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The end of the Mikulov's Jewish community came with the Second World War, which only a handful of Jewish inhabitants survived, and the community was never restored.

*Project: Infill Site / Petra Šebová*

*"The design leaves half of the plot passable for the general public and interconnects Husova Street, the castle and the gardens below. This forms a space: private for its owners and semi-public for the inhabitants."* (author's project report)

The staircase to the castle can occasionally be used as an outdoor gallery allowing the display of works on the wall separating the passage from the private garden. From this perspective, the chosen solution is interesting in restoring the lost home by designing a house that maintains access for the public. This adds another dimension to the topic of creating home and its identity.

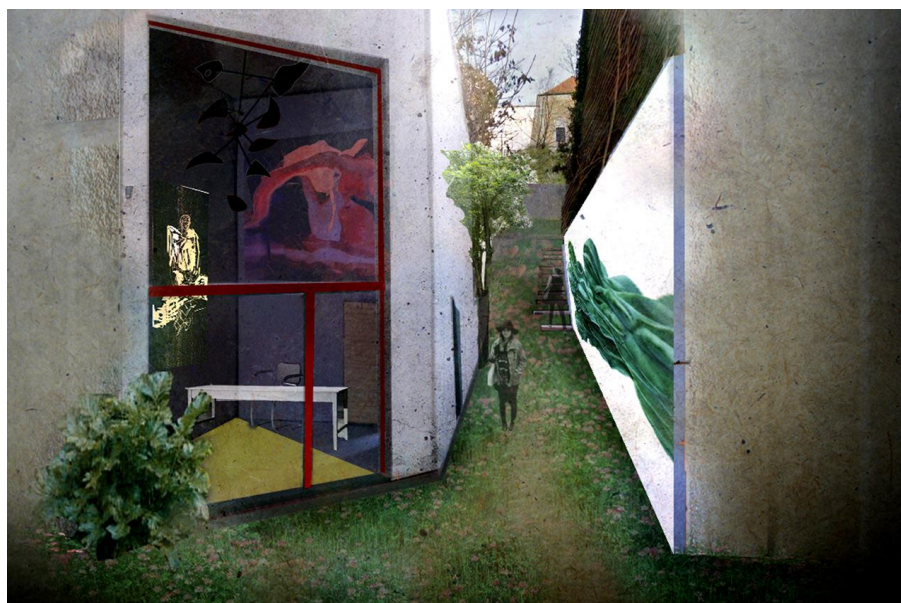


Fig.6: Infill Site / Petra Šebová

**Loss of Spirituality**

*Definition*

The spiritual significance of sites is disappearing as are religious rituals. Sacral architecture, as the formal framework of these activities, has been abandoned and is deteriorating. In some cases it has been completely destroyed by political decisions.

*Therapy*

The first impulse for site restoration is to remind people of not only spiritual but also cultural and historical significance. If the site is to become a scene of spiritual practice again, its form needs to reflect a wider spectrum of contemporary spiritual concepts.

### Case studies

Places that used to feature a chapel, a church, or a small sacral piece of architecture are quite common. These include Rochusberg where the chapel of St. Roch used to stand as well as the former chapel of St. Anthony of Padua of which only a torso has survived above the village of Perná. Somewhat different is the fate of the chapel in Ječmeniště, whose form has survived, but its religious function has not. Today it serves as a warehouse for a farming cooperative. The extinction of former pilgrimage routes is a special type of loss of spirituality in the landscape. Based on our research, we can see two ways to access the originally spiritual sites. Either to restore the former sacred building or to localise the spiritual experience in its access path ending at the original torso documenting the history of the site.

#### Model Case 1: Footprints in the Landscape / Winter Semester 2013

##### Situation

Rochusberg is a hill near the town of Dolní Dunajovice. The chapel of Saint Roch stood at its top from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Its form is not exactly known. It is reminded only by the torso of crucifix, destroyed probably by lightning.

