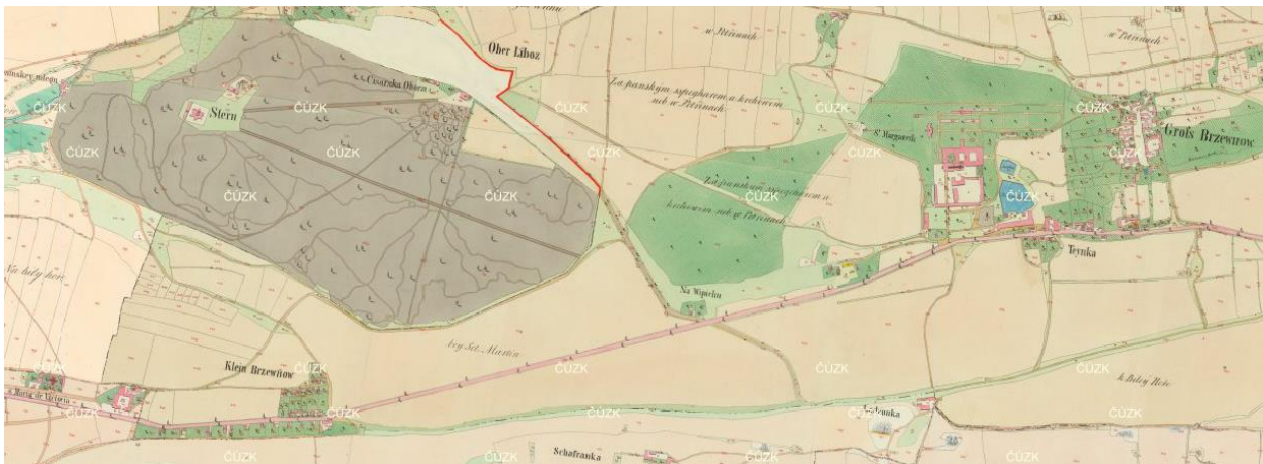


## 9 | BŘEVNOV – TRANSFORMATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL PERIPHERY INTO THE TOWN

Zuzana Kopecká



The current territory of Břevnov has developed from a rural settlement, to a suburban municipality, to being promoted to a town in 1907, to becoming part of the capital city of Prague (in 1922). It is one of the oldest districts in Prague. It was first mentioned in connection with the founding of the Benedictine monastery in 933. There were originally three rural villages on the territory of the present-day Břevnov: Velký Břevnov (with the Břevnov Monastery), Malý Břevnov and Tejnka, and a number of vineyard estates (Ryska, 2014a; Bělová, Kalašová, 2016). In its northern part, Břevnov adjoins a forest park, Hvězda (former game reserve and forest), located in Liboc. In the eastern part, there is the area of Strahov (the former area "Na Skalách", see Figures 9.1 and 9.2); the northern part is bordered by the area of Petřiny (Bělová, Kalašová, 2016).



**Figure 9.1:** Map of the Stable Cadastre from 1843 with the detail of the villages Malý and Velký Břevnov.

**Source:** ČÚZK (2020).



**Figure 9.2:** Map of the Stable Cadastre from 1843 with the detail of the villages Velký Břevnov, Tejnka and the former area "Na Skalách" (today's Strahov).

**Source:** ČÚZK (2020).

Břevnov has for a long time preserved its rural character with a number of smaller homesteads and agricultural landscapes, complemented by marl or sandstone quarries and brickyards (Bělová, Kalašová, 2016). Even today, the highest number of preserved homesteads in Prague can be found in Prague 6 (together with Prague 5) (Ryska, 2014e). However, at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the character of Břevnov gradually began to change and the urban forms of its development started to prevail (especially in the case of housing). In 1907, with Břevnov's promotion to a town, the transformation from rural to urban settlement was officially completed. In 1910, the first primary school with the adequate capacity was opened. In 1912, Břevnov even acquired its own "skyscraper". The so-called "Břevnov skyscraper" was a high apartment building built in the Art Nouveau style. It was supposed to become the core of a new residential area consisting of new apartment houses; however, the plan was not carried out. In 1923, a tram line was introduced to the territory of Břevnov (Ryska, 2014d; Bělová, Kalašová, 2016). In 1926, the construction of the Strahov Stadium, which can be considered as the most significant modern detached building in Břevnov, began. It was built for the VIII. All-Sokol Rally – a gathering of members of the Sokol movement accompanied by athletic and cultural events. According to some sources, it is the stadium with the largest area in the world (Ryska, 2015).

