



# WHAT ABOUT YOUR LOCALITY?

Life-course differences in  
experiencing and perceiving  
residential neighbourhoods



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# Introduction

One's neighbourhood serves as a context for his or her everyday life (Cresswell 2009). Residents experience their neighbourhood through the functional and emotional ties that they develop towards various neighbourhood attributes. They develop functional links through everyday activities, such as the utilisation of neighbourhood amenities (services, parks, etc.) and their interactions with neighbours or behaviours in public spaces (Lewicka 2011). Emotional links include the subjective feelings that are associated by residents with neighbourhood attributes, such as a sense of community support (Forrest & Kearns 2001), a sense of belonging (Pinkster 2016), and familiarity with places (Paton 2014). In summary, although residents may consider other places and spaces an important aspect of their everyday life (Lewicka 2011), they realise that their immediate residential surroundings directly affect their quality of life (Hur & Morrow-Jones 2008). Therefore, one must understand how people experience and perceive their physical and social surroundings to clarify their neighbourhood and residential satisfaction and the development of contemporary cities (Bonaiuto et al. 1999). However, people have various attitudes towards and demands regarding their residential environment. Therefore, the nature of their functional and emotional neighbourhood ties and satisfaction may vary according to individual characteristics, such as social status, gender, ethnicity, or life-course position.

Age and life course are two factors that determine how residents experience, perceive, and become satisfied with their residential neighbourhoods. On the one hand, people of different age groups can have different neighbourhood experiences and perceptions since different age groups have diverse lifestyle preferences and needs (Stokes 2019). However, on the other hand, residents in specific life course stages can have similar neighbourhood experiences and perceptions since their needs and preferences in different life phases may coincide with each other. At the same time, a particular neighbourhood context may affect residents' relations with localities. These contexts may be fixed in post-socialist cities with fragmented urban development and are, to some extent, dissimilar to the Anglophone context (Sýkora & Bouzarovski 2012). Moreover, this may reformulate the neighbourhood relations of residents in certain life-course stages.

This project focuses on the life-course similarities and differences in how residents experience, perceive and become satisfied with their residential neighbourhoods.

In this study, we pose the following research questions:

- *How do distinct life-course groups living in different neighbourhood types experience and perceive their neighbourhoods?*
  - *How are residents functionally and emotionally attached to their neighbourhoods?*
  - *Which are the factors that influence the residents' attachment to their neighbourhoods?*

We consider the topic from the perspectives of three population groups that are in various life-course stages and live in distinct neighbourhood types in the Prague Metropolitan Area. The groups include older children from the suburbs, young families from housing estates, and older adults from the gentrifying inner city. The life-course approach was selected because people's attitudes towards residential environments differ among life-course phases, particularly in the context of housing careers and behaviour, and lifestyle choices and preferences change in tandem with accelerating societal changes. Further, residents' functional and emotional ties with various neighbourhood attributes are examined in their residential surroundings. Finally, the project adopts a qualitative data collection and analysis methodology (semi-structured interview).

The neighbourhood types suitable for dynamic post-socialist urban development (i.e. suburbs, housing estate, and inner-city gentrifying neighbourhood) were selected according to the potential challenges that may be faced by the selected life-course groups in various neighbourhoods. Suburbanisation is one of the most important processes to have taken place in the Prague Metropolitan Area since the end of the Communist period (i.e. after 1989). Even though suburbs are usually considered an ideal urban environment to start a family, children may face various limitations in their everyday activities while growing up in such areas, for instance, the limited availability of specialised services or facilities, such as cinemas, fast foods, and high schools. The housing estates built during the Socialist era (i.e. before 1989) were originally mass-housing options for families with children. However, numerous estates underwent physical deterioration and encountered social problems during the post-socialist period. Finally, the gentrification of inner-city neighbourhoods may make the daily lives of older adults challenging by necessitating the replacement of amenities, transitions of daily used spaces, or disruption of established social ties.







## Organisation of the Final Report

The report presents and summarises the results achieved in the partial implementation phases of the project titled 'What about your locality? Life-course differences in experiencing and perceiving residential neighbourhoods'. The project was supported by the research framework START (Grant Schemes at Charles University, no. CZ.02.2.69/0.0/0.0/19\_073/0016935, MŠMT).

