

# Circular Villages: Reflections Based on a Global Comparative Analysis

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## 1 Introduction

This paper summarises the findings of a comparative analysis undertaken with a view towards a World Heritage nomination of the so-called *Rundling* villages in the Wendland, Germany. Compared with other similar rural settlement typologies these are characterised by equally approaching a round ground plan. The identified Outstanding Universal Value of the Wendland *Rundlinge* (see previous paper by Schmidt et al.) selected for World Heritage nomination derives from their settlement landscape and village typology. The typology developed over the centuries and today features a unique village footprint approaching a regular circular shape which extends radially

into the surrounding agricultural landscape with fan-shaped farmsteads. The villages' ground plan and harmonious appearance is significantly characterised by a small number of detached-standing vernacular hall houses, predominantly of the 18th and 19th centuries, whose decorated timber-frame gables are directed towards the open central village space. The site selected for nomination is composed exclusively of *Rundling* villages embedded in cultured farmland.<sup>1</sup>

Given that the settlement landscape and village typology were found to be the most outstanding features of the Wendland *Rundlinge*, a typological analysis is the centre piece of the comparative study and is synthesised in this paper. This study focuses on villages of more or less comparable settle-



Fig. 2.1 The Rundling village Satemin (©IHM, photographer: Eva Battis)



Fig. 2.2 The Rundling villages Schreyahn, Lensian and Ganse (©IHM, photographer: Eva Battis)

ment typologies. Architecture and rural surroundings are only touched upon for their share in defining the villages' appearance and setting. However, neither vernacular building types nor historic land parcel forms are discussed in detail. The authors acknowledge that this paper therefore reflects merely a section, although the central section, of a more holistic comparative analysis which was undertaken but cannot be fully reflected in the brevity of this paper.

The global examples of villages from prehistory to modern times serve to introduce the topic and to prove that more or less circular settlement forms are a global and timeless phenomenon in human history. The paper's main part then compares in more detail the Wendland *Rundlinge* with other preserved round villages in the medieval contact zone of Germans and Slavs in Central Europe, in so-called *Germania Slavica*.<sup>2</sup> The study thus encompasses a regional-chronological analysis, although the comparison to non-circular village types employed in the medieval colonisation processes in the German-Slavonic contact zone is left aside in this paper. Beyond their significance as a unique settlement and village typology, the Wendland *Rundlinge* are evidence of the medieval colonisation processes in Europe as much as they constitute Slavonic heritage. However, neither of these themes is comprehensively represented by the *Rundling* villages alone. Hence, a thematic comparison – the third framework employed in assessing the representativeness of the World

Heritage List by ICOMOS (ICOMOS 2005) – is of marginal importance and also excluded from this paper.

In undertaking the typological comparative analysis, the authors studied specialised literature and scholarly works in order to identify historical distribution areas of circular villages. Contemporary satellite images of those areas were essential for the identification of settlements that until today display a somewhat circular form or fragments thereof. Lastly, photo material and/or site visits additionally served to judge the appearance and overall state of conservation of villages that were compared.

## 2 Prehistoric settlements and villages of non-industrialised peoples

Among several examples of prehistoric settlements with a more or less circular ground plan the villages of the Tripillian culture are the oldest. The Tripillian people practiced agriculture and settled in the area of today's Ukraine during the New Stone Age. Similar to the Wendland *Rundlinge*, the Tripillian villages featured a circular ground plan, which was created by detached-standing longhouses with their gables directed to the settlement's open central space (Niemeier 1977, p. 44). However, while this settlement form is still thriving in the Wendland *Rundlinge*, prehistoric settlements