During the interwar period, the expansion of villa quarters prevailed, and at the same time the very first housing estate was built (the so-called *proto-housing estate*). This housing estate was built in the mid-1930s on a greenfield between the streets Bělohorská and today's Radimová. Between 1959 and 1965 the construction of a fairly extensive housing estate followed in the northwestern part of Břevnov. Another intervention into the urban structure of Břevnov was

the construction of Pionýrů Street (today's Patočkova) and the construction of a pre-fab housing estate for employees of the Ministry of the Interior (called "Na Obušku") in the 1970s. Political prisoners took part in the construction of that housing estate. Unfortunately, it led to the destruction of the original village square of Velký Břevnov, which was until then the main landmark reminiscent of the village character of the original settlement. Almost all buildings in Velký Břevnov, one of the original cores of the settlement, were demolished to free up space for the new housing estate. The construction of the busy street Pionýrů also divided the hitherto well-permeable Břevnov into two separate parts (Ryska, 2014c; Bělová, Kalašová, 2016). Since then, the urban structure of Břevnov has not undergone any significant changes.

### **Development of the number of inhabitants, houses and apartments**

The first significant increase in the number of houses, and of the population as well, can be observed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Bělová and Kalašová (2016), the population increase during this period can be attributed to the popularity of Břevnov, as a place favourable for living, whose inhabitants enjoyed healthy lives due to good environmental conditions. In 1890, the village of Tejnka was the most populous part of today's Břevnov (2,800 out of a total of 5,215 inhabitants lived there). Moreover, the key institutions such as the post office and trade union were located there. By 1907, the year of Břevnov's promotion to a town, its population had already grown to 9,000 inhabitants (Ryska, 2014a; Bělová, Kalašová, 2016).

The land reform taking place during the period of the First Republic was an important moment for the development of new housing construction on the territory of Břevnov. As a part of the land reform, agricultural land was released for construction purposes. Until then the land was predominantly owned by the Order of Saint Benedict based in the Břevnov Monastery (Bělová, Kalašová, 2016). In the 1920s and 1930s, development occurred at a rapid pace. Between 1921 and 1950, the population of the area of today's Břevnov increased more than twice, namely from 12,000 to 26,000 inhabitants. During this period the number of houses increased from 725 to 1,611.

Firstly, the vacated land started to be redeveloped by the local housing and construction cooperatives (e.g. "Náš Domov", "Nový Domov" and "Bílá Hora"). The development followed the principles of "garden cities" urbanism (Bělová, Kalašová, 2016). In the interwar period, the largest villa district in Břevnov was established (today's Velký Břevnov). The construction in this neighbourhood had to follow existing regulatory measures and was subject to uniform principles laid down by the urban plan. Most of the houses were standardised (mostly terraced houses or semi-detached houses), often in the style of Rondo Cubism (see Ryska, 2014b). In the 1920s and 1930s, another villa district emerged in the northeastern outskirts of Břevnov. It was named "Baterie" as a reminder of the presence of a Prussian artillery battery in the years

of 1744 and 1757. Thanks to its good view, which has been preserved up to this day, it was a strategically placed location (Karlíková, 2016).

In addition to the villa districts, the construction of tenement houses proceeded. The houses were built mostly in the style of geometric Art Nouveau. However, due to the crisis of the 1930s, which left the poorest inhabitants of Břevnov without a proper home, temporary dwellings started to emerge spontaneously. They were located mainly in the places of abandoned quarries. However, the extent of the temporary dwelling areas in Břevnov did not exceed the scope of the typical “slum districts” in Slatiny or Kotlaska (Ryska, 2014a, Bělová, Kalašová, 2016). Table 9.1 captures the settlement structure and shows the number of houses and inhabitants in individual parts of Břevnov. The data are based on the 1930 population census.

