



*Governing Urban Diversity:
Creating Social Cohesion, Social Mobility and Economic Performance in Today's Hyper-diversified Cities*

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1. Introduction

In writings on European cities a growing conventional wisdom is to present them as centres of 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007). This refers specifically to the increasing ethnic diversity, and to the demographic diversity between, as well as within such ethnic groups. Cities, however, are becoming increasingly diverse not only in socio-economic, social and ethnic terms, but also with respect to lifestyles, attitudes and activities. To indicate this multifaceted diversity, we introduce the term hyper-diversity (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013).

Within cities, social groups can be segregated or relatively intermixed. Urban neighbourhoods may consist of fairly homogenous residential areas in terms of housing and population, but they may also be considerably diverse with respect to types of housing (tenure, price) and population categories (income, ethnicity, household composition, age). In addition, individuals who belong to the same formal demographic category may unveil quite different lifestyles and attitudes, and become involved in differing activities. The latter may be predominately neighbourhood-oriented or extending over the whole city or beyond (op. cit.).

In this project, we aim to find out how urban hyper-diversity affects social cohesion and social mobility of residents in deprived and, at the same time dynamic urban areas; and how it impacts on economic performance of entrepreneurs who conduct their activities in such areas. In the report we focus on the findings from interviews with residents in socially diverse urban areas. We explore their experiences of living with hyper-diversity and the way it affects their lives.

This general aim can be broken down into more detailed and specific research questions. These include the following:

1. Why do people move to the diverse area they live in at present? To what extent does the diversity of the area represent a pull factor? Or, have other alternative aspects (such as the availability of inexpensive dwellings) been a stronger motive to settle in the area? (Chapter 3)
2. What do residents think about the area they live in? Do they see the neighbourhood's diversity as an asset or a liability? (Chapter 4)
3. How do residents make use of the diversified area they live in? Do they actively engage in relations and activities within the neighbourhood? To what extent is the area they live in more important than other areas in terms of such activities? (Chapter 5)
4. To what extent is the diversity of the residential area important for social cohesion? Which factors seem to foster, and which may be seen as hindering the development of social cohesion in the area? (Chapter 6)
5. How does the diversity of the neighbourhood affect social mobility? Which factors may be found to encourage, and which may be interpreted as hampering social mobility? (Chapter 7)
6. How are diversity-related policies perceived by the inhabitants of the area? (Chapter 8)

This report focuses on the city of Warsaw. The city has currently 1 724 404 (2013) inhabitants. Warsaw may be considered diverse in terms of its population, which results from the transforming economic profile, intense in-migration of education- and job-seekers from other regions of Poland. It is also a product of changes in lifestyles and quality of life, as reflected in behaviour, philosophy, principles, legal regulations and policy framework. As described in an earlier report (Korcelli-Olejniczak et al., 2014), social diversity in Warsaw extends beyond differences in socio-economic, social and family status, while it reflects the diversification of choices concerning workplace, place of residence, leisure, the variety and quantity of activities, venues and institutions.

Warsaw is a city of positively perceived diversification resulting from a re-opening to the world, the growth of social and spatial mobility of the population and an internationalization of the economy. At the same time, it is the habitat of negatively associated diversity reflected in growing social stratification, spatial polarization and emerging urban conflicts. While ethnic diversity still represents a rather marginal aspect of urban diversification - it is estimated that there are approx. 45 thousand foreigners with regulated legal status living in Warsaw (Piekut, 2012) - in-migration is expected to intensify in the coming years. As measured by official registration the largest nationalities represented are: Ukrainians, Vietnamese and Belarusians (Urząd M.St. Warszawy, 2013).

Within Warsaw, the research focusses on the area of Praga Północ. This area is inhabited by 67.984 people (Statistical Yearbook of Warsaw, 2012) and is considered to be one of the most diversified districts in terms of demographic, as well as socio-economic status. Its diversity is reflected in both the physical, as well as social dimension. Pre-war neglected, municipally-owned tenements are neighbouring with new buildings constructed by private developers. The level of unemployment and the share of social assistance beneficiaries is the highest of all Warsaw's districts (District Ranking, 2013). At the same time a gentrification process related to more recent inflow of people representing a higher income- and educational status is observed.

Social diversification in Praga Północ derives to a great extent from evolving urban policy – the post-war ‘intentional exclusion’ of the district by socialist state authorities¹, and the new post-1989 approach represented by the City, including place-based urban regeneration projects, infrastructural investments and the emergence of a ‘vogue for Praga’². The Praga Północ of today is therefore developing as a kind of a ‘dual city’ – a mélange of new public and private investments, a specific ‘creative-cultural’ milieu with bohemian atmosphere against a backdrop of socially deprived environments, devastated pre-war housing stock, cheap tenement buildings and a touch of folklore. This diversity is considered to be a general pull factor that attracts new residents, mostly well-educated representatives of the middle class.



Figure 1.1: Praga Północ – a district of contrasts

¹In contrast to the districts situated on the left-bank of the Vistula river, the pre-war architectural and partly social structure of Praga Północ survived the damages of World War II. Due to the fact that its characteristics did not correspond to the idea of an ‘socialist society’, large parts of the district were neglected by the authorities and underwent a gradual physical degradation and social deprivation.

²The ‘Local Urban Renewal Programme for the City of Warsaw 2005-2013’, and the ‘Integrated Urban Renewal Programme 2013-2022’ have introduced a new way of approaching Praga Północ, which reflects a change in the authorities’ perception of the district’s problems, challenges and assets.

We conducted 50 interviews with residents of Praga Północ. These interviews were carried out between October, 2014 and March, 2015. In the next chapter we present more information on the methodology adopted. This is followed by six chapters in which the research questions are responded to. In the conclusions the main results are summarized and the main research questions addressed. Also, some broader guidance for policy-making is proposed.

2. The interviewees

2.1 Selection procedure: how did we select our interviewees?

As mentioned in chapter 1, the majority of historical housing stock in Praga Północ remains in poor condition. The district is characterized by an overrepresentation of inhabitants with low educational attainment, a high share of unemployed (150% of Warsaw's average) and the highest share of population receiving welfare benefits (social support granted per 1000 inhabitants equals 200% of Warsaw's average). The concentration of disadvantaged families in Praga is related to the high share of city-owned housing stock which accounts for almost 45% of the total against 19% in Warsaw on the average (Local Data Bank CSO, 2015). Pre-war tenement buildings are often in a state of advanced deterioration.

Along with the political and socio-economic transformation which brought demographic, ideological and cultural changes, the district has become a fashionable place and is now exhibiting signs of gentrification, by attracting migrants searching for cheaper dwellings, as well as representatives of the creative class and the people who appreciate and can make use the local *genius loci*. New housing developments, as well as commercial and infrastructural investments attract migrants representing lifestyles and attitudes. These processes have slowly began to change the negative perception of the district once stigmatized as poor and dangerous.

In the selection of interviewees, we have applied a dual procedure. On the one hand, we have tried to sustain a balance between the basic socio-economic and demographic categories – the respondents represented various age and income groups, levels of education and family status, including married, cohabiting in hetero- and homosexual households, singles, including widowed and divorced, single parents and couples with children. On the other, with reference to the ongoing change as observed within the district, we have included the length of residence in the area as an additional, but basic selection criterion.

Complying to this idea two basic categories are identified. One are the 'locals' or 'old' residents, i.e. those people who were born in the area, have lived in the district for at least 20 years, or are off-springs of pre-war and early post-war time inhabitants. The other category are 'newcomers', recent in-migrants from other parts of Warsaw and other regions of Poland, also immigrants from other countries. Each of the two categories distinguished are diverse with respect to socio-economic and demographic parameters but share some distinct characteristics concerning the relation to the area occupied and the level of cultural capital. As the relation to space and neighbours is an important aspect defining the character of hyper-diversity in the area researched, additional categories of residents have been identified in the course of the analysis which are related to the functional and emotional perception of the neighbourhood and social interaction. These categories are referred to at various stages of the analysis.

The categories mentioned, including those based on functional relations and emotional connectedness with space and people compose a matrix of local hyper-diversity patterns. When

the origin of the newcomers is considered as background, the analysis unveils a picture of a district with extreme social contrasts and an interesting evidence of diversity. Ethnic diversity, which as such constitutes an aspect of secondary importance in the area under investigation, is also represented in the sample. Five out of 50 interviews have been carried out with foreign-born residents who are considered as 'newcomers', even though their relation with the research area is in the majority of cases relatively long and emotionally-based.

2.2 Which groups did we miss?

The sample was basically constructed by searching for 'locals' and 'newcomers' of different age categories, males and females representing various educational backgrounds, lifestyles and attitudes towards space – the neighbourhood as place of residence. We did not specifically look for ethnic minorities, as this category is relatively small and therefore less crucial for the overall picture of diversity in the area as compared to other groups identified. We have nevertheless interviewed several foreign-born residents whose perception of the area represents a valuable contribution to our findings.

Since we took advantage of various ways of accessing respondents (points of entry) – using contacts established during WP 5 research with representatives of local initiatives, through the Policy Platform, acquaintances of people who live in the district, contacts established during our own investigation of the area – we avoided the negative effects of snowballing. The slight imbalance between the representations of 'newcomers' and 'local' inhabitants is a result of a socio-psychological 'closeness' of the latter and, generally, a lower level of both interest and trust shown to the potential interviewers.

2.3 Some general characteristics of the interviewees

In the selection of interviewees, we tried to sustain a balance between the basic socio-economic and demographic categories. We failed, however, to achieve a reasonable gender balance in our sample, having 16 male and 34 female interviewees. The age of the interviewees ranges from 22 to 83 years. We spoke to three residents aged 18-30, twenty five aged 31-45, thirteen residents aged 46-60, six aged 61-75 and two persons who were 75 years and above. Most of the respondents (45) were born in Poland, two in Chechnya, one in France, Ukraine and the US respectively.

In terms of the level of education, four of the interviewees had vocational, eleven secondary, 35 tertiary education. The monthly household income fell into four categories. Among the respondents four answered that their household income was lower than 250 € (1000 zł), nine declared it to range between 250€ - 750€ (1000zł – 3000zł), eleven said it was between 750€ - 1250€ (3000zł – 5000zł), eighteen households had incomes exceeding 1250€ (5000zł). Seven interviewees refused to answer this question. In terms of household tenure, twenty five persons lived in owner-occupied households, eight were renting flats from the municipality, three were renting dwellings on the private market.

In the analysis of our socially hyper-diverse area, we seek both general similarities and differences between the basic categories, and explore the diversification of the groups with respect to lifestyle, values, perception of the surroundings, engagement in public and private activities within and outside the neighbourhood, openness towards, and intensity of social relations, mutual trust and the establishment of social networks. In line with M. Webbers assumption, we hypothesize that it is *'interaction, not place that creates the essence of city and of city life'* (1971), and that the basic differences between various social groups, besides economic and demographic parameters, are associated with the social networks they establish.

The patterns of social mobility and cohesion in the area explored are shaped by diverse types of social interaction and by the existing linkages between individuals and groups. We assume that it is rather the lack of social resources, and the low diversity within social networks with respect to some groups of residents, and not directly the place of residence that actually influences social mobility (MacLeod, 1995; Kasinitz and Rosenberg, 1996; Stoloff, Glanville, Bienenstock, 1999). At the same time, there is some evidence emerging from our research that diversity deriving from the inflow of 'new' residents has a somewhat positive effect on social cohesion, due to the latter group's appearing engagement in activities for the sake of the local community. We also assume (Curley, 2010) that an economically mixed neighbourhood may gradually provide quite different resources coming through social networks than a poverty-concentrated, deprived community. Therefore, the quality of social resources made available by the inflow of 'new' inhabitants is expected to bring positive driving forces for the neighbourhood over time.

3. Housing choice and residential mobility

3.1 Introduction

Praga Północ is slowly gaining popularity as a relatively fashionable, but at the same time a quite inexpensive district to live in. It is also characterized by a relatively high share of inhabitants living there since birth, which is around 55 per cent, i.e. 5 percentage points above the Warsaw average. This can be explained by a lower housing mobility of families living in publicly-owned buildings. The total stock of public-owned housing is more than twice as large as the average for Warsaw. A large share of this stock is in bad condition and poorly equipped.

Praga Północ is one of the two districts (another is the inner-city district of Śródmieście) characterized by a long-term net residential outflow. This is mainly due to the losses in the old and neglected residential housing and the lack of new housing investments in the past. For the whole post-war period the district has been characterized by population loss, while the entire city has been gaining population. Currently district population shrinkage in the district is caused by natural population decrease and net migration outflow. Inter-district migration accounts for 2/3 of the residential outflow in the recent years. Nevertheless, the official statistics do not account for a number of non-registered intra-urban moves, mostly of young people to the district. The overall negative migration trend becomes less articulated in the recent years.

New public infrastructural and private housing investments are important pull factors, supported by the district's relatively central situation within the space of the city. The Warsaw authorities, aware of the district's deficits, but at the same time of its development potential, have introduced programmes aimed at the area revitalization (ZPR 2015). The recalled policy document focuses on both social and housing revitalization. These trends are conducive to a growing residential and occupational diversity within the Praga district, which may in turn stimulate further population inflow.

3.2 Why did the residents come to live here?

In our investigation of factors of residential mobility, migration and housing choice, a dual perspective is adopted with reference to the length of residence in the district and the motives of location and housing choice. In the case of 'old' inhabitants we analyse both the mechanisms preventing people from moving and the triggers for moving out (Mulder, 1996). When analysing the motives standing behind the behaviour of the 'newcomers' we focus on reasons of moving to the area as an expression of either residential mobility or migration.

Triggers for moving – location and housing choice

The analysis conducted presents a rather simple picture of individual residential choices as taken by the interviewees. It can generally be argued that the residential choice has varied over time, with a sharp divide in the late 1980s/early 1990s, when the systemic transformation in Poland altered the opportunities and constraints related to housing choice, increased residential and spatial mobility of the population. Changes in housing allocation process comprising public and cooperative housing, the effects of socio-economic liberalization on both the demand and the supply side, as well as general metropolisation trends that have stimulated an inflow of migrants to Warsaw are among the important factors of residential mobility since 1990. As a district with a large share of publicly owned housing, in many cases nationalized pre-war private property, Praga Północ has gone through stages of population inflow mainly via the allocation of social housing.

In our analysis of location and housing choice we consider general and specific goals to be achieved when changing the place of residence (De Jong and Fawcett, 1981; Lindenberg, 1990), as well as factors which facilitate or hamper the actual process of moving (Mulder, 1996). It becomes evident that opportunities and constraints are important factors determining the decision to move and to choose a place of residence. Two main triggers can be distinguished: cheaper housing and family/personal reasons. These are further divided into subcategories. The two basic motives are usually accompanied by secondary, additional triggers, including ‘comfort’ (good living conditions), ‘affiliation’ (feeling of belonging) and ‘morality’ (values, tradition, local rules).