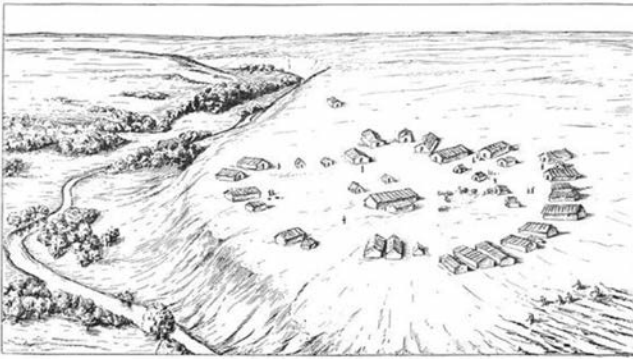


Fig. 2.3 Visualisation of Kolomischina (Source: T. S. Passek [1949] *The Periodization of Tripolije Settlements [3rd and 2nd millennia BCE]*, Fig. 71)

Fig. 2.4 Massai village in Ngorongoro, Tanzania, Africa (Source: Wikimedia Commons, photographer: David Berkowitz)

Fig. 2.5 The “Circulade” Aigne (© Eva Battis)

Fig. 2.6 The Baroque village Byšičky in Bohemia (Source: Wikimedia Commons, photographer: Petr Vilgus)

of circular or oval forms around the globe have only been archaeologically preserved.

The protective function, a matter of controversial discussion regarding the origins of the Wendland *Rundlinge*, is considered the prime reason for choosing a circular ground plan in the case of prehistoric villages. A surrounding palisade protecting against predators and human aggressors is for example archaeologically evidenced in the round villages of the Fort Ancient and Monongahela cultures, whose indigenous people settled in North America in the second millennium (Pauketat 2012, p. 300). Also most contemporary villages of non-industrialised peoples, particularly of Nomadic tribes like the African Massai, feature some sort of enclosure that at the same time serves to contain the villagers’ livestock overnight. In addition, the circular ground plan often fulfils social and spiritual functions, such as representing social hierarchies, family membership and cosmological beliefs. For example, such is the case in the villages of the South Brazilian Bororo, where the semicircles of the village are inhabited by members of two different tribes and the centre serves as a place for religious cults (Means 2007, p. 47). Cultic practices are historically documented also for the central space of the Wendland *Rundlinge* (Nitz 2004), while the highly communicative and integrating effect of the villages’ ground plan is still valued by their inhabitants today.

Unlike the preserved *Rundlinge* in Central Europe, however, villages of non-industrialised peoples – both contemporary and prehistoric – are usually only temporally occupied and therefore mostly display a simple, hut-like architecture. The varying architectural features and differences in the historic and cultural as well as the geographic contexts cause the significant distinction in typology and appearance of this type of villages from the *Rundlinge*.

### 3 Circular settlements of the medieval and modern eras

Circular typologies also occur in various permanent settlements dating from the Middle Ages to modern times. Prominent examples are the so-called *Circulades* in Southern France. The term is a neologism from the 1990s suggesting that the several dozens of such villages in the Languedoc Roussillon represent one typology of settlement (Pawlowski 1992). However, the hypothesis of a common genesis dating back to Gallo-Roman origins appears to be scientifically supported only for some of the villages (Baudreu 2003). A recurrent feature of the villages in question is a roundish settlement plan usually formed by concentric rings of dwellings, of which the outer one takes up the function of an enclosing wall. The attached masonry buildings hence create a defensive character. Curved alleyways usually lead to an enclosed central space which is either void or occupied by a church or chateau-fort. All these features clearly differentiate the *Circulades* from the Wendland *Rundlinge*.

Geographically and typologically closer, yet also distinct are circular terp mound villages (*Rundwarftendörfer*) in Northern Germany. Built on artificial mounds protecting against floods,

these settlements are believed to date back to the rise of the sea level around 300 BC. The most famous example is Rysum located with a diameter of 400 metres at six metres height from the surrounding landscape (Quistorp 2009). The larger settlement plan which is more densely built up and holds a central church as well as the settlement's elevated position in the landscape and the different local architecture are all distinctive features.<sup>3</sup>