Settlement	Character	Number of houses	Population
Břevnov	district	776	16 009
Malý Břevnov	cluster of houses	76	1 199
Petřiny	cluster of houses	57	765
U Hvězdy	scattered houses	97	241
U Bývalé Radnice	colony, cluster of temporary dwellings	20	73
Vypich	cluster of houses	3	63
Na Bateriích	colony, cluster of temporary dwellings	7	30
Větrník	individual house	1	13
individual house	individual house	1	24
dispersed temporary dwellings	dispersed temporary dwellings	25	95
<b>Břevnov - total</b>	<b>district</b>	<b>1 063</b>	<b>18 512</b>

**Table 9.1:** Settlements forming the cadastral territory of Břevnov (Census 1930).

**Source:** Statistical Lexicon (1934).

During the following decades, the urban development of Břevnov was determined by the Regulatory Plan of Prague XVIII from 1936. Based on the plan, Prague’s first proto-housing estate<sup>1</sup> was built. It was a complex of small-scale buildings used as modern social housing (so called “obecnáky”) intended for poorer urban populations. It was built in the second half of the

<sup>1</sup> In the construction of the housing estate, the principles of prefabrication and standardisation were already employed, but the houses were built of bricks, using traditional craft methods.



1930s in the western part of Břevnov, above the street Bělohorská (Doudová, 2013; Bělová, Kalašová, 2016).

Thanks to the data on the average price of building plots (from 1939)<sup>2</sup> another interesting view on the spatial differentiation of the territory of Břevnov can be captured. The highest land prices were set for the area of today's urban district Nový Břevnov, i.e. for the area of tenement houses. Within the villa districts, the highest land prices were set up in the territory of Baterie and in the eastern part of the Tejnka (urban district Velký Břevnov). On the contrary, the land with the lowest prices was located mainly in the territory of the future housing estate Petřiny and in Strahov.

The last significant urban intervention in the Břevnov area was the construction of the Petřiny housing estate in 1965, which created a total of 4,313 apartments for 13,200 inhabitants (Kovaříková, 2015). In the 1970s, a much smaller housing estate was built in the area of the original village square of Velký Břevnov. In the following decades, with few exceptions, construction was carried out only in the form of individual houses. The only major newly built-up area is the western part of the urban district Velký Břevnov, where several dozen family houses were built in the 1990s and the eastern part of the Strahov district, where a residential project with a total of 11 three- to four-storey houses was completed in 2018.

In the 1970s and 1980s the process of demographic ageing began to manifest itself in the structure of the Břevnov's population. The proportion of older age groups began to increase, and the number of deaths exceeded the number of births. At the same time, because of the construction slowdown, the immigration rate was very low. As a result, the district's population decreased from 33,000 to 24,000 between 1970 and 2001. Since then, the population of Břevnov has been increasing again, especially in the last ten years. The increase is caused mainly by the positive migration rate, in which foreigners play a significant role (see below).

## **Development of the social environment and age structure**

Already at the time when today's Břevnov territory consisted of three rural municipalities, the population of workers was represented quite significantly. Compared to the central parts of Prague, the workers were represented in a smaller number (the majority of the population in the occupation of active workers lived in the inner city), but the relative representation was quite high (similarly in other suburban municipalities in the Prague's hinterland). Despite the distinctly agricultural character of Břevnov in 1869, the share of the working population was 78 percent (of the active population); the share of workers employed in industry, trade and transport in the working population reached almost 70 percent (see Moravcová, 1978).

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<sup>2</sup> IPR (2020).

According to Moravcová (1978, p. 80), in 1869, Břevnov could be described as a locality in which "traditional craftsmanship lived and the population was employed by some of the branches of the construction industry". Local brickyards, sandpits and marl quarries provided employment for many residents. Many trades and crafts were originally represented on the territory of Břevnov, e.g. pottery, furniture making and the most well-known furnace charging (see Bělová, Kalašová, 2016).

The municipalities of the present-day Břevnov served to some extent as a residential area for the population working in the adjacent district of Strahov, where jobs in construction, brickyards, traditional handicrafts and metal production were located (Moravcová, 1978). The relatively high share of the population working in industry, trade and transport can be seen as a signal of the starting transformation from the formerly rural area into the urban settlement. Following the social changes, the physical environment changed as well, and the new housing construction started to follow urban architecture forms (see Figure 9.3). Bělová and Kalašová (2016) state that for the "old" Břevnov neighbourly relations of a village character were typical, including everyday favours between neighbours. The original residents "welcomed" the newcomers who settled in the newly built houses with a distrust. However, even later on, Břevnov did not lose its agricultural character completely. Jiří Král (1947) included Břevnov among the territories of the type "residential and agricultural periphery in the transition, from place to place with industry".