##### Project: Chapel as the Way / Vojtěch Kolář

The *Chapel as the Way* refers to the original chapel of St. Roch. Its memento, however, is not literal. The author has installed several symbolic elements of typical chapel furniture along the historic path to the hilltop: a staircase (part of the entrance), a pew ( a place of rest and prayer), an ambo ( a pulpit for an imaginary dialogue in the landscape) and a prie-dieu (deepening personal spirituality under the cross). The limestone blocks of the furniture are figures of archetypal shapes. Their distribution refers to the tradition of small sacral architecture (shrines, wayside crosses and chapels) along pilgrimage routes. The fifth element should be the restored cross on the torso of the preserved plinth.



Fig.7: Chapel as the Way / Vojtěch Kolář (photo by Barbora Ponešová)

##### Other projects

Also remarkable are two student works dealing with the Rochusberg vicinity: *Imprint*, a project by David Helešic, who recreated an imaginary link between the original chapels of St. Roch and St. Anthony of Padua. This axis is defined by fourteen “imprints in the landscape” – concrete sculptures complemented by short-term land art installations of gold balloons during the holiday season. The other project is *Symbiont* by Lukáš Kvaššay, modifying the access path to the torso of the St. Anthony chapel near Perná. He left the chapel as a torso and placed a new structure on the access path. Thanks to this, incomers can leave the mood of an ordinary tourist path and prepare for a spiritual experience by passing through the structure.

#### Model Case 2: Ječmeniště / Summer Semester 2014

##### Situation

See above.

##### Project: Baptism / Petra Buganská

*“To forsake the past – not to forget, but to forgive; to reconcile with past events and to stop recalling them. Not to reopen old wounds. One period is over, something new is starting. To encourage a new beginning, the natural cycle of life. As when the green leaves of a sapling sprout on a dozing stump. It is about creating a new layer that is based on the original but brings its own content. This approach has a parallel in the Christian ritual of baptism.”* (author’s project report)

Despite a turbulent history, the student created a project that can become a new beginning for Ječmeniště. Symbolically, she chose the theme of baptism. The design consists of three parts: the repaired chapel serving its original purpose, a new outdoor baptismal font and a circular ambit that delimits the spiritual space while offering pilgrims shelter from rain or even for an overnight stay.

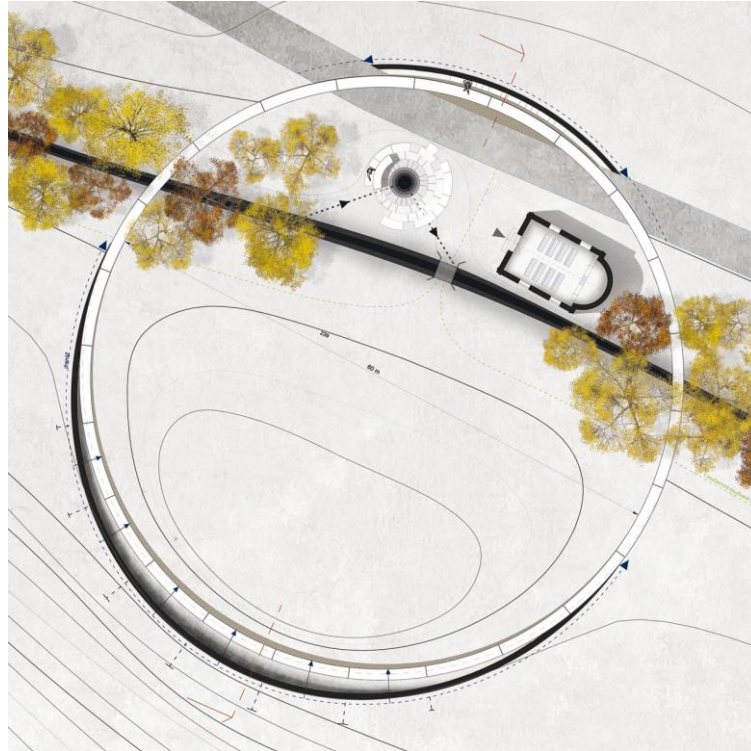


Fig.8: Baptism / Petra Buganská

## Loss of Life

### *Definition*

The site loses all meaning and form. It becomes a cultivated wilderness (within the meaning of Shephard, 1997).