Cheaper housing and beneficial living arrangements:

- a. council flats obtained or cheaper flats in housing cooperatives purchased (usually concerns period before 1989 and people who moved to Praga before the systemic transformation in Poland);
- b. flats exchanged with a family member, or the return to the family house, which offers preferable conditions;
- c. flat purchased in a newly constructed building for a price lower than in most other, centrally located districts of Warsaw³;
- d. flat purchased after 1989 on the secondary market, where the relation of price and size is beneficial considering conditions prevailing in Warsaw;
- e. flat rental at preferable prices.

A large group of interviewees who have lived in Praga for at least 15-20 years claim that they have been allocated a tenement/flat in a housing cooperative or came to live in a flat belonging to a family member or exchanged flats with a family member. Interestingly, the more recent residents also refer to the affordability of housing as a main factor of moving to Praga. In this category two basic groups can be distinguished. The first consists of students, or young professionals, usually single, childless or living with a partner. The second comprises people in a difficult financial situation. These tend to live in rented apartments and highly appreciate the low costs in the area. Affordability of housing as a key factor of residential choice refers to all groups interviewed irrespectively of the level of education, socio-economic or family status, household composition as well as age.

“I have moved in here out of housing reasons. This is a council flat” says a middle-aged women, (R 39, woman 43 y.o., single parent with 2 children, secondary education), similarly a retired state official explains that she left her large private apartment in a housing cooperative to her grown-

³The average price of 1 sq. metre of flat on the primary market in Praga Północ amounts to approx.. EUR 1760 (2013).

up daughter and came to live with her that-time partner: *“I moved in with him 21 years ago, we were not married yet, this is a council flat without central heating.”* (R 10, woman, 63 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education). *“There were days when people got flats. Here was one available”*, says a woman, who has lived in Praga for over 30 years (R 36, woman, 60 y.o., single household, tertiary education). This situation also concerned a 49-year old artist who moved to Warsaw after getting married to a woman from Praga Północ. *“We met at the Arts Academy, and as there were no better possibilities, we came back here to live in a council flat.”* (R 27, man, 49 y.o., couple with 6 children, tertiary education)

There are also more recent examples of tenement allocation, which usually concern residents in a difficult financial situation, or those with refugee status. *“(…) five flats per year are allocated to refugees from all countries altogether. I didn’t believe that we would be lucky. But we got the flat after the first application.”*, says a middle-aged woman from Chechnya (R 38, woman, 38 y.o., couple with 4 children, tertiary education). A partly handicapped alcoholic working at a computer servicing company says, that he got his flat after returning from army service: *“Its rented from the City. Nice folks live here, but they (the City) keep throwing people out. Maybe they want to sell it and renovate it.”* (R 4, man, 33 y.o., single household, secondary education). In this group there is also a subcategory of people who rent apartments at prices that are relatively lower than in other areas of Warsaw.

Another large group of interviewees are those who purchased a flat on the primary or secondary market: *“Young people come here, buy devastated houses, renovate them and start a family. I think they choose Praga because you couldn’t make it cheaper anywhere.”* says a middle-aged woman living in Praga Północ for at least 15 years. (R 50, 50 y.o., couple without children, secondary education). *„This is a story about economy. I wanted to find a flat for myself, all other district were out of reach, so I bought this one.”*, says a 36-year old woman who moved in recently (R 19, woman 36 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education). Those are usually more recent residents, people either searching for ‘comfort’ (in this case well-being, good living conditions) at a relatively low price and for ‘morality’ (meaning tradition and more conservative values than in other areas) , or ‘stimulation’ (which in Praga may be related to social diversity, folklore, artistic milieu) as secondary factors (De Jong, Fawcett 1981). This group consists mainly of well-educated, considerably ‘well-off’ residents, performing well-paid, usually prestigious jobs – the middle class. Two of the interviewees’ statements are especially suggestive and representative for this dual category. One derives from an interview with a French architect, married to a Lithuanian woman of Polish origin. The man argues that the primary reason for moving to Praga was practical and had to do with the search for ‘comfort’:

“Thanks to a colleague I found a house which was subject to restitution. The family of the owners owners decided to sell it – a building with a free plot of land which had a regulated building permit. So I decided to buy (...), a private property, where the land is in perpetuity for the public. We bought the house with tenants living in it and over the last years worked on rebuilding and revitalizing it (...). Maybe, I didn’t know it initially, before we moved here, but I would say that the district is inhabited by “real people”. Here, neighbours say ‘good morning’ to each other. All this makes you feel the difference when you come from the left bank of the Vistula river. This attracted me to stay.” (R 1, man 37 y.o., couple with 3 children, tertiary education).

The other, expressed by an ‘old’ resident supports the idea, that Praga Północ, next to being inexpensive can also be a stimulating place, is artistic and provides the possibility of meeting a variety of people – people not to be met elsewhere. *“There’s a life there.”* (R 36, woman, 60 y.o., single household, tertiary education).

“The last few years you can observe a vogue for Praga. Artists appreciate this place. In the old pre-war buildings there are popular art galleries and architectonic workshops. Fashionable new clubs and cafes are all around. You can see the artistic climate of Praga.”
(R 42, 40 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education).

Family or other personal reasons:

- a. living in the same house since birth or returning home,
- b. settling down with partner,
- c. desire to be near to the ‘close’ ones,
- d. desire to move out of the family house and become independent.

Family and other personal reasons include both rational and emotional decisions – in many cases these are strongly intertwined. In the case of the ‘locals’ it is to a larger extent a necessity (illness of family members etc.), or the desire to unite (reunite) with the family that decides about moving to the neighbourhood. In the case of the ‘newcomers’, additional personal reasons are important – the search for ‘autonomy’ (understood as the possibility to be on one’s own, independent, move out of the family house). The story of a 36-year old man is a good example of a choice out of various reasons:

„My parents moved over there, and I came to live in their apartment with my wife (...). It was important to have all my close family around me. I can walk over to my brother, my father, my father-in-law and to the brother of my wife, because he lives next to his parents.”
(R 18, man, 36 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education).

An older man talks about difficult occurrences in his life: “(...) when my parents got ill, I moved in here.” (R 17, man, 65 y.o., single household, tertiary education). A middle-aged woman talks about being local since generations: “I have lived here all my life. My grandfather built this house, my mother was born here and then I” (R 20, woman, 44 y.o., single parent household, secondary education). An elderly artist who moved to Warsaw because of family reasons says he did chose Praga also because it was “(...) perceived as a Mecca for artists.” He says: “I came here because of my first wife, who was from Warsaw (...) I met my second wife and we started a life together in my former workshop and now here. It is my private place.” (R 29, man, 61 y.o., couple with 6 children, tertiary education).

Other motives – functionality, location, affiliation

Other motives seem to be of secondary importance, like in the above examples the search for privacy or the existence of social rules in the community. In the case of residents who moved in more recently some practical, rational motives are pointed to:

“ (...) Praga Północ is such a nice district, perfectly connected with the city via public transport, near to the centre. So I bought the flat and I live here.”, says a middle-aged man (R 21, man, 45 y.o., single household, tertiary education). Another man thinks that the area has many facilities he requires “I liked the cosmopolitan character of this street (...). The place is marvelously connected with other parts of the city (...) There are a lot of kindergardens here (...) There is a school nearby. We have chosen this place out of such reasons too.” (R 12, man, 36 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education).

In some cases the decision to move has to do with ‘affiliation’, meaning the search for place where you feel that you belong to, where strong ties connect you with other people. In rare situations also ‘stimulation’, i.e. finding the place interesting, fascinating to live in (De Jong and Fawsett, 1981) stands behind the choice of the place of residence.

3.3 Moving to the present neighbourhood: improvement or not?

The interviewees with a shorter residence status in Praga Północ are usually satisfied with the change of their place of residence. The positive aspects that are raised concern the built and natural environment, public and private space, social attributes, with a particular focus on safety.

“We lived in a large elegant apartment building in Wola⁴ and I was afraid to go out in the street because I didn’t feel safe (...) And people were so anonymous. Here I started to breathe again, it is so neighbourly here.” (R 36, woman, 60 y.o., single household, tertiary education).

A similar statement comes from a person who was born in Praga, then moved out and came back:

“(...) I lived 10 years in Czerniaków⁵ and my flat was robbed twice. I get mad when people say bad things about Praga Północ (...) I never experienced anything like break-ins here” (R 39, woman 43 y.o., single parent with 2 children, secondary education).

The ‘native’ residents complain about the inconvenience of their flats with respect to technical equipment, but appreciate the architectural diversity and social familiarity:

“I was bewitched by the surrounding, although the flat was poorly equipped, there was no central heating (...), but there were squirrels jumping on my window sill, it was green everywhere, and a variety of housing - from old pre-war buildings to modern ones and one-family houses, narrow streets, dogs barking and flowers, in the middle of the city.” (R 10, woman, 63 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education).

Residents usually focus on the quality of old, pre-war buildings despite their technical deficits: *“You kind of live a better life within these high ceilings.”* says a 60-year old man (R 11, man, 60 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education) and diversity of neighbourhoods in Praga Północ: *“The people here are sensitive, intelligent, you can talk to them, but there are places nearby with crime and drugs.”*, says a man, who moved within the district (R 29, man, 61 y.o., couple with 6 children, tertiary education). Those who return to the area of their childhood usually express their emotional bonds with the place: *“It was convenient in the city centre for a student and young person, but now I am back here and this is my place on earth, the only place.”* (R 26, woman, 58 y.o., single household, tertiary education). There are also negative opinions about the new place of residence. A young lesbian woman living with her partner and the partner’s brother in an old building:

“We preferred to live in old Ochota⁶, I come from Mokotów, I grew up there, these are similar places with nice neighbours and surrounding (...). It is difficult to live here. And it is not about the building, as ours is renovated. I could live in worse conditions, but the reality around me is awkward. (...) It was very clean there, elegant and cultured, people are nice to each other (...). We don’t experience that here.” (R 2, woman, 27 y.o., incomplete tertiary education).

⁴ A centrally located, quickly developing district on the left bank of the Vistula river which undergoes a transformation of its leading functions from industrial to business.

⁵ Another relatively centrally located area of Warsaw with a dominance of multifamily housing blocks from the 1950s and 1960s, also new apartment houses.

⁶ A residential district in central Warsaw with many pre-war single family houses. Due to its tradition and new housing developments it is considered as quite prestigious

3.4 Conclusions

The two basic motives of choosing Praga Północ as place of residence are related to the categories of cheaper housing/beneficial living arrangements and family/other personal reasons. All other motives are treated here as secondary and encompass both functional and emotional stimuli. In most cases, the established residents have either been allocated a council/tenement or company flat before 1990 or have moved to a council, cooperate or private flat directly or indirectly out of family reasons. Among the respondents who came to live in Warsaw to study, the choice of residence in Praga Północ specifically is related to the affordability of housing. The respondents who have moved within Warsaw in general point to 'affiliation' as a specific goal – being close to family, moving to one's own house, moving to the family house or the partner's house, changing flats with a child or other family member.

The native residents of Praga point to their physical rootedness (Gusfield, 1975) as the strongest motive to stay, next to strong family ties and 'morality' – the 'unspoiled' social environment and the simplicity of everyday life. In some cases, however, they emphasize that the change was difficult, mainly due to the social aspects of the surroundings. People usually don't expect any improvement related to a hypothetical change of their place of residence (to another area). In rare cases they expect improvement from the inflow of better educated, younger and more affluent residents. The potential of social diversity, the heterogeneity of profiles and lifestyles is usually absent in the responses of the 'old' residents, who, however, point to architectural and functional diversity – lack of monotony of large modern housing estates.

In the case of more affluent out of the group of inhabitants who moved more recently to the district, the choice to live either in newly constructed private housing estates, or in old buildings is usually related to lifestyle, type of education, family status, interests and general values they represent. Artists, large families and well-educated singles prefer the 'bohemian' atmosphere provided by old, pre-war housing with large flats, often completely rearranged by the new owners. Young couples, people with 1 to 2 children and people with business-related jobs or professionals aged 60+ tend to choose new housing constructed by developers, often in small, guarded and fenced housing estates. In the case of the first group, which is a small one, diversity in all its aspects seems to be an important pull-factor, and their moving to Praga Północ a choice out of 'autonomy', 'morality' and 'stimulation' factors (Mulder, 1996). With respect to the second group it is rather 'comfort' that decided about the choice of the district, related to favourable (central city) location and the availability of a bigger apartment for less money.

4. Perceptions of the diversity in the neighbourhood

4.1 Introduction

As argued in the previous chapters, Praga Północ is an area with a concentration of poverty, social deprivation and dysfunctions – alcoholism, crime and unemployment (Węclawowicz, 2001) and carries a stigma of an 'excluded' district. Until recently, Praga Północ was looked at as a neglected area within the space of the city, where its preconditions and the disinterest of local authorities have led to a progressing deterioration and disorder, to some extent resembling processes described by Wilson and Kelling's theory of 'broken windows' (Sampson, Raudenbush, 2005). The perception of Praga can be associated with the 'reading of space', where it is stigmatized, negatively connoted, has attributes which discredit it in the relation to other spaces (Szczepański, Ślęzak-Tazbir, Świątkiewicz-Mośny, 2006). Interestingly, the perception changes to some extent, when the space becomes 'tamed', once it is appropriated in everyday practices. This phenomenon is quite distinct when analysing the perception of Praga Północ by its residents –

both those with shorter and longer residence duration. In our analysis special attention is paid to perceiving broadly understood diversity aspects in the neighbourhood and the neighbours as users of space with their mutual relations.

4.2 Perceived boundaries of the neighbourhood

Our research points to a narrow understanding of the term ‘neighbourhood’ as perceived by the interviewees, i.e. the area of daily spatial mobility, where their basic and regular needs are satisfied. The majority of the respondents use the notion ‘neighbourhood’ as closest surrounding, the walking distance often covered – its range, however, differs with family status, age, duration of residence, often also profession. The more recent residents tend to identify ‘zones’ within their neighbourhood – from the closest space used most intensely to the most distant one, physically, but also emotionally:

“(...) one zone is close to this place, my good friend lives here (..), the next zone is the whole block of buildings, and Praski park and the bank of the Vistula river. And then there is the zone where I shop, where services are, not far from here.” (R 15, woman, 31 y.o., single household, tertiary education, 1 year in Praga).

The more established residents are more connected to the place of residence than the majority of newer residents:

“I’m generally very local and spend a lot of time here. But I understand local as quite a large area, there where I can go by bike”. When talking about his daily activities: “Everything is close here, 700 m to school, 110 m to the kindergarden.” (R 18, man, 36 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education).