The report is divided into five main sections. The introductory section is followed by a methods section, in which we introduce the reader to the project's data collection and analysis methods. Additionally, we present the selected case study localities (and age groups). The subsequent section discusses the study's results. The results section is divided into thematic subsections, and the results themselves are presented separately for each case study (each age group in a selected neighbourhood). First, we evaluate perceived neighbourhood positives and negatives. Second, we focus on movement around the neighbourhood, which significantly affects residents' relationship with the locality. Third, we discuss social ties in connection with the movement. Finally, the report concludes with a summary, which discusses several policy implications.

# Methods

First, we present the study's data collection process and analytical approach. Subsequently, we introduce the three case study localities.

## Methodology and data collection

The objectives of the Final Report were realised using the qualitative research methodology, which is considered the most suitable method to clarify people's experiences and perceptions. Specifically, we analysed 44 in-depth semi-structured interviews with three distinct population groups of the Prague Metropolitan Area to evaluate the life-course differences in residents' experiences and perceptions of their residential and social environments and clarify their residential satisfaction. The interviewees were selected from three life-course groups living in three distinct types of neighbourhoods:

- Children living in a suburb with their parents but mostly able to perform their daily activities independently (12–16 years old)
- Young adults (25–44 years old) with small children living in a housing estate
- Older adults whose children have grown up and no longer live at home (empty nesters; over 55 years) living in a gentrifying inner-city neighbourhood

Initially, several approaches were used to contact the participants. These included social networks (through researchers' contacts, posts in Facebook groups, etc.), the posting of leaflets, and direct outreach in the neighbourhood. Additionally, the snowball sampling method was initialised. Interviews had a duration of 35 minutes to 1.5 hours; however, the interviews with children were of shorter duration.

Compared to other groups, the child participants from the suburban municipality were recruited differently since they are a relatively harder group to contact (children's activities remain largely dependent on their parents). All the child participants belonged to a children's tourist group (similar to a scout); therefore, they had similar interests and could be considered very active in this sense. One of the researchers led this tourist group, which helped enhance the trust between the children/parents and the researcher.

The interviews of young families were conducted in English by a non-Czech-speaking researcher. These interviews were transcribed and analysed in English, as well. This did not pose a major challenge during analysis. However, it is noted that some information may have been lost or unclearly expressed by the participant and the researcher during the interview due to the language barrier. At the same time, only interviews with English speakers could be conducted in this location.

For older adults, several interviews needed to be conducted online due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. However, these interviews could be conducted smoothly and did not pose major problems for the research.

The structure of interviews varied slightly across localities. Interview questions were modified to suit each age group, and some parts of the interviews were not used in the analysis since they were related to different topics. Nevertheless, the first part of all the interviews aimed at establishing a close relationship with the participant. Therefore, this part included general questions on participants' characteristics, place of residence, length of stay, and so on. Subsequently, questions focused on the different functional and emotional links of residents with the neighbourhood. Specifically, we asked about the participants' everyday activities, social ties, use of the neighbourhood, and perception of and overall satisfaction with the neighbourhood and its features. The interviews concluded with easy, closing-type questions.

The conducted interviews were recorded, anonymised, transcribed, and thematically analysed. We started with data familiarisation, which was particularly important because not all researchers participated in conducting all the interviews and one set of interviews was in English. Subsequently, we proceeded to the coding phase and systematically worked on our dataset. Since all the four researchers were involved in the analysis, parallel coding was performed. In the first phase, we coded some selected interviews from the three groups first individually and then jointly. Each code was collectively discussed. We focused on the code's meaning, as well as the textual sections where the code was applied. This phase yielded a list of codes that was used in a heuristic coding of the remaining interviews. During the coding process, the positive and negative aspects of neighbourhoods were identified from the perspective of each life-course group. Subsequently, we generated initial themes and gradually developed and revised them. Further, we focused on analysing data connected to the theme 'movement' since it influences participants' functional and emotional connection with their neighbourhood. Other themes involved the evaluation of various neighbourhood features in relation to the participants' neighbourhood satisfaction (i.e. the evaluation of positively and/or negatively perceived features).



## Case study localities



Figure 1. Locations of case study localities



### Roztoky (suburb)

Roztoky is a suburban town (municipality) located very close to Prague (Figure 1). In this town, suburban development started around 2003. Since then, the population of Roztoky has increased by more than 3,000 inhabitants; currently, the town houses 9,216 residents (Table 1). The increase in the number of inhabitants was mainly caused by the immigration of young families or couples with plans to start a family. An efficient public transport system connects Roztoky to Prague's city centre. Further, the town offers many services and a wide range of leisure activities. On the other hand, the area lacks many specialised services that attract teenagers, such as shopping centres and fast food outlets. High schools are absent, as well. However, the town has conditions that support independent mobility and unstructured outdoor play, such as the presence of quiet streets, a proximity to forests, and a predominance of family houses with gardens.