### *Therapy*

To introduce a new function while recalling the original purpose. Isolation of a site may become a new quality. If a new function cannot be found or its return to the site is no longer possible, the extreme form of architecture can be considered: controlled extinction.

### **Case studies**

The loss of life can be documented in the defunct village of Ječmeniště and in the abandoned estate of Annahof. We have not encountered another extreme case of a completely abandoned site in the case studies. Paradoxically, we have found dead places within otherwise functioning communities (Tasovice or Jaroslavice). The model cases present again two opposite poles in thinking about a therapy for the lost life in a locality: Either the abandonment and the isolation of the site is perceived as a quality being developed by the new function, or it is desirable to re-activate the site using the functions in their original scope.

### **Model Case 1: Annahof / Summer Semester 2016**

#### *Situation*

See above.

#### *Project: Absolute Absence / Norbert Obršál*

*Absolute Absence* by Norbert Obršál is an academic consideration reflecting the author's thoughts on today's overly technological world. It is based on the thesis that in today's society "we are socially and professionally dependent on the Internet. Being offline and freed from technologies is becoming a new form of luxury." (author's project report). The completely abandoned and cut-off complex of Annahof was ideal for the author's pondering. The farmyard's own grounds are a formal transcription of this new luxury concept. It is a rediscovered Eden with a small orchard and a well. The centre of this garden hosts a residential tower. The user of the house (short-term tenant) is freed from all current technologies and his/her ritualised daily cycle is governed solely by the sun.



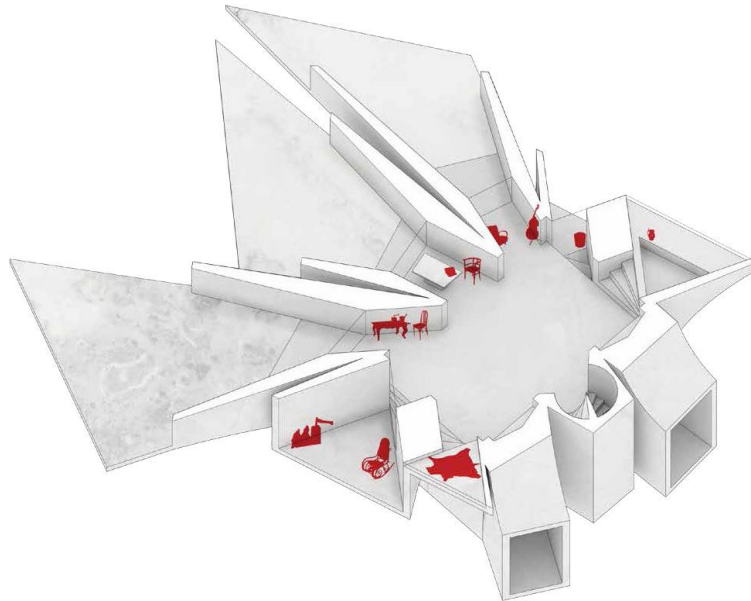


Fig.9: Absolute Absence / Norbert Obršál

**Model Case 2: Farmyard in Jaroslavice / Summer Semester 2018**

*Situation*

The complex of the former farmyard in Jaroslavice is located near the castle, north of the town centre. Nowadays, only fragments of the former extensive manor can be found on the grounds. Further east, open fields neighbour the plots. The presence of the strong vista of the castle and the proximity of the town centre make restoration of the form desirable. The proposal itself was preceded by an in-depth analysis of the region in order to find new features for this site. The students worked together for the first semester, then designed separately, but in such a way that their structure would fit the shared urban solution.