This way of perceiving the boundaries of one’s neighbourhood can be described as ‘functional’ in contrast to the ‘emotional’ perception. It is connected with the way people use their neighbourhood’s space and relations with other people to perform everyday functions. According to this criteria, the following categories are distinguished:

- a. *parents* – their neighbourhood perception is usually connected with daily activities concerning childcare, kindergardens and schools and the way to school, leisure time with children, surrounding parks and playgrounds. Parents use the public space within the district and neighbourhood predominately out of the above reasons. They are a category which creates functional bridging networks with other parents independent of differences in socio-economic or ethnic status:

“The trip we make to school every day draws the boundaries of my neighbourhood (...).” (R 13, woman, 42 y.o., couple with one child, tertiary education); *“My neighbourhood are playgrounds I visit with my kids here nearby, I go to the Praski park, we use the space from here to the railway track.”*, says a few years younger man (R 18, man, 36 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education).

- b. *elderly people* – usually mention parks and shops nearby, ‘their’ neighbourhood is generally smaller than that of younger people, they give mention names of streets in the distance of one kilometre:

“My neighbourhood are the streets nearby and over there to the railway tracks and to the river.”, says a woman, who has lived in Praga for 30 years (R 36, woman, 60 y.o., single household, tertiary education); *“Here, the park, I walk through the park*

when I go to my daughter's café. That's my neighbourhood." (R 8, woman, 58 y.o., single household, tertiary education).

A subcategory of elderly people are *wanderers*, usually residents of a lower educational status. For them the neighbourhood is delimited by their walks. They enjoy their surrounding in a simple and practical way. A widow living in a residential exclave of Praga Północ - Śliwice⁷, whose neighbourhood closes with walking distance says:

"You know Mister, I am a walking type, I walk all around the place, like a dog, sniffing here and there (...) I keep walking to the other side of the railway track, a few kilometres, that's my neighbourhood." (R 26, woman, 58 y.o., single household, tertiary education). Similarly, an old man, who suffered from a heart attack a few years ago says: *"I need to walk, cause of my heart, but I like it, you can see everything, I walk to the market place, to the Skaryszewski Park, the Praski Park, this is where I walk, my places."* (R 25, man, 54 y.o., couple without children, secondary education).

c. students (and other young people) – they usually sleep in Praga but move all around the city, use public transport to reach places, don't get attached to any physical boundaries, but associate their neighbourhood with areas they visit:

"I'm lazy, so I take the bus when I want to go somewhere.", says a student (R 7, woman 22 y.o., single household, secondary education). *"Praski park, is my garden, I actually cross the street and I am there. I'm there every day and I treat this as my neighbourhood. And the Vistula bank as well (...)"* (R 15, woman, 31 y.o., single household, tertiary education).

A specific, additional category are *dog owners* – people representing all age groups, male and female, 'locals' and 'newcomers' who usually draw the boundaries of their neighbourhoods and establish personal relations with other people in their immediate surroundings while walking their dogs:

"Since I remember I always had a dog, that I had to walk. My neighbourhood is where I go with my dog (...) We pass the market place, Wileńska shopping centre, Kaufland, we make a square shaped detour." (R 10, woman, 63 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education); *"I moved here after adopting my dog, so my dog draws the boundaries of my neighbourhood."*, says a young woman (R 15, woman, 31 y.o., single household, tertiary education); *„I would call my neighbourhood the dog route, thanks to my dog, I learn to know Praga, the closest areas and the areas with nicer architecture a bit further away."*, says another young woman (R 2, woman, 27 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education).

The emotional perception of the neighbourhood is related to how people sense their neighbourhood and draw its boundaries through an emotional contact with people, nearest surrounding, or how their neighbourhood is spatially restricted. This perspective allows for the distinction of the following three categories of residents:

⁷Śliwice is a small colony of houses developed in the period of 1937-1939, with a population of 300 inhabitants

- a. *local activists* – usually people with tertiary education, often engaged in some local social initiatives. For them their neighbourhood is part of the city, but a part that they care about, one without defined boundaries:

“(...) the perception varies in time. The more I stay here, the more it translates into a larger scale. I am not sure where to start, and what was my “scale” at the beginning and what it is now. As we moved in, the place I considered to be the immediate surroundings was the area around the staircase inside the building, then it was a group of flats around the stairwell (...). The second step was as we took off the fence between our yard and the two neighboring yards (...) (R 1, man 37 y.o., couple with 3 children, tertiary education).

The man continues to say that his neighbourhood encompasses the place he cares for.

- b. *flâneurs* – people who reflect upon what they see in their immediate surroundings, are interested in the way their neighbourhood evolves with time, the connection between the past and today, the architecture, the way people behave:

“I am interested in what’s happening here in the surroundings, I look at buildings, enjoy (...) I move all over Praga. My space is much larger than just two streets, it’s the whole of Praga, related to my social engagement. I look at things changing.” (R 17, man, 65 y.o., single household, tertiary education).

- c. *loiterers* – usually ‘old’ residents with vocational to secondary education, unemployed, retired. Their surroundings encompass their courtyard, gate:

“(...) where my neighbours live, where my door is.” (R 30, woman 56 y.o., single parent household, secondary education), says an older woman living with her daughter, who spends a lot of time hanging around her building. *„This gate is incredible.”*, reveals a young woman living in an old building, *“(...) there is always somebody standing there. The whole building is like one big apartment, and there are Roma people there, whoever knows what they are doing (...)*” (R 3, woman 27 y.o., lesbian couple without children, tertiary education).

For these people, the *loiterers*, their gate is not only their neighbourhood but their whole world. A well-educated woman, who recently moved into the district, says that she feels sorry for those people loitering in their gates, but that they are part of the neighbourhood’s specificity.

4.3 Perceptions of neighbours (classification, qualification, description of relations)

A careful beholder easily recognises that social diversity, contrasts and differences are important aspects that are raised directly or indirectly in the interviewees’ statements:

“Different people live here, like the architecture is diversified, so are the people.” (R 10, woman, 63 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education), *„(...) there are a lot of students, who sleep here but study on the other side of the river, 40% of the flats in my building are rented, there are students here and workers and foreigners.”* (R 14, male, 35 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education); *“There is a wide social range here, from a homeless person to a lawyer living with a girl he just met.”* (R 4, man, 33 y.o., single household, secondary education).

Many residents claim that important changes are observable; the area has become less dangerous, as people are changing due to various circumstances:

“Now it is safe, years back one had to look out for scallywags and thugs and thieves. First it was the locals that had clashes, then when Russians came to trade in things at the Różycki bazaar⁸, there was one assault after the other. They were attacked by the locals and who knows by whom else.” (R 43, 56 y.o., couple without children, primary education).

Another interviewee states that : *“(…) bad company has moved out, the homeless, the rascals, they ended up in prison, the Police took care of that”* (R 43, woman, 56 y.o., couple without children vocational education). The perception of the neighbours is usually different according to the length of residence in the area and the age of the interviewees. Some observations are frequent.

There is a predominance of old people, although a change is brought by the ‘new’ residents, who are more diversified with respect to age. *“That’s a negative aspect because my kids don’t have companions to play with, there are usually people in the age of my parents.”* (R 6, woman, 35 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education). Also, older people perceive their neighbours as rather advanced in age: *“The youngest people here are around forty.”* (R 36, woman, 60 y.o., single household, tertiary education). But there are also other opinions. A person, who recently moved into a new building, states for example: *“(…) the demography is diverse. There are very young people, families with children and older people.”* (R 19, woman 36 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education), another recent in-migrant also observes this: *“There are more young people here, than where I used to live before (…). Here you can see families with children. But that is a new phenomenon”* (R 9, woman, 38 y.o., living with husband and son, tertiary education).

There is a lot of diversity with respect to the level of education, vocabulary used, professional status, income: *“Everybody lives here. From drug addicts and drunkards to medicine doctors and lawyers. There’s a woman who taught at the university, her father is a local tailor.”*, says a retired woman (R 10, woman, 63 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education). Similarly, a divorced mother of four claims:

“We have a whole range of people here – from one extremity to the other. There are people from the underclass, there are well-educated folks, with great jobs (…). The place I live in is a mixture of elites and proletariat.” (R 31, woman, 83 y.o., single household, secondary education), says a woman, who worked as a tour guide, about her building.

“Usually there are fine people living here, very diversified, from university professors to those living in the street. But there are only 1-2% of them, usually aggressive like small dogs, but not dangerous.”, says an ‘assimilated’ artist from southern Poland (R 27, man, 49 y.o., couple with 6 children, tertiary education). Some residents claim that while there are considerable differences as to the quality of life in the neighbourhood, there is also a concentration of relatively poor people in some subareas and buildings. The following statements may be illustrative in this respect:

“(…)There are small differences between people in my building. Only some live a peaceful life and others have to work hard for the same (…). When you go to the other side of the street, there you see a gated estate and much more affluent people.” (R40, woman, 59, y.o., couple with 2 children, secondary education); *“Its poor here, there are no rich folks,*

⁸ An important landmark of Praga Północ, the Różycki bazaar was founded in the late XIX century and played the role of Praga’s main trade centre till WW II. In the 1950s the bazaar was nationalized but private merchandising continued. In the early 1990s the place was booming and attracting mainly salesmen from the ex-Soviet Union. Unfortunately as part of the so called ‘Bermuda Triangle’, with train station ‘Warsaw East’ and the former bazaar at the ‘Stadium’, it has become the centre of crime.

which is bad in fact (...). In that private sector you need money. Flats are expensive, the new people coming must have money to buy them.” (R 30, woman, 56 y.o., single parent household, vocational education); *“They (the residents) differ by income status, there are some poor people in council flats, some pathology too, here (in Ślůwice) it is very visible when it happens.”* (R 20, woman, 44 y.o., single parent household, secondary education); *“In my building there is an income diversification. You can see by the cars, some are pretty run down, others new and classy.”* (R 12, man, 36 y.o., couple with children, tertiary education).

There is a characteristic way of perceiving how some people look like in Praga. For example, there is an opinion that people look different in the neighbourhood than in other, more affluent parts of Warsaw. The differences refer to the physiognomy, behavior and how people dress. This way of perceiving the neighbours is characteristic for the new people moving into the district:

“This is an observation related to my trips to the East, to Ukraine.” says the 31-year old philologist referred to before, *“(…) look there is an Orthodox church here, I can also often hear Russian here or Ukrainian in the street. Maybe it’s the case of low prices (...) The faces are different, more eastern-like, less delicate than most of the subtle, light complexions in the centre of Warsaw (...) The people also dress differently, less fashionable than over there.”* (R 15, woman, 31 y.o., single household, tertiary education).

There is a minor perception of ethnic diversity. The phenomenon is recognized, but only a few people think that it is an important component of the population structure. There is no antagonism observed; rather positive or neutral attitudes. Some statements reflect this finding:

“(…) in the next building Russians or Ukrainians rent a flat.” (R 10, woman, 63 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education); *“(…) there are a lot of foreigners. When we shop in Carrefour we talk to people. There are many people from the East – Ukrainians. I like such a melting pot. We like this shop because they hire disabled people and foreigners, we like such an open society.”* (R 16, 59 years old, female, living with husband, tertiary education); *“There are some foreigners here, people move out or leave and they rent these flats. We have Ukrainians, Turks, Russians in this building.”* (R 27, man, 49 y.o., couple with 6 children, tertiary education).

People often refer to a neighbourly atmosphere in the area, with less anonymity than in other parts of Warsaw:

“The majority of people have lived here for a long time. When you move in and start to regularly visit a place, a store for example, people begin to recognize you.” (R 2, woman, 27 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education). Many interviewees also say that their neighbours are nice and friendly: *„I have the impression of living in a real city, where there are real people around, real relations between people. Just after I moved in, everybody knew that I was new and people offered help”* (R 22, woman, 55 y.o., single household, tertiary education).

The current social change, related the inflow of new residents, has various dimensions⁹. Those are predominately:

⁹There are also some very positive reflections upon the pre-war Praga, which was diverse, multilingual and multicultural, with a large Jewish minority

- a. Complaints about the moral decay – usually older residents and those with longer residence status claim that things started changing for the worse, they are suspicious about their new neighbours: *“These new people, they have money coming from who knows where. You cannot simply afford a 100 sq. m flat when you are twenty something”*, says an old woman (R 31, woman, 83 y.o., single household, secondary education). She talks sentimentally about the high social status of the people she lived with after the War. And she stresses, that everybody was *local*, that is *from here*. Only a few out of this group of residents consider the newcomers as very positive. Usually, the well-educated among the ‘old’ residents raise the aspect of socio-economic change: *“New private buildings have brought new, well-educated people.”* (R 17, man, 65 y.o., single household, tertiary education). Only rarely, very rarely it is a praising of gentrification.
- b. The feeling of cultural alienation – in some cases the ‘new’ residents feel a bit like strangers in their surroundings. This has nothing to do with a negative attitude towards their neighbours, but rather with the sense of being ‘different’:

„I feel ok here, but I’m very tolerant. Now, that I think about it, this is not my familiar environment, where I feel comfortable.”, *“(…) this is rather because I have a positive attitude, positive associations since my father lived here, and I am able to forgive this place more. But I do feel uneasy – age difference and everything.”* (R 15, woman, 31 y.o., single household, tertiary education). *“I kind of skirt round the immediate surroundings (...). Nothing is there. I have to look for places where people similar to me created something.”*, says a woman who has lived for 7 years in Praga (R 9, woman, 38 y.o., living with husband and son, tertiary education).

A completely different kind of alienation concerns former refugees. A single mother from Chechnya says: *“I don’t have friends among the neighbours, I feel uncomfortable here.”* (R 35, woman, 43 y.o., single parent household, tertiary education).

4.4 Perceptions of the neighbourhood: positive and negative aspects

Most residents of Praga Północ perceive their neighbourhoods as very specific. On the one hand, people recognize the social problems and infrastructural deficits of the place, on the other its natural, open and simple character:

“I feel sorry for these people loitering in front of their buildings, when I go to work. I think there’s no idea how to cope with this problem. But then again, it’s the only area where I see children playing outside, in the playgrounds and courtyards.” (R 19, woman 36 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education).

The interviewees mention both negative and positive aspects of the neighbourhood, they also talk about its specificity. Some opinions are neutral. People say, for example, that there is a sense of uniqueness of the neighbourhood (especially Szmulki¹⁰) – a mixture of folklore, history and the present: *“Here are such things that combine today with dim and distant past”*, says a woman living in Praga for many years (R 31, woman, 83 y.o., single household, secondary education) talking about cultural, social and architectural diversity. The ‘exotic’, character of the area is pointed to in some statements, meaning different, deriving from another culture:

¹⁰A neighbourhood of Praga Północ, with a high share of Jewish population before WW II, after the war held in disrepute due to its social deprivation and deterioration of its housing stock

„Some people say that I live in Asia, in Azerbaijan. These are of course jokes, but this is what people sometimes think about this side of the river. I have the impression that, although I may not be perceived in that way, this is how I see myself sometimes.”, says a young woman (R 15, woman, 31 y.o., single household, tertiary education).