A small village that could in form and appearance be confounded with medieval villages of *Germania Slavica* despite a very different origin is Byšičky in the Czech Republic. However, Byšičky was only planned and founded in 1717 by Count Frantisek Antonin Spork and is one of the best preserved Czech Baroque villages. Other examples of Baroque villages, which rulers across Europe laid out and constructed in a perfectly circular shape, are the Polish Paproć Duża, founded by German settlers in 1800 under the name Königshuld, and Charlottenburg (also Šarlota and Saroltavár), equally of German origin from 1771 in the historic landscape of Banat in today's Romania. The latter two Baroque examples do not only differ in origin and architectural features from the Wendland *Rundlinge*, but also in their ground plans. While the fan-shaped farmsteads radiating into the landscape in the case of Charlottenburg exceed those in the Wendland, in both cases the circle of buildings accompanying a ring road is of such diameter that one can hardly sense the circular space on the ground.

Comparable in its shape to the Baroque villages and less to the Wendland *Rundlinge* is the Moshaw Nahalal in Israel. Inspired from Ebenezer Howard's Garden City concept and founded in 1921, it is one example of modern planned communal settlements with roundish ground plan. Here again, the wide oval ring road and wedge-shaped land parcels extending far into the landscape are mainly perceivable in aerial views of the settlement. The moshaw is on Israel's Tentative List for World Heritage, together with other early Kibbutzim. The only somewhat circular settlements currently on the World Heritage List are some of the Chinese Fujian Tulou, which in fact represent a large type of vernacular courtyard house rather than a village, and the horseshoe-shaped *Hufeisensiedlung* of the Berlin Modernism Housing Estates. Neither site is comparable to the Wendland *Rundlinge*.

#### 4 Circular settlements of *Germania Slavica*

The *Rundling* villages in the Wendland as well as related village types approaching a circular ground plan within *Germania Slavica* are considered a typical early settlement form of the medieval colonisation processes. Rulers across Central Europe urbanised little or unpopulated areas by founding villages and towns often with settlers invited from other overpopulated areas. The colonisation processes differed from region to region. However, wherever German and Slavonic tribes met or mingled, small circular or rather originally horseshoe-shaped villages were common.<sup>4</sup> By far the majority of the circular villages and hamlets carried names of Slavonic origin. This still applies to almost all preserved roundish vil-

lages or fragments thereof that were identified when the comparative analysis for the Wendland *Rundlinge* was carried out. The dark yellow areas in Fig. 2.7 indicate areas where such contemporary settlement traces were found in higher density. The lighter yellow parts mark areas where roundish settlement remains occur widely dispersed or isolated.

Scholars agree that the *Rundlinge* in the Wendland (marked in red in the second map) are the most perfectly shaped, best preserved and most impressive circular villages in *Germania Slavica*. The purpose of presenting the following small selection of settlements that were compared to the Wendland *Rundlinge* is to illustrate this fact.

The *Rundling* relicts most relevant for comparison are those located closest to the Wendland, given that the local landscape and the cultural-historical context play an important role in shaping the settlements' characteristics. For example, local variants of the lower German hallhouse (*Niederdeutsches Hallenhaus*) comparable to those characterising the Wendland *Rundlinge* would be the typical vernacular building tradition in many villages of adjacent distribution areas of circular settlements.

The relict areas in Lower Saxony extend westwards from the Wendland, however, in decreasing density of former *Rundling* settlements, as well as eastwards into western parts of Brandenburg. Dispersed examples can be found in areas reaching up north to Lübeck in Schleswig-Holstein and southwards to