*Project: Agriculture: Research, School and Production / Veronika Dočekalová, Ivana Galková and Lucie Mrlinová*

*“The Institute for Soil Research and Protection, a specialised secondary school and the Regional Food Centre are situated on the grounds. All three follow the ground plan footprint of the original mansion buildings... The entire complex functions as an interconnected synergic system. Pupils will gain experience in research as well as by working in the fields and orchards. The Research Institute and the Food Centre will have a pool of temporary workers.” (authors’ project report)*

The students respected the original scale of buildings and the principle of country estates. The functions

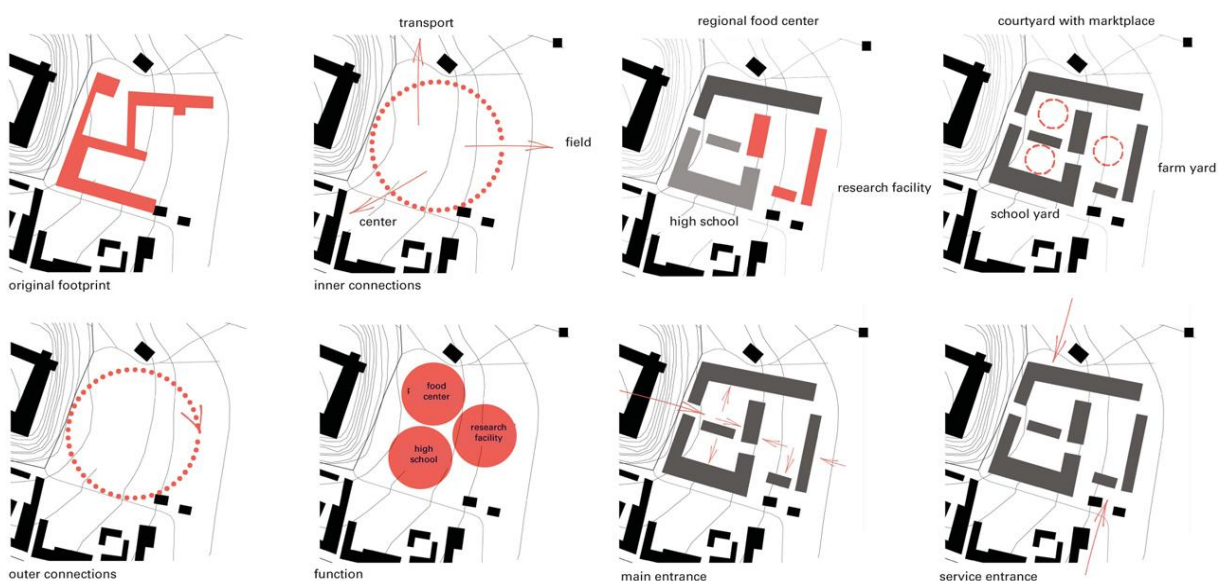


Fig.10: Agriculture: Research, School and Production / Veronika Dočekalová, Ivana Galková and Lucie Mrlinová

they chose after a profound analysis of the region are new in the location, but work synergically, just like the different facility buildings do. Other students working on the same assignment tested different options: they either situated the new buildings independently from the original footprint or imported the new function without any architectural form, as a park and an outdoor swimming pool. Of the above mentioned cases, the two extreme approaches worked best to restore life to the given location: re-installation of the original volumes or introduction of a purpose without the need for an architectural form.

### Conclusion

The outlined options are based on the cases investigated. The list is not exhaustive. Due to the length of the research and the number of cases, however, some generalisation may be considered, at least for the investigated area. Deeper discourse over wider selection of model cases has plagued us in the correctness of these options formulated of the previous paper. Important of this phase of research was to discover and describe the boundary solutions of these defined options.

The best verification of our conclusions would be practice. As of now, the *Chapel as the Way* is still the only implemented project. The first noticeable results can be observed there. Thanks to this intervention, both the local population and the tourists are more aware of Rochusberg. To our surprise, the *Chapel as the Way* has hosted several wedding ceremonies. The next step of the research might be to try to extend the boundary solutions, possibly also at different location.

We believe that conscious work with defined links to the site can significantly help in processing architectural tasks restoring deprived sites. We are convinced that awareness of and understanding the loss of place attachments and possibly a subsequent attempt to restore them (or to introduce new ones) will lead to viable results.



Fig.11: Wedding at Chapel as the Way (photo by Petr Hrubeš / Hary Marwell Photography)

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