There are also opinions that the area is dangerous. A Czechnyan woman talks about how friends from her daughter’s school, which is outside of the district, reacted: *“It is not that they treat us as foreigners but that we are from Praga. My daughter invited a friend to her birthday party, but the parent’s wouldn’t let the girl come to the district.”* (R 35, woman, 43 y.o., single parent household, tertiary education).

When talking to the ‘old’ residents, it becomes evident that they feel more integrated and perceive the newer ones as not assimilated yet: *“(…) the people who have lived here for years somehow consolidated (…) the behaviour of the new people is still questionable.”* (R 45, woman, 65 y.o., couple without children, secondary education). It seems obvious that they expect the ‘new’ residents to assimilate and support the area’s interests. An old woman says:

„Some people assimilated with old Praga. Here we have a neighbor who fights for the rights of tenants. He represents first of all the old Pragians who have lived in these building since the war, and now these people are at risk of forced eviction.” (R 45, woman, 65 y.o., couple without children, secondary education).

Negative aspects are more frequently pointed to in the interviews. One of the examples, given a few times mostly by ‘new residents’, is negatively understood local solidarity. A young woman mentions that there are more police and neighbours’ interventions in the case of ‘new’ residents, people from ‘outside’ of the neighbourhood, than when the ‘locals’ organize loud parties or behave aggressively in the streets:

“Nobody called the police, even though the party continued for 24 hours, but when there was another party (…) where young people, say, similar to us were having fun – people like us, the police came. They didn’t like them.” (R 2, woman, 27 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education).

Another respondent says:

„A guy was elected to the district council from our building. He has a criminal past, but he got elected as he is from here. The community has decided that he will have influence on things, a native Praga boy with muscles and a rich vocabulary.” (R 9, woman, 38 y.o., living with husband and son, tertiary education).

Another aspect is the people’s behaviour and the general passiveness of the local authorities. The woman referred to above says:

„Its messy bear, old people around, maybe not old but hoodlums. When somebody throws a pampers in the street, nobody takes care of that and it gets worse. The district’s administration doesn’t do anything about it.” (R 9, woman, 38 y.o., living with husband and son, tertiary education).

The same woman talks about domestic violence, spouse abuse, regular fights in the streets. Other people mention unemployment, growing homelessness and alcoholism. Break-ins and other small crime seem to become rarer, people talk about them, but seldom: *“One situation was before we moved*

in, then there was another situation when there was a break-in and many things were stolen. (R 6, woman, 35 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education).

Respondents often state that authorities neglect Praga Północ in comparison to other districts of the city: *“Nobody cares whether the place develops, if there’s a plan, a programme (...). A pity for the beautiful, dying architecture”* (R 22, woman, 55 y.o., single household, tertiary education). Generally, women are more critical in this respect than men. Once the new public centre for drug addicts was open in one of Praga’s socially most difficult environment, people started being aware of another danger in their neighbourhood: *“(…) it is difficult to have human feelings for such people. Older people go out and find needles and they have enough. I stopped allowing my kids to go out into the courtyard.”* (R 27, man, 49 y.o., couple with 6 children, tertiary education). The interviewee claims that, the city should not have located such an institution in a place which once had high crime risk and is undergoing a difficult transformation. *“We have drug addicts everywhere, they come from other areas”,* says a woman working as a landlady in one of the buildings. *“We are scared, as we don’t know what to expect from them. I don’t know them (...)”* (R 39, woman 43 y.o., single parent with two children, secondary education).

The residents also mention their disappointment with the low level of schools in Praga –the worse statistics in Warsaw, and one of the lowest in the Mazowieckie voivodship. It turns out that people who can afford it, take their kids to schools located on the other side of the river, *“(…) which means that the kids with lowest potential stay here.”* (R 12, man, 36 y.o., couple with children, tertiary education). This attitude can be defined as a negative opinion about segregation within the educational system.

The most common positive opinions concern social relations in the neighbourhood. People assimilate and communicate with each other: *„(…) people, although not so well-educated are cultured and always say ‘good morning.’”,* says a woman who moved in recently (R 13, woman, 42 y.o., couple with one child, tertiary education). A characteristic feature is the lack of anonymity, mentioned before and more direct interaction:

“I like the contacts between people, when I walk down the street I can talk to people about anything, just like that, not only to neighbours”, says a woman living for 10 years in her neighbourhood, *“I can talk to strangers in the park”* (R 6, woman, 35 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education).

A frequent reflection concerns the authenticity of the neighborhood and the district in general. People like that Praga is a real place, with real people and real three generational families, not ousted after the war. Some people don’t seem to want more ethnic diversity and in-migrants from other regions of Poland. They say for example: *“(…) good that there are still not so many in-migrants as in Ursynów¹¹ for example.”* (R 22, woman, 55 y.o., single household, tertiary education). Interviewees expressing such opinions are aware of the existence of socio-economic inequalities and differences in family status and lifestyles, which they don’t usually see as problems: *“This is positive that there are different milieus, different situations, different lifestyles.”* (R 39, woman 43 y.o., single parent with two children, secondary education).

¹¹The largest residential district in Warsaw. Especially in its southern part – Kabaty, the population is composed to a large extent of in-migrants from other regions of Poland

4.5 Conclusions

The older residents in the area often raise the aspect of the division into ‘us’ and ‘them’ when talking about levels of cultural capital, education, family background. They are often critical about ‘newcomers’ creating gated communities, they question the relation between socio-economic status and education, arguing that these don’t always go hand in hand. The newcomers are aware of entering a conservative community, one that is, however, usually open to those who comply with the local rules. Most interviewees recognize a growing social diversity, which is sometimes seen as a potential, bringing positive change, in other cases a danger introducing a destruction of a ‘*poor but stable*’ (Schaffner, Goldberg, 2009) community. At the same time, diversity is a challenge to further development and policy: „(...) *it is difficult to create something with such diversity. How can you talk people into following common goals?*” (R 20, woman, 44 y.o., single parent household, secondary education).

5. Activities in and outside the neighbourhood

5.1 Introduction

As argued by van Kempen and Wissink (2014, p. 95) neighbourhoods can be perceived as basic categories through which both individuals and organisations ‘give meaning to their reality and through which they structure action’. This can also be related to the role of the neighbourhood as place defined as a physical locality, social setting and socio-cultural context (Robinson, 2010) in the daily life of residents. Shops, squares, bus stops, streets, community centres, parks and restaurants become scenes of social interaction and practices. Van Kempen and Wissink stress (2014, p. 103) that in research on neighbourhood as place it is important to focus on how different groups use different places and what forms of practices they are concerned with – in and outside the neighbourhood. This challenge applies to research on socially homogenous as much to mixed neighbourhoods.

It is often claimed (Blokland and Van Eijk, 2010) that residents of neighbourhoods which are characterized by a considerable level of diversity do not develop diverse networks. There is evidence provided that this also concerns ‘diversity-seekers’ – those middle-class representatives who chose the neighbourhood as their place of residence due to its diverse character. While in the practice of daily life ‘diversity-seekers’ use commercial neighbourhood facilities more often than other residents, this has no effect whatsoever on the diversification of their social networks (Blokland and Van Eijk, 2010). It is, however, argued by Blokland and Nast (2014) that there are different forms of community development observed in such areas, described as other, specific forms of constructing the ‘belonging’. The authors provide evidence that the sense of belonging in the place of residence may be related to casual encounters with known and unknown people, and to the creation of ‘absent ties’ (Granovetter, 1973). The feeling of belonging may evolve due to ‘public familiarity’ (recognizing and being recognized in public places), which produces social space as a ‘comfort zone’. In this chapter the daily activities – routines of residents of Praga Północ are analysed in relation to three questions:

- Where and with whom do individual representatives of the various groups of residents conduct their activities;
- How do they make use of public space;
- What is the role of local associations in their activities and in network creation.

It is argued here that there are considerable differences with respect to the scene of social interaction (places) and practices of inhabitants representing the categories of ‘old’ and ‘new’ residents. While the sense of belonging in the case of the ‘old’ residents is rather linked to the

length of residence, the constant making use of local places, i.e. private and public (shop on the corner, park), relations with immediate neighbours and family, the ‘new’ residents function more as members of a ‘metropolitan’ society (Tönnies’ Gesellschaft) within a specific local community (Gemeinschaft). The time spent in the neighbourhood encompasses only a part of their daily practice, as is related basically to leisure – making use of commercial services and creating networks within the category of ‘new’ residents.

At the same time there are differences in the way time is spent and where it is spent between groups representing different age and family status, level of education and economic status. „*There is such a difference, that the new resident takes the lift down to the underground garage and jumps into his car, while the old resident has to walk out of the door (...)*” (R 16, woman, 59 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education).

Last but not least, there are differences between the categories listed in chapter 4, where a classification of neighbours is presented according to the perception of the limits of the neighbourhood. When describing the activities in and outside of the neighbourhood all classifications are considered, presenting a wide spectrum of social diversity, with special focus on the latter and the distinction between the ‘native’ and ‘new’ residents.

5.2 Activities: where and with whom?

The ‘new’ residents usually state that they maintain face-to-face contacts with friends and acquaintances in the neighbourhood but in most cases those are friends from outside of the area – from work, school or university days; while relations with neighbours and people living in the vicinity are rather to be treated as limited occurrences related to daily obligations. This varies for example with respect to the residents’ family and age status. It is also related to the residents’ interests, obligations and ways of perceiving their neighbourhood and life in general. *Parents* meet people while picking up children from kindergarten, *‘elderly people’* most often talk about casual encounters in parks, all interviewees talk with people while shopping in small local stores. As one of the respondents describes, people she usually meets in the neighbourhood are “*(...) neighbours, or parents of children in our kindergarten*”. But she also states: “*(...) sometimes it happens that I talk to unknown people in parks.*” (R 9, woman, 38 y.o., living with husband and son, tertiary education). While about friends she says: „*(...) they are first of all from work, from university, also from high school.*” Childless, relatively young people and students who are recent residents usually maintain less local contacts:

“*(...)there is one person I can call a friend in my block, a neighbour that takes care of my cat when I am not there. The rest of my friends are people from school, university. I studied abroad, so also from there.*” (R 19, woman 36 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education).

At the same time, people with a higher level of education rarely maintain local contacts, or rather, their local contacts are usually less intense: “*People who are close to me from the past, from work and my family visit me here.*” says retired public official “*(...) today my contacts with neighbours are rather casual*” (R 10, woman, 63 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education). A distinct exception here are ‘new’ residents with an artistic background, who are engaged in all types of activities, also in the vicinity:

“*I have friends everywhere, not only those dealing with arts and stuff; neighbours, owners of shops, local small businesses (...), friends own cafés, I’m all around*”, says an artist and local activist (R 27, man, 49 y.o., couple with 6 children, tertiary education)/

A designer and artist claims:

“My best friend lives just around the corner. I have a close friend in a nearby photo gallery, then there are all the artists who have their studios here. Almost twenty people, close acquaintances. We keep in touch quite often and spend time together.”, claims a designer and artist (R 22, woman, 55 y.o., single household, tertiary education).

An interesting example is also the case of the French architect, who lives and works in one of the neighbourhoods of the district researched. He states: *“I made friends with people from the immediate surroundings and we spend time together. They are generally my age, older and a little younger, such a mixture.”* (R 1, man 37 y.o., couple with 3 children, tertiary education). Respondents often refer to places of daily encounter with others, to routines and activities in the neighbourhood. The places they mention include local shops (everybody), parks (*dog owners, parents, older people*), streets (*older people*), certain community centres (*older people*) and courtyards (*parents, ‘old’ residents in general*). People either talk about daily routines, or their leisure time. Less affluent inhabitants, usually those with a longer residence status meet in their buildings or in places they shop. They mention small local grocery stores, smaller supermarkets (especially one is mentioned frequently) and a local shopping centre.

Although especially the ‘old’ residents, as well as *older people* stick to the neighbourhood, generally most residents interviewed rarely shop beyond the limits of the district: *“I rarely go shopping to other places than nearby, only when some specific clothes are needed.”*, says a 35-year old man, who has lived with his fiancé for 5,5 years in the area (R 28, man, 35 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education). Practically all residents spend time in parks and go to the cinema. Especially the local cinema Praha is treated as a place of social encounter.

Young people and students, as well as more affluent residents talk about a larger variety of activities undertaken in comparison with their older and less affluent neighbours. The former focus on privately organized leisure time within and outside the neighbourhood, some of them invite friends to barbeques in private courtyards, visit restaurants and clubs, bike and walk. The latter prefer to take part in public open events. A professional from Łódź referred to above recalls his leisure time:

“I usually spend my time with friends at home, but we also bike to various places (...). I like to spend my time in Praga, because everything is close here. But I also spend a lot of time in other places.” (R 28, man, 35 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education).

A retired Ministry official talks about her and her husband’s former engagement in social events organised in the district:

“We took part in many events organized here, now we stay at home more due to our health condition. But there are many attractions here, like the street festivals, Days of Praga in the Praski Park. Things are happening here all the time, and we also have our very own local initiative – the Days of Michałów.” (R 10, woman, 63 y.o., tertiary education).

A student from eastern Poland explains that he enjoys spending time in the neighbourhood: *“I love Żabkowska street, I go to eat there in a Georgian restaurant. I love the place (...) There are many places there that I like.”* (R 7, man 22 y.o., single household).

A general finding is that *older people*, and especially those with a longer residence status make less use of commercial services than most *young people and students*, as well as the majority of the ‘new’ residents. Instead, they visit parks, walk and visit their neighbours and acquaintances. This is

reflected in their opinions as well as in descriptions made by ‘new’ residents. An architect asked where his neighbours spend free time says the following:

“Well, a lot of people spend their time at outdoor events, organized by the City or my local organisation in parks and in streets. People like such things here. There are also many local people in restaurants and clubs, but those are different people – of different status. I don’t think that all of my neighbours would go to such places. They would rather go to community centres and to church.” (R 25, man, 54 y.o., couple without children, secondary education).

Apart from organized events, time is spent with the family and also neighbours. A few respondents mention barbeque parties in their courtyards. An elderly man with higher education tells his story with a smile: *“(…) there were many barbeques in our courtyard in the summer season. Hmm, barbeque in the city, that was fun.”* (R 11, man, 60 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education).

Diversity in practices

The above description of places reflects to a great extent the activities undertaken by the residents in their neighbourhood. The main activities and practices, as most often present in the responses of the interviewees, include shopping, taking children to school, celebrating in the streets, celebrating at home and at private barbeque parties, going to restaurants, to the church, using public transport, working, walking and biking. In the narratives, the ‘old’ residents focus on describing the immediate surroundings and the activities undertaken in it. This concerns relations with neighbours, discussions, daily routines related to children and pets. Well-educated interviewees with well-paid jobs usually focus in their stories on leisure time, on the means of travelling to their workplace, the relation between the time spent in and outside of the neighbourhood.