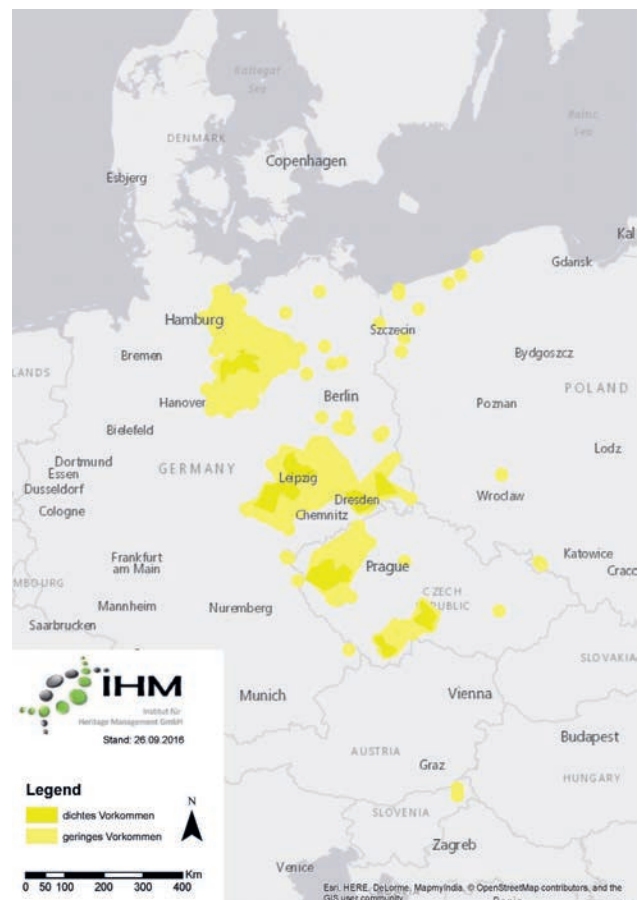


Fig. 2.7 Relict areas of circular settlements in *Germania Slavica* (© IHM)

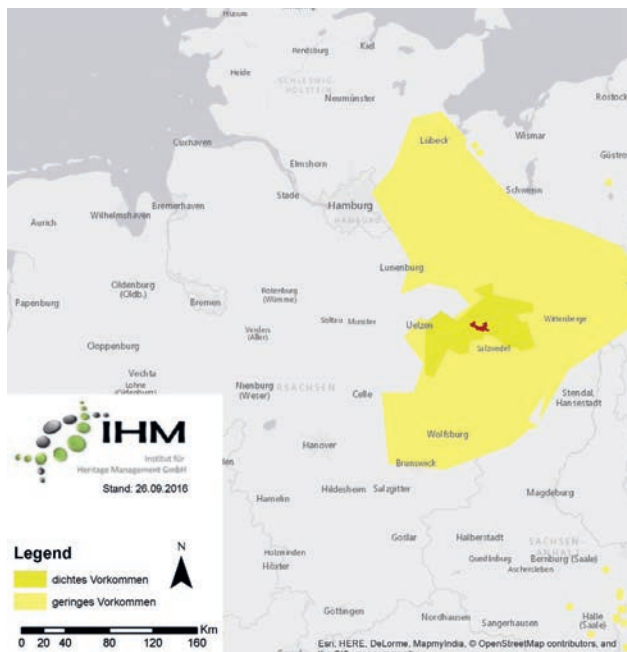


Fig. 2.8 The Hanoverian Wendland (red) and adjacent relic areas of circular settlements (© IHM)

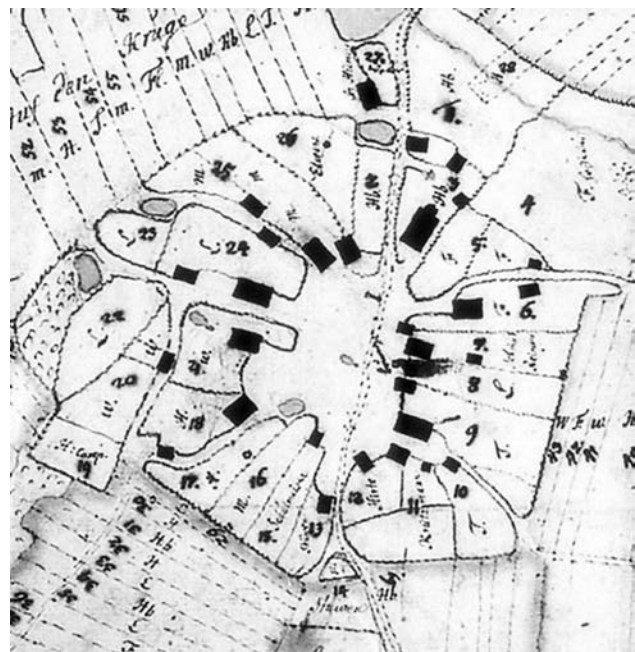


Fig. 2.9 Historic land register map of Kankelau, 1751 (Source: <http://www.amt-schwarzenbek-land.de>)