**Figure 9.3:** A view of the tenement housing in the street 8. listopadu.  
**Source:** Bělová, Kalašová (2016).

In terms of the employment structure, Břevnov's relative position remained stable even in the 1920s and 1930s. At that time Břevnov was one of the territories with a relatively high representation of workers, especially in comparison with the inner-city districts. But it was still lower compared to neighbourhoods located in the outskirts of Prague (e.g. Prosek, Jinonice, Hloubětín, Motol) (see Moravcová, 1978, Špačková, Nemeškal, 2015). Julie Moschelesová (1937) included Břevnov among the territories with a "weak" social status (i.e. not "strong" as districts of the inner city, nor "very weak" as peripheral districts). According to Moravcová (1978), the increase in the representation of the working-class population in the peripheral areas of the city was caused mainly by the immigration of a non-Prague population.

Evaluation of housing conditions<sup>3</sup> provides a similar picture of the socio-spatial mosaic of Prague. In 1930 the number of inhabitants per one habitable room in Břevnov was higher than in inner-city districts, but lower than in districts lining the edge of Prague (see Kopecká, Nemeškal, 2015). Gradually, the number of inhabitants in non-manual occupations began to increase (Moravcová, 1978). In the 1970s, Břevnov was already one of the quarters with the lowest share of the working-class population (Špačková, Nemeškal, 2015).

Apart from the workers, the "wealthier" strata of the population found their home in Břevnov. They built their villas there already at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (see Boháč, 1976). The diverse urban fabric at the time, consisting of farmsteads, villas, tenement housing and slum dwellings, thus points to the diverse structure of Břevnov's population. Even up to this day, we can see how the characteristics of the residential areas (in terms of type of housing) are mirrored in the pattern of the socio-economic structure of the population. Hence, there are areas, e.g. housing estates or the urban district of the Strahov dormitory, with a higher representation of the population with a lower level of education. And there are also districts with a higher share of the population with a higher level of education, including Strahov district (with a high share of new construction) and some villa quarters (Malý Břevnov, Velký Břevnov, Na Větrníku and Kajetánka).

The current composition of Břevnov's population is influenced by the increasing share of incoming foreigners. According to the data of the ŘSP (2020), the share of foreigners in the total population of Břevnov was 16 percent (the Prague-wide share was 15 percent) in 2018. The most represented group is Russians, who accounted for 17 percent (exceeding the values in the Prague as a whole by 5 percentage points), followed by Slovaks (15 percent) and Ukrainians (14 percent, which is 11 percentage points less than in the Prague-wide population of foreigners). Within the Břevnov area, the highest concentration of foreigners (especially Russians and Vietnamese) can be found in localities with university dormitories, i.e. in Strahov and Kajetánka (see Přidalová, Klsák, 2017).

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<sup>3</sup> Based on the census of apartments in Prague in 1930.

The age structure of Břevnov's population has evolved over time. In 1930, younger age groups predominated. Later on, the proportion of the population aged 45 to 64 and 65 and above gradually began to increase, and the number of inhabitants aged 15 to 44 decreased significantly. The child population remained relatively stable. The position of this district within the city in terms of age structure was also changing. While in 1930, the age structure of Břevnov's population could be described as "younger," with a higher share of children (compared to other parts of Prague), in 1991 the child population was below average and all other age groups were above average. In 2001, the only age group that was above average was 65 and above. A slight rejuvenation was observed in 2011, but this may be due to the fact that students living in dormitories (Strahov, Na Větrník, Kajetánka) were included in the statistical evidence. If we look at the spatial distribution of the various age groups, we can see that the neighbourhoods with a younger population include those where the most new construction has been carried out during the last twenty years (urban districts of Velký Břevnov and Strahov) and also the district of Strahov dormitory (where mostly university students live). The higher proportion of the older population can be found, for example, in the districts of housing estates (Petržiny and Nový Břevnov).

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