Activities which are more often mentioned by the interviewees are related to the way neighbours take care of their surroundings – the courtyard or street, and activities undertaken for the disadvantaged, needy residents. The statements below are clearly about living with ‘difference’ in the space of the neighbourhood.

“The other building has been fenced off because it’s a private possession. The facades and surfaces were restored, the whole area surrounded by a fence, trees planted. Then we started building a fence around our building. You can see now that everything became orderly, as formerly there were broken bottles and beer cans all over the place (...)” (R 11, man, 60 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education).

A 36-year old well educated man on parental leave tells our interviewer about his reflections upon people’s needs, especially other *parents’* needs and those of *older people*. He thinks that not much is required to offer less mobile people opportunities to enjoy the time spent in their neighbourhood:

“When I moved in, I recognized that these people want the same kind of city that I want to live in. When thinking about projects for the participatory budget, I had an idea that in the place where you parked your car, a small green area could be arranged, a little park for people, not for cars.” (R 12, man, 36 y.o., couple with children, tertiary education).

The 43-year old landlady with 2 children is very engaged in all kinds of activities in the neighbourhood. She also claims that the role of the Church community where she is active in helping children from disadvantaged families is significant:

“Our Church community organises a Christmas party for children from poor families. The teachers in local schools know which children need help and pass this information over to the Church. About 50 gifts are funded every year.” (R 39, woman 43 y.o., single parent with 2 children, secondary education).

5.3 The use of public space

When talking about the use of public space, the respondents often mention: the courtyard, the street, schools, parks, public transport, a local community centre - Kuźnia, the Praha cinema, also local shops and the shopping mall Wileńska. It can be generally claimed that *older people, flâneurs*, less educated, as well as people with a longer residence status make more use of open, accessible, mostly uncommercial public space in the neighbourhood, spend more time in the vicinity and their use of commercial services is rare: *“(…) local people spend time everywhere, but not in restaurants and clubs.”* (R 1, man 37 y.o., couple with 3 children, tertiary education). Usually *young people and students*, more affluent and better educated people make use of both types of public space: *„I go to cafés, clubs, I use bike rental services, buses, bike lanes, trams, I will probably use the metro.”* (R 22, woman, 55 y.o., single household, tertiary education). When considering the classification in chapter 4, the categories of *dog owners, parents, older people, loiterers, wanderers and flâneurs* spend a lot of time using public, accessible uncommercial space, all out of different reasons, while *young people and students*, as well as more affluent, usually childless residents tend to use commercial space.

Local schools are not treated as spaces of encounter for different social groups, as most of the residents who can afford it send their children to schools in other districts. This concerns practically all interviewees in the *parents’* category. Courtyards are definitely segregated spaces, serving either residents in closed and comfortable housing estates, or inhabitants of council buildings, the latter being usually in a poor condition. *„Those were gated estates, where the residents were functioning within their closed community”,* says an older man, *“(…) the residents maintained no relations with the others.”* (R 17, man, 65 y.o., single household, tertiary education). The man continues to say that the residents of these buildings also use public spaces, usually parks. This is where people of different social background meet. Also, local kindergartens and playgrounds are places where bridging networks are established between diverse groups. Small local services, like grocery stores, tailor’s, shoe or watchmaker’s shops, or the Różycki market place – the ‘iconic’ bazaar and a kind of symbol for old Praga, are also referred to as unsegregated places.

Courtyards – a special place of daily encounter

Residents talk about disorderly and unsafe courtyards, as well as fenced, green courtyards where barbeques are organized. An old resident says that since their building has been fenced it has become clean and no ‘intruders’ come in: *“Sometimes we gather at barbeque parties once or twice a week. There are usually 10-20 people present.”* (R 11, man, 60 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education). Most residents feel safe in their courtyards. A man who worked for the ‘Neighbourhood Libraries’ initiative (Korcelli-Olejniczak et al., 2014) says: *“One of the activities in the Library is for example that we go out and read books in the courtyard.”* (R 4, man, 33 y.o., single household, secondary education). This is a true opportunity for people from different backgrounds to meet in the neighbourhood.

Those who care for their courtyards say: *“(…) we renovate a lot, we plant bushes, it looks very nice, its changing for the better.”* (R 13, woman, 42 y.o., couple with one child, tertiary education), they also try to teach others to do so: *“(…) if we do cleaning ourselves, we give a good example and this works. Our*

courtyard is clean, so the neighbours who had a mess feel ashamed and clean up. Things change, nobody throws garbage out of the window." (R 1, man 37 y.o., couple with 3 children, tertiary education). Another young, 'new' resident says that the neighbourhood is the only place where she sees children playing in the courtyard. There are, however, opposite opinions about safety and the use of courtyards. This concerns especially an area in which the mentioned centre for drug addicts has recently been opened: *"I don't allow my children to play in the courtyard. There were times, when the situation was different, now it is not safe."* (R 39, woman 43 y.o., single parent with 2 children, secondary education). Courtyards are also mentioned as places where the *loiterers* spend their time, they are referred to by more recent in-migrants as very village-like: *"Gate nr 11, an example of a closed enclave. Village life. You see ladies wearing bathrobes with curlers in their hair and laundry drying in the courtyard."* (R 17, man, 65 y.o., single household, tertiary education).

Schools – educational segregation

Generally, there are negative opinions about sending children to schools in the neighbourhood. These concern both the level of education and general social reputation. The latter is related mainly to some chosen areas, but the bad opinion about schools is common in spite of differences in the length of residence, socio-economic status, age of residents:

"I have decided to send my children to a school which is further from here. That other school is better, with a sports hall and swimming pool. I wanted to isolate my kids from bad influence." (R 39, woman 43 y.o., single parent with 2 children, secondary education); *„Its difficult to send children to school here. We take them to districts on the other side of the river. Here the budget is cut for everything. Children suffer because of this."* (R 27, man, 49 y.o., couple with 6 children, tertiary education), *„I have succeeded not to send my daughter to school in this district."* (R 35, woman, 43 y.o., single parent household, tertiary education).

Among the respondents interviewed there was one positive opinion about schools in the neighbourhood: *"(..) there are normal, unspoiled kids there, not like in other districts."* (R 1, man 37 y.o., couple with 3 children, tertiary education).

Parks – where diversity meets

Both 'old' and 'new' residents, *parents* and childless people, *older people*, as well as *young people and students* spend time in local parks:

„They go to parks." says the French architect about the 'old' residents (R 5, woman, 35 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education); *"We spend weekends in the park, or we sun bathe and stroll along the river, but we usually go to Skaryszewski Park and the Zoo."*, says a mother of a son (R 9, woman, 38 y.o., living with husband and son, tertiary education); *"Its an obligation to go to Praga park for the Days of Praga event."* (R 10, woman, 63 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education), says an old lady; *"If we have time we go to the Skaryszewski park with bikes or inline skates."* (R 12, man, 36 y.o., couple with children, tertiary education), says a young father of two children; *"We go to the park with my daughter (...)"*, says an ex-refugee from Chechnya (R 35, woman, 43 y.o., single parent household, tertiary education).

Streets as defined and undefined spaces

There are many ways in which streets are portrayed in the stories of the interviewees. A street is either an undefined space, or the synonym of 'courtyard'. People sometimes talk about not

wanting their children to play in the street, meaning spending time in an unorganized way, or feeling uncomfortable about letting kids wander around freely. Another way through which a street is a public space made use of are street festivals. A lot of respondents mention them. “*People like the street festival in Zabkowska*” (R 1, man 37 y.o., couple with 3 children, tertiary education); “*There are various things happening here like the festival in Brzeska street or Zabkowska street*” (R 2, woman, 27 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education). A street is a place where *loiters* stand, through which *wanderers* and *flâneurs* stroll, where *local activists* often interact with the residents. A street is also mentioned in the context of everyday chatting of *older people* and sometimes *parents*. A street is a very important place in the neighbourhood, encompassing neighbours in their diversity.

5.4 The importance of associations

Not many respondents interviewed are active in local associations although the district of Praga Północ is an arena of diverse social activity, which is pointed to in the people’s statements. This activity is related to local development in general, and to all forms of counterbalancing the negative aspects of the district, especially social exclusion. Two of the interviewees are members of associations, one interviewee was candidate in the local elections and represented a local organisation *The City is Ours - of the Praga residents* (Miasto jest Nasze - mieszkańców Pragi). Another respondent mentioned his engagement in the initiative ‘*Targowa for People*’ (Targowa dla Ludzi) – a bottom-up renewal project concerning Targowa street which is the district’s main functional area and transportation axis. The role of these associations, especially one of Michałów is recalled upon in many statements. There are also examples of participation in other organizations and fora like school councils, Church communities, bikers clubs. One respondent had his own foundation, the aim of which was to support disadvantaged children through artistic activities, a gentrifying process in a very deprived area of Praga Północ.

In general, the respondents share the opinion that local associations are doing a lot for the community, in many cases more than the local authorities. As one of the ‘new’ residents claims: “*The Association Michałów has many ideas how to change the area. Their main target is the transportation system and how it influences urban development.*” (R 12, man, 36 y.o., couple with children, tertiary education). The main difference between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ residents related to their engagement in local development is that the ‘old’ residents usually focus on their immediate surroundings. The ‘old’ inhabitants usually cooperate directly with their neighbours, not feeling the need or having the interest of involvement in local associations. As far as the ‘new’ residents are concerned, they feel more responsible for their wider surroundings. Their engagement in local organizations and informal initiatives creates linking networks between various groups of residents being an activity complementary to local integration policy.

5.5 Conclusions

The way the residents of Praga Północ spend their time is as diverse as they are themselves. On the one hand, ‘ne’ and ‘old’ residents differ with respect to the scene of social interaction, spatial patterns of activities and the feeling of belonging to the place of residence. The significant differences in educational level and economic status are reflected in the lack of consistency of attitudes, values and common patterns of behaviour.

For all qualitative categories distinguished, the closest network of friends and family is not restricted to the neighbourhood. The social relations of ‘new’ residents within the boundaries of the neighbourhood are usually limited to occurrences related to daily obligations. *Parents* use public space in the neighbourhood as far as it concerns their children. *Older people* and residents with a longer residence status have in most cases more or less regular, although not very

emotional relationships with people in the vicinity, whom they encounter in places like parks, courtyards and local shops. It can be claimed that all groups have developed a specific feeling of 'belonging' to the place of living, although they understand it differently. The local identity reflected by more intense contacts and more frequent activities in their neighbourhood is less dependent on the length of residence than on individual profiles of the residents – their education, interests, job, family and age status. There is definitely a relation between the general lifestyle and the way time is spent locally; moreover, it is often attached to the categorization of 'new' and 'old' residents.

People manifesting different types of activities in the neighbouring environment differ with respect to the use of open public space and commercial services. Although they use partly the same infrastructure, particularly regarding shopping for food, green areas and cultural institutions, it can be claimed that the diversity of the area leads to low social integration - the residents do not live together but rather next to each other. Such a situation, according to Putnam (2007, p. 151) in the short perspective leads to a reduction in social capital resources, in mutual trust and cooperation:

'(...) inhabitants of diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, to distrust their neighbours, (...). Note that this pattern encompasses attitudes and behaviour, bridging and bonding social capital, public and private connections. Diversity, at least in the short run, seems to bring out the turtle in all of us.'

The low level of mutual trust is manifested by physical fencing of residential buildings from public space, which is usually perceived negatively by less affluent neighbours. At the same time, some people of higher economic status see positive aspects of being cut off from the public space and the diversity outside.

The evidence from the interviews allows us to conclude that social interaction in the area researched is very functional, more emotions are related to the way time is spent; for example walks or admiring the river are signs of 'belonging'. The social distance between different groups of residents is, however, clearly visible and takes the form of two seemingly opposing processes. One leads to an increase in tolerance and integration, and the other to maintaining distance and lack of acceptance for differences in norms and behaviour.

6. Social cohesion

6.1 Introduction

Building on the findings from chapter 5, one should recall an argument by Curley (2010) according to whom it is not socio-economic mix but rather social and material resources of the neighbourhood that are strong predictors of social capital. The development of neighbourhood facilities such as libraries, community centres, health, childcare and social support services, schools and parks as spaces of encounter, integration and equalisation of social opportunities – all these may enhance social cohesion. At the same time, place attachment and the feeling of safety, may also change the perception of the neighbourhood – counteract the stigma of a 'bad area' and of the 'broken window' syndrome.

Most reflections expressed on the theme that are expressed by the interviewees blame city authorities for the low level of social cohesion, which is perceived as a result of lack of insufficient policies. The Local Revitalization Programme (2008) for example was believed to focus mainly on housing policies supporting the gentrification process, irrespective of social

needs and inequalities, low quality of social resources and of the endogenous potential. As a consequence of this, the City now introduces the Integrated Revitalization Programme for the years 2015-2022 with a focus on areas with most intense social problems. The programme promises for example:

‘Socio-economic revival by raising the quality of public space, in accordance with the principles of spatial order and aesthetics, development of tourism and culture based on cultural heritage resources, increased safety of the inhabitants, as well as improvement in transport possibilities within housing areas, social integration of inhabitants, preventing and counteracting social exclusion’ (ZPR 2014).

The programme is expected to enhance the area’s social cohesion, the low level of which is considered to be one of its main handicaps.

6.1 Composition of interviewees’ egocentric networks

The composition of individual social networks in the area investigated is extremely diversified. The types of relations that the interviewees establish, their intensity, the tendency towards homo- or heterophily within social networks, their spatial closeness or openness depend predominately on basic demographic factors such as age, family status and education, but also on origin of the respondents, as well as his or her cultural and religious background. To a certain extent, they are also related to very individual psychosocial features, interests, lifestyle, sexual orientation and other characteristics of the persons we talked to. It can be assumed that the diversity of the area, the differences between various social groups, the gentrification generated by housing policies, the inflow of inhabitants and the ‘*vogue for Praga*’, constitute a challenge to social cohesion in the district.

The analysis of relations and ties established locally by individuals unveils two basic patterns. Firstly, some relations are more of an emotional character, they derive from a need of ‘togetherness in place’ and a desire for social contacts, encounter, sharing of space; others are more of a functional nature, related to common local goals, daily practices, obligations. Secondly, the functional or emotional relation to space is connected with the individual’s rootedness in the area, the length of residence in Warsaw and in the neighbourhood.

„I do know people here, but all that connects us is following some common goal. I am not from Warsaw, or Praga, I didn’t study here, I have to build my relations from the beginning, it is different when people go to school together. Even in Praga it is important when you have known each other longer, for people who made it, I mean. Because there are people my age from here who died from alcohol and drugs.” (R 14, man, 35 years old, couple without children, tertiary education).