Braunschweig. The majority of these villages are significantly modified. Bockholt (52°53'11.42"N, 10°47'12.04"E) is a better example in the county of Uelzen, adjacent to Lüchow-Dannenberg. It has preserved a circular settlement shape despite architectural modifications. Hohenbostel (53°9'9.51"N, 10°28'40.65"E), on the contrary, is one of the few remains of an early distribution area of *Rundlinge* near Lüneburg. Like many other *Rundlinge*, it has been significantly extended. In the city of Wolfsburg, the remains of the *Rundling* villages Brackstedt (52°28'34.59"N, 10°45'55.31"E) and Rühren (52°29'2.09"N, 10°53'4.19"E) have merged with the larger urban area. Very little has been preserved in the adjacent historic distribution areas formerly reaching up north to the sea. Located adjacent to the Wendland, the area called Mecklenburgische Jabelheide was equally inhabited by Slavic Wends for a long time (Hardt, 2004, p. 74). According to Krenzlin, the processes in which *Rundlinge* came into being in the 12th

century in the Jabelheide are comparable to those in the Wendland as well as in the so-called Prignitz in the state of Brandenburg (Krenzlin 1983, p. 17). However, both in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and in Brandenburg few traces thereof are found today.

The best example in Schleswig-Holstein is Kankelau (53°32'58.44"N, 10°34'4.08"E), which has preserved its historic ground plan but maintained only two vernacular hall houses. The selected Wendland *Rundlinge*, on the contrary, consist predominantly if not exclusively of historic vernacular buildings. Hence, no area in Lower Saxony or in neighbouring regions was identified that features such well-preserved *Rundlinge* and certainly not in such density as in the Wendland. After Lower Saxony, most villages approaching a circular form were identified in the federal state of Saxony. Villages of this kind were predominant in the former Slavonic settlement areas of Saxony and have in considerable number been



Fig. 2.10 Seegel (© IHM, photographer: Eva Battis)



Fig. 2.11 Muschlerna (© IHM, photographer: Eva Battis)

preserved in areas extending from the Vogtland via Leipzig to Upper Lusatia.<sup>5</sup> However, few of these villages are well preserved. In addition, they differ significantly in typology from the *Rundlinge* in the Wendland as the following selection of examples illustrates. Karlheinz Blaschke categorised the Saxonian villages in 1957 and divided those that are related to the Wendland *Rundlinge* for the polar arrangement of their farmsteads into various typologies. He differentiated between the small roundish *Sackgassendörfer*, the *Gassendörfer* of rather rectangular ground plan and the larger, more regular *Rundangerdörfer*. None of these villages are as regularly shaped as the Wendland villages – a fact that H.-J. Nitz explains with their supposed older Slavonic origin (Nitz 2004).

The four villages of Löben (Pegau) (51°12'42.34"N, 12°14'21.79"E), Scheidens (51°12'27.08"N, 12°14'41.27"E), Peißen (51°12'17.97"N, 12°14'26.04"E) and Seegel (51°12'8.94"N, 12°14'25.99"E), located in close vicinity to each other in an agricultural area south of Leipzig, were affiliated to the town and monastery of Pegau and belonged to the realm of Wiprecht of Groitzsch – Margrave of Meißen and the Saxon Ostmark from 1123. The cluster of villages looks promising from an aerial view as heritage of this era, but is rather disappointing on the ground. The villages show quite a poor state of conservation in terms of architectural quality and homogeneity, as the image of Seegel illustrates, while in Peißen it is impossible to even sense a circular arrangement on the ground.

The case is similar in the agglomeration of roundish villages identified north of Leipzig. The local vernacular building stock, which differs fundamentally from that in the Wendland, has largely disappeared or was found in a state of advanced deterioration, as in the case of Mutschlena (51°26'18.20"N, 12°29'39.44"E). Adjacent Gottscheina (51°25'35.01"N, 12°28'53.53"E) is an example where remains of a historic mud wall have been preserved, which used to surround the village and accompany a water mound and which constitutes another distinctive feature of the Wendland *Rundlinge*.

Better preserved villages with a polar arrangement of farmsteads and historic masonry or timber-frame farmhouses are found in the city and surroundings of Dresden. Some are designated ensembles and charming in a way. However, the villages can neither compete in spatial and architectural quality nor in quantity per area with the selected *Rundlinge* in the Wendland.

The most circular groundplan was identified in a former Slavonic fishing village, now called Am Kreis (51° 5'48.04"N, 13°40'26.11"E). A map from the 19th century shows this *Rundplatzdorf* (Blaschke 1957) with a clear horse-shoe-shape opening to the banks of the river Elbe. This arrangement has been well preserved, although the historic village today blends into the urban area of the city of Radebeul. The majority of buildings are front-gabled and of the local vernacular type. Nevertheless, the village hardly competes with the selected Wendland *Rundlinge* in terms of its state of conservation and aesthetic and spatial quality.

In comparison, Altzitschewig (51° 7'5.88"N, 13°36'14.59"E), which is also located in the urban area of Radebeul, is an ar-



Fig. 2.12 a–b Historic land register map of 1893 (Source: Detail from the *sächsische Äquidistantenkarte* of 1893, Blatt 66, Section Dresden) and contemporary photo of the village core Am Kreis (Radebeul) (© IHM, photographer: Eva Battis)

Fig. 2.13 Contemporary aerial view of Altzitschewig (Radebeul) (Source: Google Maps, under principles of "fair use")

chitecturally pleasant village with many well-kept vernacular two-sided farm-buildings from the 19th century and featuring a single access street to its central square. The situation is similar in Altmickten (51° 4'25.81"N, 13°42'1.81"E) which is located in the urban area of Dresden and today has two access streets. However, both villages are *Platzdörfer* with a self-contained rectangular rather than a circular central open space and ground plan.



Fig. 2.14 Borthen (© IHM, photographer: Eva Battis)  
 Fig. 2.15 a–b Historic settlement plan (Source: Jacobi, 1845, Fig. 2) and contemporary aerial view of Zagkwitz (Source: Google Maps, under principles of “fair use”)

Most villages in distribution areas located south of the Wendland that have preserved vernacular architecture consist of two-, three-, or four-sided farmhouses, which define the settlements’ clear inner and outer spatial borders. The farmhouses are usually built attached to each other and the farmyards are walled off from the village square. Hence, a self-contained inner village space is created. The Wendland *Rundlinge*, on the contrary, consist of detached hall-houses and auxiliary buildings positioned individually in the outer parts of the farmsteads. In consequence, a permeable ring of detached farmhouses defines the circular village space of the

*Rundlinge*, thus maintaining spatial continuity and visual connectivity to the surrounding landscape.

An enclosed, yet irregularly shaped central space and ground plan are found in several smaller hamlets in agricultural plains surrounding the city of Dresden. Brabschütz (51° 4’12.40”N, 13°37’16.14”E), Merbitz (51° 4’3.23”N, 13°38’24.26”E) and Altmobschatz (51° 4’33.07”N, 13°38’36.92”E) for example have ground plans of irregular roundish, oval or horseshoe shape, which are more or less perceivable on the ground.

A typical feature found in many circular villages is a central fire-fighting pond. That is also the case in several *Radial-hufendöfer* – villages with radial hives created by forest clearance – in an area close to Pirna, where throughout history dependency shifted between the margraves of Meißen and the kings of Bohemia. Six villages, historically affiliated to the medieval city of Dohna, were studied in greater detail in this area. One of the most pleasant examples is Borthen (50°58’12.91”N, 13°48’9.13”E), which has however been extended beyond its oval historic core (see Figure 2.14). In Dohma-Goes (50°55’42.21”N, 13°56’44.00”E), originally in an open horseshoe shape, the central pond is of such size that it dominates the village.