The aspect of the length or residence, together with the factors discussed in the first paragraph decide about whether individual social networks allow people to become a part of a community, or rather alienate them from the immediate surrounding. Following Wellman and Wortley (1990), different types of ties provide different kinds of supportive resources. Some ties are not supportive, while others may either provide emotional aid or functional support.

When comparing individual networks of the interviewees it seems that *older people*, irrespective of all other factors maintain deeper emotional relations, also in the neighbourhood. This can as well apply to those inhabitants with a longer residence status, and to people in a difficult financial situation.

“Yes, I have a very close friend nearby. He visits me very often. My friend is also retired and a true-bone Pragian. We worked together at a parking lot. We were from here, not like some ‘glassjars’, that is temporary in-migrants. I have known this guy some 20 years, I know his wife and family.” says an old widower (R 37, man, 80 y.o., single household, primary education).

Quite obviously the length of residence in the area has also to do with the diversity of social networks of individual residents. Generally, *older people*, less affluent residents with a lower level of education are more local, and their social networks are less diverse. But there are exceptions to this rule. The landlady referred to in the previous chapters explains:

“I know many people who live in my neighbourhood, different people, very mixed. I’m quite energetic and like to be present in many places, and have friends there - officials and cleaning ladies and managers in firms. They are either younger than me or my age or a bit older.” (R 39, woman 43 y.o., single parent with 2 children, secondary education).

The latter interviewee is an example of a *social activist*, person who is engaged in all kinds of activities in the community. Her social network is wide, although not all relations are deep and intense. A similar situation concerns almost all artists we interviewed. People performing semi-artistic jobs seem to have wider and more diverse social networks than most other people: *“My best friend lives nearby, and another friend works in a photo gallery here and the rest of the artists. We maintain close contacts.”*, says graphisist (R 22, woman, 55 y.o., single household, tertiary education). Similarly, a man who owns a workshop in Praga says: *“I have artists around me, there were here yesterday for example, we see each other every two weeks or so. The artistic milieu here is very open.”* (R 29, man, 61 y.o., couple with 6 children, tertiary education). The man claims that he maintains also close contacts with many other people in the neighbourhood. He continues to say: *„First of all I like this generation who has not forgotten what it means to be elegant and cultured”* (op. cit.).

The development of social networks can also be analysed from the perspective of its dynamics. The local, older residents were accustomed to closer relations with their neighbours, despite their diversity. Living in a common space meant being a community – spending time together, organizing neighbours’ parties or inviting neighbours to family celebrations. The newly established relations with people in the neighbourhood are more functional and more casual, as is the case of *parents* or *dog owners*, who share obligations or interests. Generally, *young people and students* maintain relations with people of their age, not necessarily living in the neighbourhood, those are either friends from university, or individuals sharing interests.

This also concerns some well-educated professionals. They usually say, like an actress who moved to Praga 7 years ago, that they *„maintain relations with people who do similar things”* (R 9, woman, 38 y.o., living with husband and son, tertiary education). The woman argues that she tried to establish contacts with neighbours and people in the vicinity. One woman was of similar age, had children and was well-educated – a sales manager. But in that case even common goals and obligations did not play a role. The actress complains that she could not find a common language with her neighbour. *“We are artists, such people will not understand us.”* (op. cit.). A completely different example is represented by a middle aged, well-educated man, who has established a dense social network in his closest vicinity:

“I know everybody in my building. It was built 1993-1994, so it is not this newest type of housing, where this new category of people lives (...) Our closest friends, a family with three children also live in this building.” (R 18, man, 36 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education).

The above analysis shows that there are no general rules behind the type of networks established by individuals. The diversity of the neighbourhood may perhaps hinder social cohesion and the formation of a community and place-awareness, but in the light of individual stories these are rather specific features, needs and constraints that decide about the density and composition of social networks.

6.2 Living together with neighbours: bonds, forms of mutual support, etc.

The main factors that determine relations between the residents in the neighbourhood are usually age, family status and length of residence in the area. But there are also examples of people who despite their short residence status have still developed a local social network. They trust their neighbours and are trusted by them: “*We have neighbours whom we trust, they live on the floor below us. I think we trust them a lot.*”, says a man who recently moved to Praga (R 12, man, 36 y.o., couple with children, tertiary education).

It seems that there are two basic patterns concerning the interaction between the residents. The first is based on bonding networks, usually strong ties established between those people who have lived in Praga at least since the systemic transformation started in 1989. These bonds concern family, neighbours and close friends. Although most of the ‘old’ residents among the interviewed represent a similar socio-economic status, it can be assumed that this type of interaction is rather related to the physical rootedness and familiarity which play an important role in the evolution of sociality and cooperation, and not specifically to similarity of the residents. The other type of relations is established between more recent in-migrants who, as far as the neighbourhood is concerned, tend to maintain contacts with people of similar socio-economic status, but develop bridging networks outside of the area of residence. It is also evident that the bridging networks established connect people who differ in terms of nationality, ethnicity or age, but tend to share interests, attitudes and values.

Interactions between persons of different socio-economic status are observed when there are functional dependencies or common interests and goals that bring residents together. This is frequent in the case of *parents* or *dog owners*, who represent different socio-economic and demographic categories, but focus on similar every day activities in the space of the neighbourhood. There is also strong interaction between *local activists* of various backgrounds who share goals and an emotional attitude toward their area of activity.

Strong versus weak ties

A significant process observed related to social interaction in Praga Północ is the changing character of personal bonds. Several interviewees praise the times when neighbours were more interconnected, have developed stronger ties within their social networks. A woman who lived in Praga from birth tells her story:

“Now the ties are loose. When I was a little girl, we were much closer with neighbours. In those days there were no TV sets or radio, so the only thing to do was to hang around the courtyard and that was fun. Now I don’t even know most of my neighbours (...). In the past people were interested in what the others do. Now it is different (...). Most people from those days either died or moved out and new people came.” (R 43, woman, 56 y.o., couple without children vocational education).

A retired woman also sees a lot of change:

„There were times when we were close with our neighbours, now there are no name days¹² we celebrate together, only funerals. There are no really friendly relations, to many new people.” (R 10, woman, 63 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education).

A much younger woman focusses on the type of current relations with neighbours in newer buildings:

“A lot of these contacts is of organisational character. Lots of things are happening in the housing cooperative, we have renovations for example. We also talk about children, exchange information.” (R 6, woman, 35 y.o., couple with 2 children, tertiary education).

In some cases, especially in older tenement buildings with many *older people* the relations have maintained their cordial nature despite the flow of time. An elderly man focuses on the friendly atmosphere in his building:

“(…) when I moved in here many years ago, people came, knocked on the door, said ‘how are you’. We had a cup of coffee, tea, chatted. And here you are, we know each other.” (R 37, man, 80 y.o., single household, primary education).

There is also a specific kind of local solidarity developed between people:

People have lived here for generations, they take after their grandfathers and great grandfathers, therefore the atmosphere here is so specific, because everybody knows each other. Nobody calls the police, when things happen, we solve our problems by ourselves.” (R 17, man, 65 y.o., single household, tertiary education).

When talking about her neighbourhood a 56-year old woman says:

„On Christmas Eve we knock on the neighbours’ doors, pay visits, decorate the tree and table. I don’t spend Christmas with my sister as much as I spend with my neighbours, children sing Christmas carols. They sing in the courtyard.” (R 30, woman, 56 y.o., single parent household, vocational education).

We ask the woman to tell us what it means to be a good neighbour, what she expects from people different than she. She says: „They should learn our customs. Don’t interfere with anything, know nothing, don’t listen to anything, don’t peep, just be nice and say good morning to everybody.” (op.cit.).

The *older people*, as well as the majority of the ‘old’ residents share a different feeling of belonging in the neighbourhood. Even if they don’t maintain very close relationships with people in the vicinity, they somehow feel connected to the place. A middle-aged women who lives by herself in a single-family house built by her father in the 1960s states: “(…) we drink coffee with my neighbours, chat on a regular basis (…)” (R 26, woman, 58 y.o., single household, tertiary education). The respondent argues however, that there are hardly any relations developed between ‘new’ and ‘old’ residents in the area: “(…) the old residents know each other and the new residents, but we don’t integrate. There is no barrier or wall between us, no antagonism. But then there is no interest.” (op. cit.).

¹²It is a traditional custom in Poland to celebrate name days, currently people tend to celebrate birthdays more often. A characteristic thing is that *older people* interviewed mention very many first names when talking about their neighbours. This gives an idea about the closeness of traditional relations in the area.

There are some exceptions to this rule. A married, elderly couple who moved to Praga a month ago and live in a rented flat say that they already have established neighbourly relations with people in their building: “*I think we already know everybody. I have the impression that people live here like in a small town, closer to each other.*” (R 16, woman, 59 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education). The couple also likes the diversity of the neighbours, which they consider to be interesting. An analogous opinion is expressed by the French architect referred to earlier in this report. He says:

“If the neighbors do not welcome each other here there has to be a reason for that. In other places in the city, you have to have a reason to say ‘good morning’ to someone.” (R 1, man 37 y.o., couple with 3 children, tertiary education). The man also claims that he is accepted by everyone: “*I think I feel that I belong here. Even though for most of my neighbors I am a foreigner, a Frenchman but as I live here, I am ‘from Praga’, like the others. This is how it works unless you feel different yourself.*” (op.cit.).

Another important component of social capital is trust. The level of trust in the area researched seems to be quite high. Usually people trust their neighbours, in some cases they trust them more than other people they know. Trust usually grows with the length of residence in the neighbourhood. People tend to trust more if their neighbours are similar to them: “*Undoubtedly, I wouldn’t trust just anybody only because he is my neighbour. I think that trust is based on how you picture people. You probably trust those who are similar to you.*” (R 21, man, 45 y.o., single household, tertiary education). Long relationships, however, can be based on trust despite differences between people. Things that strengthen trust between diverse residents are for example: childhood spent together or children in the same age. A woman, who has spent all of her life in Praga says: “*Our children were in the same age more or less. My son liked their son. I trust my neighbours. I could leave my keys with them. I don’t believe that I could trust other people more than neighbours and family.*” (R 43, woman, 56 y.o., couple without children vocational education). Also functional relations, common goals make people trust each other. Parents tend to trust other *parents*, *dog owners* trust other *dog owners* in the neighbourhood.

There are opinions that there is a specific kind of trust among ‘native’ residents of Praga which derives from a specific local identity developed among the residents of Praga after the war, and was inherited by next generations. This kind of intuitional trust is related not only to the strong ties between long-time residents but also tradition, the unwritten rules of co-existence: „*In Praga*”, says a 35-year old man, who is active in a local association:

„(...) among the autochthonic residents there are people who have known each other all their live, went to school together, sometimes even broke the law together. The solidarity there is stronger. The newer residents restrict their activity and also trust to the nearest surroundings, sometimes even their flat. The door is a barrier that isolates them from the world. This concerns more affluent residents.” (R 14, man, 35 years old, couple without children, tertiary education).

Actually, all categories of residents trust *social activists*, people who work for the community. A young woman talks about her neighbour:

„There is an old lady, who lives vis a vis, who is active in our housing cooperative. In our building, regularly on Thursdays there are meetings organized. My neighbour, dressed elegantly takes the lift to the basement, where she has on-call hours (...) Knowing who she is and that she does things for the community makes me trust her.” (R 15, woman, 31 y.o., single household, tertiary education).

Functional ties, emotional ties and social solidarity

There is an opinion about some newcomers in Praga, in particular those who are in a better financial situation that “(...) *they only trust their flat, family and car. They treat this place as a bedroom, where they sleep, they are not interested in any relations with other people.*” (R 14, man, 35 years old, couple without children, tertiary education). In buildings where there are many rented flats there are hardly any relations between people established. An elderly woman complains : “*These flats are sold, residents change, new tenants come, they don’t integrate and they are not helpful at all*” (R 31, woman, 83 y.o., single household, secondary education). On the other hand, most interviewees have personally experienced expressions of social solidarity – support offered by a neighbour. Also, people usually declare that they provide support if necessary.

Signs of ignorance, resistance, bad will or rejection are rare. The most common opinion about old Praga’s tradition and its social solidarity among residents is that: “(...) *if something were happening, it would be enough to open the window and scream. This is how the area functions. If there is a need, there is a need.*” (R 10, woman, 63 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education). Another resident considers Praga to be exceptional with respect to social solidarity: “*An old woman fell in the street, in winter, at an instant there were five people around her to help. This would not happen everywhere.*” (R 30, woman, 56 y.o. living with daughter, vocational education).

Many people talk about practical support:

“When I needed to carry two beds for my sons and the guy from the transportation company was crooked and couldn’t help me, I asked a neighbour and he carried these beds upstairs. If somebody needs help here, everybody helps.” (R 39, woman, 43 y.o., single, living with 2 children)

This kind of solidarity is observed between people who maintain mutual functional relations. Interviewees talk about support offered among *parents* or *elderly people*. Also *dog owners* help each other in walking their dogs. Such kind of functional and casual support and interaction is also observed increasingly in newer buildings, where there are many new residents, although the support is more casual.

“Those are some small things like borrowing a cup of sugar, or when I was ill a neighbour came and brought me a hot stew and some sweet stuff to make me recover faster. I also get help offered when I have problems with my car in the garage.” (R 36, woman, 60 y.o., single household, tertiary education).

Another kind of engagement and solidarity with the neighbours is observed in case of *local activists*. There are people among this category who are engaged in institutionalized forms of activity. Their relations with other residents are not direct or strong, but they develop linking networks via local organizations. Others are not members of formal organizations, but owing to their emotional engagement in the deeds of the neighbourhood and its residents they develop stronger ties with people:

“Neighbours help each other as much as they can. When you need help, they help you. When you see that someone needs help, you go on and help. I have such a specific profession that my level of sensitivity is a bit higher than the average. My children also, I provide medical aid, as next to being an artist, I am also a qualified male nurse. I help people when I see that they have health problems. Never leave a man lying in the street, even if he looks like he’s drunk or high, cause it might be something dangerous. Once I found a man in a puddle of blood. Then the neighbours said, that Highlander – that’s what they call me here, saved his life.” (R 27, man, 49 y.o., couple with 6 children, tertiary education).

6.4. Conclusions

The most important barrier to social cohesion in the area researched is the low level of integration between dissimilar groups of residents who represent different socio-economic status, different lifestyles and values. The problem is deeply rooted as the divergence is related to unlike ways of understanding the idea of social solidarity, its rules and ways of expressing it. Most of the 'old' residents, not necessarily due to their economic status but physical rootedness in the area, share a specific way of approaching their friends and neighbours, their relations are based on strong ties with people who have been living in the district for a long time. On the contrary, the more recent in-migrants in general establish weaker ties and with people of similar socio-economic status, even if different with respect to nationality or age.