Central ponds are also typical in the southern distribution areas extending to Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia. Many villages here were founded in valley heads holding a spring – a topographical feature clearly different from the Wendland *Rundlinge*. One of the most impressive examples in Saxony-Anhalt is Großwilsdorf (51°10’55.39”N, 11°45’6.16”E). The gables of the tear-shaped village are all directed towards the settlement’s entrance. In Külso (51°52’4.00”N, 12°46’55.82”E), like in several other relict circular villages east of Lutherstadt Wittenberg, the four-sided farmsteads do not face the centre with their gables, but with their eaves. This creates a settlement-scape that differs more significantly from the *Rundlinge* in the Wendland. This is partly also the case in the much larger village of Tiefengruben (50°53’50.84”N, 11°13’53.42”E), which has the reputation of being the most impressive *Platzdorf* in Thuringia. Here, the attached-built farmsteads create a defensive settlement character, although the outer gardens are reminiscent of those in the Wendland. The large central village space in Tiefengruben, like in many compared villages, is not empty but holds a church and several other buildings. The Wendland *Rundlinge*, on the contrary, do not typically feature any churches, unless added on the outskirts during the late Christianisation process of this area (Meibeyer 2004, p. 89).

Yet another typology, which was considered for comparison in the study despite its irregular plan, are hamlets composed of few freestanding four-sided farmsteads arranged around one centre. Out of 13 preserved examples in Eastern Thuringia (Schmidt 2004), Reinsdorf (50°40’49.28”N, 11°50’53.30”E) (Saale-Orla Kreis) and Zagkwitz (50°53’37.47”N, 12°17’45.27”E) (Altenburger Land) can serve as examples with seven farmsteads each. Despite continuous change, the village plan of Zagkwitz is still similar to its form documented by V. Jacobi in the 19th century (Jacobi 1845, p. 9; see Fig. 2.15). The occurrence of circular villages decreases further south. Some comparable small villages of irregular yet polar



Fig. 2.16 a–b Photo (Source: Aktron / Wikimedia Commons) and contemporary aerial view of Kojšovice (Source: Google Maps, under principles of “fair use”)

composition are found in the Franconian part of Northern Bavaria, which supposedly originate from Slavonic hamlets (Nitz, 1991, p. 129). An illustrative example is Dobrigau (49°56'9.31"N, 12°17'20.33"E). Of more circular shape are a few *Radialhufendörfer* dispersed in Bavaria, such as Matzersreuth (49°52'28.78"N, 12°22'46.00"E). More impressive than the villages in the cases of such *Radialhufendörfer* are the radial land parcels differing typologically from the linear historic land parcels of the Wendland (Meibeyer, 1964). In the most southern tip of the study area, on the border between Austria and Slovenia, in historic Lower Styria (Untersteiermark) no more than three relict circular villages were found. The transformation of the historic ground plan seems further advanced in the Slovenian village of Dragotinci (46°34'57.54"N, 16°1'55.56"E) than in the Austrian examples of Zelting (46°42'23.67"N, 16°1'30.97"E) and Sichelndorf (46°40'42.44"N, 16°1'55.72"E).

According to the studies of Bogdan Zaborski, Halina Szulc, Franz Engel und Herbert Schlenger, the distribution area of circular villages historically reached eastwards up to Pomerania and Silesia in Poland. Hardly any remains of former circular villages studied by these scholars were identified. Two exceptions are Księżę Pole (50°6'32.33"N, 17°57'55.30"E) and Domanowice (51°24'33.77"N, 17°3'1.80"E) where, however, the fan-shaped land parcels are better preserved than the historic villages.