Besides different patterns behind social relations established, there is, however, evidence of functional relations among people sharing common goals and activities, as well as emotional relations between residents who share an attitude toward their area of residence – need of local identity, improvement, change. Some of these people develop a certain feeling of 'belonging' in the neighbourhood, even though their interaction with other people is weak.

It seems that the functional and emotional relations can constitute seeds for ties to be developed in a longer perspective. This requires the development of such initiatives and facilities which can integrate dissimilar residents with the focus on a common goal. Another factor which builds integration, and therefore contributes to social cohesion is the awakening of the feeling of local identity and belonging to a certain subspace. The evidence of the activity of individuals and groups of people engaged in counteracting social exclusion in the district, as well as those focusing on the area's development and attractiveness are premises that integration can be achieved despite a diverse social structure

7. Social mobility

7.1 Introduction

Social mobility, a change in social status relative to the other's social status, is a process that allows one to determine how society changes over time. It is a good indicator of direction, speed and depth of change. It can show how fast a society adjusts to changing external conditions. The main categories of mobility based on its direction (Sorokin, 1927) are vertical mobility, i.e. change of position up or down the hierarchy (e.g. class or state) and horizontal mobility, meaning change of position with respect to another at the same level of hierarchy. The main categories of mobility based on its duration are *intra-generational mobility* – mobility that takes place in the lifetime of a person, *inter-generational mobility* – focused on relations between positions of members of different generations. The analysis conducted unveils all of those categories, but a strong focus on intra-generational mobility is observed. Social mobility is considered a factor that draws sharp division lines between the respondents.

7.2 Current and previous jobs

As expected, the positions of the respondents depend strongly on the level of education they have attained. Respondents with tertiary education are present in all the categories distinguished, also in those identified according to the length of residence in the district. The professional positions and job trajectories of people with university diploma did not differ considerably one from another:

“I was always a journalist, already upon finishing high school I knew I’d become a journalist and be one till the end of my life.” (R 26, woman, 58 y.o., single household, tertiary education), says a middle-aged widow living in Praga for many years; *„I’m a freelancer, an artist. So I do many things, like coaching, conducting workshops, organizing exhibitions. I also paint. I have a small atelier nearby”*, says a more recent in-migrant to Praga (R 22, woman, 55 y.o., single household, tertiary education).

People with vocational, or general secondary education levels attained, mostly with longer residence status in the neighbourhood, are usually blue collar workers or they occupy simple office jobs: *„I’m a landlady and I work physically. I was offered this job after my divorce. I had to reconcile the role of a mother and work.”* (R 39, woman 43 y.o., single parent with 2 children, secondary education):

„I have been working for three months as a computer technician in a cable tv company. I am crippled as a result of drinking too much. It’s been 2 years, 2 months and 13 days that I am sober. I spend long days in front of the computer, although I hate computers, Facebook etc., I hate them all.” (R 4, man, 33 y.o., single household, secondary education).

An important factor that differs respondents are their carrier paths. In case of people with tertiary education, usually an upward mobility is observed.

„After I finished college I started working at Pizizza Hut, then after five years as a waiter I became a marketing manager and this is how my adventure with promotion and commercials started. Now I work at a company which organizes conferences and events for firms.”

In the case of the established residents with vocational education a horizontal mobility is more frequently visible. *„I am a landlady. (...) before that I worked in a store, then I was a babysitter.”* (R 39, woman 43 y.o., single parent with 2 children, secondary education). What is important, almost all resident’s professional life outreaches the district of Praga Północ. Both “old” and “new” residents, except for artists, only sporadically work within the study area:

“I work as a guard and I am awarded DLA (...). I work in Wola, they move me here and there. The same company but every year there is a competition. If they win we stay, if not we move somewhere else.” (R 43, woman, 56 y.o., couple without children vocational education).

The strongest divide with respect to social mobility, especially professional mobility, concerns two specific categories of residents. The first group are immigrants from Chechnya. Their life trajectories are an example of an extreme vertical downward mobility. One of the respondents with an academic degree describes her professional carrier with the following statement: *„I baked cakes for sale, then I packed them and I worked as a clerk. I applied for jobs that anyone could perform.”* (R38, woman, 38 y.o., couple with 4 children). The experience of emigration is hard itself, but it also has further consequences.

“If I would not be forced to leave my country it would be different. These years that I lost, it would not be like that. My life would be stable. A 33-year old starts to build a fundament, gain a foothold. But then I didn’t have a foothold, I didn’t even know where I stand. At the age of 33 years, I was forced to change everything. I regret that I was not younger when leaving my country.” (R 35, woman, 43 y.o., single parent household, tertiary education).

Economic exclusion leads to exclusion in other fields. The woman continues:

“My situation was difficult, even tragic. I experienced two wars, but it was here that I experienced real hunger. I feel ashamed that I have to say things like that.” (op.cit.).

The second group that strongly differs from all others are artists. In spite of being highly-educated and working in their profession, they are relatively poorly paid and have no reasonable professional promotion. One of the systems of financing artists in the area investigated is a municipal system of micro-grants, but according to the interviewee the system is ineffective:

„We prepared a project for 180 events during the year. For our streets and the whole of Praga. We planned events in many different places – exhibitions, drama, concerts (...). Unfortunately it turned out that apart from a media hype nothing happened. The City organized its own event New Year’s eve celebration with a budget of 6 mln złs”¹³ (R 27, man, 49 y.o., couple with 6 children, tertiary education).

The same respondent describes his professional trajectory in the following way: *“I’m a carpenter, plumber, constructor, I organize exhibitions, film events, I am a photographer, I write screenplays. I would prefer to be a sculptor, but the conditions are difficult.” (op.cit.).* Although the interviewee declared to have a wide field of artistic activity, when asked about income he replied: *“You’re joking. I earn almost nothing from all that.” (op.cit.).* The necessity of undertaking so many professional activities by artists is related to various background conditions. Firstly, the level of public financing appropriated for cultural activities is extremely low in the district analysed. Secondly, the demand for culture in the area is not very significant. Funds in most domestic budgets are earmarked to satisfy basic needs. Culture is considered to be expensive and remains a luxury for many families. Therefore, in order to achieve a satisfying level of income, artists have to work in other branches: *„I am an artist, a freelancer. I do all kinds of things (...) I worked for Gazeta Wyborcza¹⁴ as a graphics designer. My daughter was little at that time, so money was very important.” (R 22, woman, 55 y.o., single household, tertiary education).*

On the other hand, as already focused upon in an earlier report, artists are the only professional group that strongly binds their activity with the area of our research. This is related to the fact that many representatives of this profession work either at home or near their place of residence. Their presence and cultural activity in the area is a local development factor, as they produce and promote cultural goods focused on social change, improvement of life chances and social mobility, especially for young residents of Praga Północ (Korcelli-Olejniczak et. al. 2014) *“We also wanted to allow the kids to look at their place of residence from the outside, we took them to exhibitions in other districts, we wanted them to observe and contemplate.” (R 27, man, 49 y.o., couple with 6 children, tertiary education).*

7.3 Using neighbours and others to find a job

The support of neighbours in job finding is determined by the category of residents. It is rare among highly-educated and well-paid, usually “new” residents, and if it appears, it’s mostly because of stronger bounds than the neighbourhood offers. *„We would have to be very close to help each other in such situations. This is not a case for mutual support in the neighbourhood. It’s a case for friends” (R33, woman, 43 y.o., couple with child, tertiary education).* Residents within the category generally don’t need this form of support from their neighbours. It seems that if they look for or acquire help in job hunt it happens in closer networks than the neighbourhood.

¹³ i.e. almost EUR 1.5 million

¹⁴ One of Poland’s top daily journals

Help in job search is much more common between interviewees with vocational and secondary education, established residents, *older people*, immigrants from poorer countries. It also happens mostly in communities that occupy pre-war buildings: “*Information circulates here. One tells the other that there is a job offer or work here?*” (R 4, man, 33 y.o., single household, secondary education). This is related to a great extent to the type of job that the mentioned categories of residents look for - either jobs with a high level of functional complexity or low pay temporary jobs. The latter are often subject to discussions between neighbours.

“I have personally helped my neighbour to find work. She worked earlier in a shoe shop, then she couldn’t find work. So we sometimes talk about such things here with people I know. And there was an afternoon cleaning job in the courts in the city centre, so I said that I know someone who is interested.” (R 39, woman 43 y.o., single parent with 2 children, secondary education), or *“It turned out that they are looking for people to distribute leaflets. I asked my children and neighbours in need (...) There is this guy who collects scrap metal. I meet him and say, there is this job. You’re taking it? (...) and he says, that’s great, thank you, I’m on board. Next day he comes to me shaved and dressed like for church.”* (R 27, man, 49 y.o., couple with 6 children, tertiary education).

The information network is not limited to neighbours that have lived together for a long time. Immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Asia that are placed in social housing become members of this network too:

„They offered me a job. When my neighbour heard, that I am looking for a job, she gave me a few hints. The job didn’t work out, but she wanted to help.” (R 28, man, 35 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education) or *“My neighbour called somebody to say that I urgently need a job. I wanted to sign the contract as fast as possible. People heard it on the grapevine. Just a free-for-task agreement but with superannuation. People help each other here.”* (R 35, woman, 43 y.o., single parent household, tertiary education).

The help of neighbours in job searching can be seen as a factor of quality and depth of social networks in the neighbourhood. It is also a factor which has a large impact on the mobility of members of this network. On the one hand, it keeps them from starving, allows them to earn for their livelihood, while on the other, it also allows them to change work places to similar ones (horizontal mobility). The local social networks examined are rarely helpful in supporting such vertical mobility as advancement and promotion at work.

7.4 Neighbourhood reputation as an asset in upward social mobility?

The so called neighbourhood effect or the impact of the area’s reputation on its residents is unquestionable. However, its dimensions differ in the case different categories of residents. Well-educated and well-paid recent in-migrants are often confronted with declared aversion to the area expressed by their friends and acquaintances. A young woman explains: *„They think that we are living here in slums. My sister says, that she is not going to the slums, cause she’s scared.”* (R 9, woman, 38 y.o., living with husband and son, tertiary education). Another woman says: *“Some friends told me that they always take a taxi if they want to come to my place, because they are afraid to take the bus as it seems to be dangerous in this area.”* (R 19, woman 36 y.o.) There are more such opinions among ‘newcomers’:

„When someone hears the word Szymulki, he thinks more or less that there is a rascal with a knife around every corner, that it’s a different world. But when I show the place to the people, the cafes in Zabkowska, they often change their way of perceiving the area.” (R 14, man, 35 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education).

The negative attitude of outsiders towards the area is also reflected by difficulties in accessing certain services provided by firms at the client's home. A middle-aged woman who moved to the neighbourhood a few years ago says for example:

„Just recently I wanted to prolong some kind of an insurance policy. An agent visited me at home and told me that he doesn't understand how such a highly educated person like me lives in such a neighbourhood (...). And some guys from a redecorating company hesitated to provide me with their services, because they thought I were insolvent or that I would cheat on them.” (R 19, woman 36 y.o., couple without children, tertiary education).

A worse situation related to the neighbourhood effect concerns usually less affluent people with vocational or secondary education. For them the bad reputation of the area sometimes tends to be a barrier to social mobility:

„The lady who hired me told me after some time that they had great doubts about hiring me, a person from such as deprived neighbourhood. And then she told me, that I don't look like a person from that area.” (R 39, woman 43 y.o., single parent with 2 children, secondary education). *„I realized lately that boys from my courtyard who attend vocational school and want to become car mechanics are looking for some kind of apprenticeship. And they didn't find any because they live in this neighbourhood. I even told them to temporarily register someplace else, to eliminate this kind of stupidity. People from here are discriminated because of their place of residence.”* (R 27, man, 49 y.o., couple with 6 children, tertiary education).

As shown above, the reputation of Praga Północ, but especially of some of its subareas, can affect the perception of individuals as employees, being a barrier to social mobility. This, however, usually concerns poorly educated residents. While in the case of more recent and well-educated inhabitants, the neighbourhood effect is limited and has no direct impact on upward mobility, indirectly it can matter due to the composition of one's social network.

7.5 Conclusions

Social mobility in Praga Północ varies according to three basic factors – education, economic status and length of residence. While new in-migrants, well-paid and highly-educated residents are more mobile in terms of vertical mobility, both intra- and inter-generational, it is usually the 'old' residents, as well as persons with only vocational education in general that tend to be more frequently trapped in their social positions. They may be horizontally mobile, but still have less chances for an upward social mobility. The latter is reinforced by the neighbourhood effect which is more evident in the case of less affluent, older residents, those with a lower level of education.

The analysis conducted makes it also evident that social networks play a crucial role in social mobility. People with more extended and diverse weak ties within their network, related to their level of education, experience and skills, are more competitive on the labour market (Montgomery 1992). The neighbourhood reputation plays a minor role in their job performance and their social networks are usually extended far beyond their place of residence. In the case of 'old' residents, those with a lower educational, as well as socio-economic status, the strong ties within their social network (between long-time neighbours, friends and family) are in many cases decisive in maintaining their basic existence and in a way supportive of horizontal mobility.

In this context, it can be concluded that social diversity is not a factor of raising social mobility in the neighbourhood, as groups of residents of different socio-economic status or cultural background rarely interact within their social networks. It can be assumed, however, that a stronger social integration in the area, supported by public policies and bottom-up activities, may result in the diversification of social networks in the case of those residents whose social mobility potential is very limited.

8. Perceptions of public policies and initiatives

8.1 Introduction

As argued in Chapter 2.3., the inflow of new residents to Praga Północ, especially those characterized by a high level of education, though not necessarily well-paid jobs, has a considerable influence on how the district is treated as a ground for the implementation of policies and initiatives. This is related in the first place to the rise of general social awareness, the level of public participation and care about space, also beyond one's backyard. These processes are extremely important due to the fact that in the perception of the residents, according to the research conducted it is the public authorities, i.e. the City, are to be blamed for the bad state of the area, its deprived social structure and degraded space.

8.2 Perception and evaluation of existing policies and initiatives: what do residents know?

Based on the interviews conducted we found that inhabitants of Praga Północ have a rather modest and selective knowledge of initiatives and projects carried on in the area of their residence. This is especially true for the 'old' residents of Praga Północ, i.e. those who have lived there for at least ca. 20 years. A significant number of respondents have not heard about any project that was implemented: "*I, frankly speaking, find no interest in such matters.*" (R 7, man 22 y.o., single household, secondary education).

The interviewees primarily referred to those projects and initiatives which were implemented by the City, and which targeted at social cohesion and social mobility. Those included the initiative of the 'Participatory budget', the Integrated Revitalization Programme, the cultural initiative 'Days of Praga', the initiative 'Targowa for People', aimed at a reorganization of public space in the key transportation artery of Praga – Targowa street. Apart from the above, also small projects related to infrastructure like free gyms in parks were mentioned now and again.

The 'old' residents, usually less educated persons, as well as *older people* in general pointed to some bottom-up activities related to the protection of local social interests, i.e.: interests of tenants and protests against the planned commercial investments in the area. The modest and selective knowledge about projects and initiatives was often accompanied by a high level of dissatisfaction with the quality of public space and social policy. A common case was a direct criticism of the public actor's indolence with respect to the revitalization of the housing stock and spatial development:

"I feel that all initiatives of the local government come too late, or are ideas who were known to us five years before. (...) In this segment, no one is interested, the City is not going to prepare development plans until the investor decides what will be built here. In fact, developers draw master plans. This is how the City thinks about planning." (R 9, woman, 38 y.o., living with husband and son, tertiary education).

The level of knowledge concerning social initiatives and public projects is related to the level of education, sometimes even the type of education. Although those were usually more recent in-migrants to Praga Północ who had more information and have shown more interest in local development as such, this predominately results from their socio-economic and family status, as well as their age. Among the qualitative groups identified in Chapter 3, according to the perception of the boundaries of their neighbourhood, also *parents* unveiled some general knowledge on local initiatives, at least those concerning the support of families and children. They also declared to have heard about non-governmental initiatives targeted at social mobility and the support of education¹⁵.

When comparing the opinions of the inhabitants based on the length of residence in Praga, we can find some commonalities and shared opinions, despite the fact that long-term residents and more recent in-migrants are relatively diverse in demographic and economic terms. This is especially true with respect to negative opinions on the ‘Local Revitalization Programme’. These are regardless of the respondents’ social and demographic status or the length of residence in the area. They generally agree that the development potential of the area researched remains untapped and the activities of the City are artificial and too slow: *“It is called the revitalization programme, but it should be rather called micro-revitalization because it's not a real complex revitalization, and these small actions do not make any sense.”* (R 21, man, 45 y.o., single household, tertiary education). Another respondent argues:

“I feel that the district is impermeable, they even missed the moment when there was a boom as Paul Alchamer lived here, and a lot of these people who are known all over the world, but it really was not recorded by the district authorities. There was a famous case, as the whole yard was burned at Inżynierów street. There was a lot of art studios and the City has done nothing, it seems that they pulled out of here.” (R 9, woman, 38 y.o., living with husband and son, tertiary education).

Another finding was that the inhabitants who arrived in the district in the recent years are more engaged in local activities. This, as pointed to before, is related to their knowledge and possibilities. The recent population inflow brought a social diversification that has a positive effect not only on demographic, economic and educational structure, but can also create conditions for the introduction of button-up initiatives and pro-active local society. We find a slight dependence between the reason of moving to the neighbourhood out of one’s own choice, the appreciation of the areas *genius loci*, and the support given to local revitalization processes. In this context, it can be claimed that social diversification in the area which intensified after 1989, results not only in a complexity of lifestyles and attitudes, but also promotes the expansion of positive patterns of behaviour.

8.3 Policy priorities proposed by interviewees: what do residents want?

The formulation of expectations regarding policy priorities was a rather difficult task for the majority of respondents. We found highly diverse kinds of rather narrow issues of everyday life given by respondents, such as street cleanliness, benches in parks, improved public transport, sport and recreation infrastructure, parking lots, but also spatial order and security. When generalizing the information obtained, some problem areas can be distinguished that were pointed to more often than others. These focused on the improvement of:

¹⁵This is related to a great extent to the stage in the family-life cycle of this group, the fact of having small or school-age children. The category of young families, together with *older people* are generally more likely to participate in public plenary events, and be interested in local development, than *young people and students* or well-paid childless professionals, who focus on their education, career or leisure time and usually care less about their immediate surroundings.

- the quality of life through the renovation of pre-war apartments and buildings,
- the quality of transportation infrastructure and public transport,
- the quality of education in schools.

These issues were usually more or less important for all types of residents, regardless of the length of residence, level of education and economic status. Regardless of specific types of actions that should be undertaken, we have identified a consensus on how the enormous potential of the area is not taken advantage of. The revitalization of tenements is much too slow and significant parts of the buildings cannot be saved. Residents live in deteriorated council buildings in conditions that may be regarded as undignified, which is not conducive to social cohesion.

Many interviewees expect financial aid from the City, the state and the EU, or housing policies suitable for residents and entrepreneurs: *“I think that looking here at the number of empty premises, maybe you should change the housing policy, I do not know if it is a question of price, or location, why are there no people interested in these places.”* (R 21, man, 45 y.o., single household, tertiary education). They expect the City to promote local business activities that would give the residents an opportunity to be active and earn money. They understand it as shared responsibility, which would make the area more attractive for everybody: *“Send a strong stream of money to Praga, and not to rich districts, for example.”* (R 9, woman, 38 y.o., living with husband and son, tertiary education). Some residents have many ideas:

“(...) firstly, educate people, really it is the hope for the children who live here. The second thing is to improve the quality of life here. Reduce transit traffic for example. The third thing is to improve the quality of life for those who live in blocks of flats, that is in public housing. Repairs, installation of toilets, because there are terrible living conditions. The changes in housing policy would introduce preferential rental rates for desired types of activities. The lack of such a policy causes the formation of vacancies and the deterioration of many buildings.” (R 9, woman, 38 y.o., living with husband, one child, tertiary education).

8.4. Conclusions

The knowledge of public policies and local initiatives is rather selective and depends predominately on the length of residence in the district, the level of education, age and family-status of the respondents. Highly-educated residents tend to have more detailed knowledge and be more involved in social, participatory projects and initiatives. While the majority of persons interviewed had basic knowledge on activities targeted at social mobility (mainly education) and social cohesion, they had generally limited knowledge on projects aiming at economic performance. To some extent, this is a consequence of a low number of such initiatives and the fact that they are usually not locally focused (Korcelli-Olejniczak et al., 2014).

There is a broad consensus concerning the insufficient number and limited financing of projects aiming at the revitalization of the area's technical infrastructure. This consensus is also related to social issues, such as the educational system. Most interviewees consider Praga Północ to be underdeveloped, predominately because the City ignores its needs and undervalues its development potential. Both of these aspects are related to either social diversity or social inequalities which are evident in the area, but are not subject to satisfactory public attention. The majority of initiatives are focused on tackling the negative aspects related to poverty and economic inequality. With particular attention being paid to the enhancement of educational performance and equalizing of educational opportunities of children being at risk of social

marginalization, social heterogeneity appears rather as a context in which the initiatives are developed and the use of social diversity as an asset is not discussed.

9. Conclusion

As argued in the beginning of this report, what lies behind the relation between the social potential of the area under investigation and its development state, are social networks established by individuals and groups of residents – their quality, density, size and diversity. R. Putnam (1993) states, that the more dense a network of social engagement, the stronger the probability that the residents will be able to cooperate for the sake of common goals. The analysis conducted provides a rather convincing evidence that it is the lack of social integration between the area's mostly diverging groups which is Praga Północ's biggest deficit. The existence of strong ties and social bonds among the category of 'locals', by and large middle-aged to older persons with a fairly low level of cultural capital, their inward orientation and distrust towards 'newcomers' constitute a barrier to a cohesive development of the district. These tendencies hamper the establishment of bridging networks and restrict the social focus on place-based, common goals.

The 'locals' and the 'newcomers' (within each of the two categories) have a more or less uniform lifestyle, respect certain rules and social norms based on values, beliefs, customs and habits. What integrates the residents within the two categories, i.e. socio-economic status and cultural capital, disintegrates the district and its neighbourhoods. Both groups treat themselves as strangers, and the process of becoming neighbours (Sandercock, 2000) in the social dimension is much more troublesome than the physical cohabitation. This concerns the development of mutual trust, the common use of public space and public facilities, cooperation or social solidarity in everyday life.

Another deficit of the research area is social exclusion¹⁶. In this case, however, the inflow of new residents, who are usually middle-class, well-educated and considerably young people is undoubtedly considered an opportunity for the area in question. This is linked to three basic issues. The first is of symbolic character and is related to the means of combating the stigma of a 'bad area'. The more the research area is dissociated of this image, the better may its development chances be estimated.

The second issue is connected with the potential of a social mix itself. Sharing space by people representing different socio-economic, cultural, age and family-status may be a stimulus to development by counteracting stagnation and providing diversified models and patterns of behaviour. At the same time, a lessened concentration of poverty and social pathology is a visible mark of change in the area researched.

The third issue is related to the effect of behaviour of and activities initiated by some of the 'newcomers', whose sense of responsibility for their place of residence is of wide range and substantial quality. It is mainly the 'new' residents who, as individuals or members of local associations are active in implementing functional and material change in the area by introducing initiatives targeted at various resident groups. The activity of those persons builds linking networks and creates development opportunities for disadvantaged people, typically the 'locals'. Due to the lack of integration between the 'old' and the 'new' residents, however, this kind of activity is not always recognized and appreciated by those who fear change, and associate it with

¹⁶Among all districts in Warsaw, Praga Północ is characterized by the largest number of dysfunctional families and the lowest life expectancy (District Ranking 2013).

an end of their self-perceived, even though low-standard stability. In the analysis conducted, we have identified four ways of living with, and experiencing hyper-diversity in Praga Północ. All the cases described below do not constitute separate categories, but are to be interpreted as generalizations of attitudes observed.

The first way of perceiving diversity is related to fear of the unknown, of difference. This is experienced by the 'locals', who have over time developed strong bonds, that are not physical but rather cultural, i.e. related to the tradition of the district, a common understanding based on unwritten rules of local social solidarity. This is symbolized by the following quote: "(...) *don't listen too much, don't ask questions, be nice to everyone.*" (R 30, woman, 56 y.o., single parent household, vocational education). The group referred to has an overall negative attitude to diversity, as it may alter its 'secure' and familiar world.

Another way of perceiving diversity concerns rather well-educated, usually young residents (but again, age is not a rule here) who have moved to the area recently from other regions of Poland, or other districts of Warsaw. Irrespective of the motivation behind their moving to the area, they are interested in the surroundings and wish to improve its quality. They treat the diversity of the area as a development potential and a stimulus for their activities. The group is not uniform with respect to economic or family-status. It also includes emotional and functional categories, for example *social activists* and *parents* (compare chapter 3).

The third group are people who feel alienated within their place of residence – predominately women, usually single or single mothers, also two lesbian women. The origin of the women is diversified – from an immigrant (former refugee) from Chechnya to people who have moved to the area from other districts of Warsaw and feel a certain discomfort related to their 'new' surroundings. The sense of diversity is related to the lack of rootedness, belonging or understanding of local principles and rules. It seems that within this group the lack of strong ties in the neighbourhood plays a key role. While it may not influence social mobility per se, it tends to hinder the fulfilment of some emotional needs.

The last group can be more or less categorized as well-educated, well-paid, usually young residents who don't seem to express any interest in their neighbourhood and perform their lives outside of its borders, treating the area as a dormitory. While their social networks rarely include any neighbours, these 'ex-territorials' lead a life within the walls of their flats and the shields of their cars. They work elsewhere and drive their children elsewhere to school. For this group, the character of this neighbourhood is rather a stigma, something to be associated with poverty, deprivation and low life quality. We did not encounter many representatives of this group during our interviews, but many residents refer to people they know as such cases.

The findings from Chapters 6 and 7 show that diversity has a limited positive influence on social cohesion and social mobility in general. Still, the inflow of new residents, bringing social mix, engagement and new ideas may be expected to evoke positive change concerning both material and social capital in the area. The accompanying infrastructural improvements, and the place-based revitalization programme can be treated as a framework encouraging future actions to be initiated by various actors, both individuals and groups.

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Appendix: List of the interviewed persons

Interviewee	Age group	Gender	Position in household	Income group	Ethnic group (or region/origin)
1	31-45	M	Living with wife and 3 children	>1250EUR	FR
2	18-30	F	Living with partner, no children	>1250EUR	PL
3	18-30	F	Living with partner, no children	>1250EUR	PL
4	31-45	M	Single	250-750 EUR	PL
5	31-45	F	Living with husband and 2 children		PL
6	31-45	F	Living with husband and 2 children	>1250EUR	PL
7	18-30	F	Single	> 250 EUR	PL
8	46-60	F	Widow	750-1250 EUR	PL
9	31-45	F	Living with husband and child	>1250EUR	PL
10	61-75	F	Living with husband	750-1250 EUR	PL
11	46-60	M	Living with wife and two children	750-1250 EUR	PL
12	31-45	M	Living with wife and children	>1250EUR	PL
13	31-45	F		>1250EUR	PL
14	31-45	M	Living with wife		PL
15	31-45	F	Single	> 250 EUR	PL
16	46-60	F	Living with husband	750-1250 EUR	PL
17	61-75	M		>1250EUR	PL
18	31-45	M	Living with wife and two children	>1250EUR	PL
19	31-45	F	Living with partner	>1250EUR	PL
20	31-45	F	Living with partner	750-1250 EUR	PL
21	31-45	M	Single	>1250EUR	PL
22	46-60	F	Single	> 250 EUR	PL
23	61-75	F	Living with	750-1250	PL

			husband and two children	EUR	
24	31-45	F	Living with partner	750-1250 EUR	PL
25	46-60	M	Living with wife	750-1250 EUR	PL
26	46-60	F	Single		PL
27	46-60	M	Living with wife and six children		PL
28	31-45	M	Living with partner	>1250EUR	PL
29	61-75	M	Living with wife and six children	750-1250 EUR	PL
30	61-75	F	Mother in a single-parent household with child		PL
31	>75	F	Single		PL
32	31-45	F	Living with husband and two children	>1250EUR	PL
33	31-45	F	Living with husband and child		PL
34	31-45	M	Living with husband and two children	750-1250 EUR	PL
35	31-45	F	Mother in a single-parent household with child	> 250 EUR	Czechnya
36	46-60	F	Single	>1250EUR	PL
37	>75	M	Single	250-750 EUR	PL
38	31-45	F	Living with husband and four children	250-750 EUR	Czechnya
39	31-45	F	Mother in a single-parent household with four children	250-750 EUR	PL
40	46-60	F	Living with husband and two children	250-750 EUR	PL
41		M	Living with wife	>1250EUR	PL
42	46-60	F	Living with husband and two children	>1250EUR	PL
43	46-60	F	Living with husband	250-750 EUR	PL
44	46-60	M	One-person household	250-750 EUR	USA

45	61-75	F	Living with husband	250-750 EUR	PL
46	31-45	F	Mother in a single-parent household with child		PL
47	31-45	F	Living with partner	>1250EUR	PL
48	31-45	F	Living with husband and child	750-1250 EUR	UA
49	31-45	F	Living with partner and child	>1250EUR	PL
50	46-60	F	Living with partner	250-750 EUR	PL