Lastly, the Czech Republic, more specifically Bohemia, has a much richer heritage in circular villages. Several areas with a rather high density of villages of this kind testify to the inner colonisation under the dynasty of the Přemyslides in the 9th and 10th centuries and to later settlement extensions, including western settlers under the Bohemian kings. However, most Czech villages, like the Saxon examples, are typologically distinct from the *Rundlinge* in the Wendland and generally less preserved. Kojšovice (50°4'55.30"N, 13°0'28.09"E) is one of the more attractive examples within a rather dense distribution area in the surroundings of the monastery of Tepla. Like most circular villages in the Czech Republic, it belongs to the typology of *Radialhufendörfer* created by forest clearance. While Kojšovice has lost its radial forest heads, it has preserved its lens-shaped ground plan holding a central lake and chapel. In other places, only the radial forest heads indicate the former existence of villages in their centre. They have entirely disappeared (e.g. 48°55'52.05"N, 14°4'44.00"E and 48°58'58.93"N, 13°53'2.89"E).

*Platzdörfer* with a central square are numerous in Bohemia. However, many have a rectangular rather than a circular form. A good example of an oval form is Plešovice (48°51'48.25"N, 14°21'11.29"E) north-east of Cesky Krumlov. A horseshoe-shaped example is Mažice (49°12'46.67"N, 14°36'39.00"E), which is characterised by vernacular southern Bohemian folk Baroque architecture.

The most attractive and best preserved Czech *Platzdorf* with this kind of architecture from the 18th and 19th centuries is already on the World Heritage List: Holašovice (48°58'8.86"N, 14°16'21.19"E). It was inscribed on the basis of criteria (ii) and (iv) for its vernacular buildings and as an excellently preserved traditional rural settlement in Central Europe. With 210 x 70 metres, the rectangular central square is particularly large. It is surrounded by three-sided farmsteads built attached to each other. The centre is empty apart from a small pond and three buildings, including a chapel (Czech Republic 1997). Among all World Heritage sites, Holašovice is most comparable to the *Rundlinge* in the Wendland, because it is a rural settlement of the German-Slavonic contact zone with a central square. However, with its large, clearly rectangular shape and closed spatial configuration it clearly represents a different settlement typology than the *Rundlinge* in the Wendland.



Fig. 2.17 Holašovice in Bohemia (Source: Sgbeer/ Wikimedia Commons)



## 5 Conclusion

The *Rundlinge* in the Wendland constitute a unique typology of circular villages that emerged in the medieval German-Slavonic contact zone and developed its characteristics until the 19th century. Villages of related typologies, yet with different local spatial and architectural features, are at times well preserved individually or in groups in other places throughout *Germania Slavica*. However, the Wendland displays an incomparable quantity, density and exclusiveness of circular villages which have preserved their extraordinary spatial and architectural qualities to date. No rural settlement area of circular villages comparable to the Wendland is inscribed on the World Heritage List or has been identified to exist in general.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The complete comparative analysis encompasses a justification of the restriction to a nomination area composed of 19 *Rundling* villages in the Wendland. Explaining the selection lies beyond the scope of this paper.
- <sup>2</sup> The term was coined by the historian Wolfgang H. Fritze. Slavic scientists alternatively derived the term *Slavia Germanica* for the eastern areas of the contact zone.
- <sup>3</sup> In the Wendland, so-called *Wurtenrundlinge* are a special, though not representative type of *Rundlinge* founded on terp mounds in the flood plains of the rivers Jeetzel und Elbe, which were later drained (Schulz 1979).
- <sup>4</sup> Meibeyer traced in great detail the development of the Wendland *Rundlinge* from their original horseshoe-shaped ground plan to an almost perfect circular form over the centuries that followed their beginnings in the 12th century (Meibeyer 1964).
- <sup>5</sup> The term *Rundling* for circular village types of medieval origin along the *Limes Sorabicus* was coined in the 19th century by the agronomist Victor Jacobi (Jacobi 1845).
- <sup>6</sup> The area of Upper Lusatia in Saxony, which was already inhabited by Slavic tribes in the 9th and 10th centuries (Higounet 1986, p. 117), has preserved a strong Slavic minority – the Sorbs. While their living cultural heritage, particularly the Sorbic language, has survived to this day, few fragments of circular settlements can be found here. The case appears similar in Lower Lusatia in the federal state of Brandenburg.