Figure 2 and Figure 3. Roztoky (By authors)



Neighbourhood		Roztoky	Invalidovna	Prague 7
Population	2011	8 140	2 245	41 429
	2021	9 216	2 472	44 442
	<i>change (in %)</i>	<i>13,2</i>	<i>10,1</i>	<i>7,3</i>
Inhabited apartments	2011	3 345	1 141	19 034
	2021	3 634	1 341	23 282
	<i>change (in %)</i>	<i>8,6</i>	<i>17,5</i>	<i>22,3</i>

Table 1. Population and inhabited apartments (Czech Statistical Office 2011, 2021)

## Invalidovna (housing estate)

Invalidovna is a housing estate in the municipal district Prague 8, which is adjacent to the gentrifying inner-city district Karlín. The area's location, as well as its recent physical upgrades, contributes to Invalidovna's status as one of the most expensive housing estates in Prague. Population censuses reveal that the neighbourhood's population increased by more than 10% from 2011 to 2021 (Table 1). Further, the number of occupied dwellings increased and reached 1,341 in 2021. The population increase was the result of young families' growing interest in the neighbourhood. However, the increase in population does not completely reflect the increase in number of young families since they usually settle in a place by replacing the area's old age groups. Accordingly, the inheritors of the previous generation either replaced their grandparents or sold the flats. Overall, the child-oriented facilities offered by the neighbourhood, such as a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere, kindergartens and schools, greenery, and accessible public transport, is the main reason why young families tend to settle in this neighbourhood.



Figure 4 and Figure 5. Invalidovna (By authors)

## Prague 7 (inner city)

Prague 7 is an inner-city district that is currently undergoing gentrification. The neighbourhood served multiple uses following its development at the end of the 19th century; it blended the residential parts for middle and upper classes with industrial spaces housing working-class residents. Gradually, the interspersing of factories with residential houses resulted in overcrowding and worsened residents' quality of life. During the Socialist era (between World War II and 1989), Prague 7 socially and physically deteriorated like the other inner-city areas in Prague. However, since the change in regime, the area's residential attractiveness and investment potential (due to its proximity to the city centre) have been increasing. Even though the neighbourhood has attracted many residents who are young and have high social status, its overall population structure remains heterogeneous. In the last decade, the number of residents and occupied dwellings increased significantly, mainly due to the replacement of former industrial plots by new housing construction (Table 1).



Figure 6, Figure 7 and Figure 8.  
Prague (By authors)

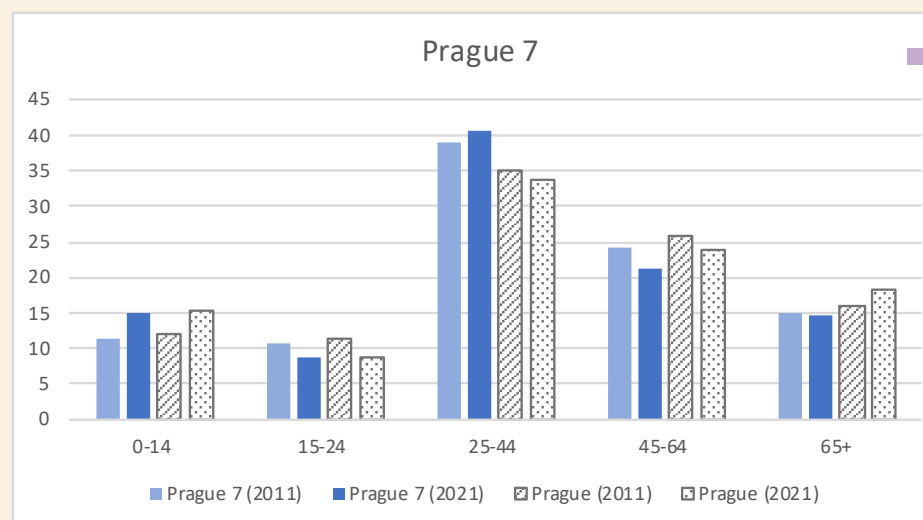
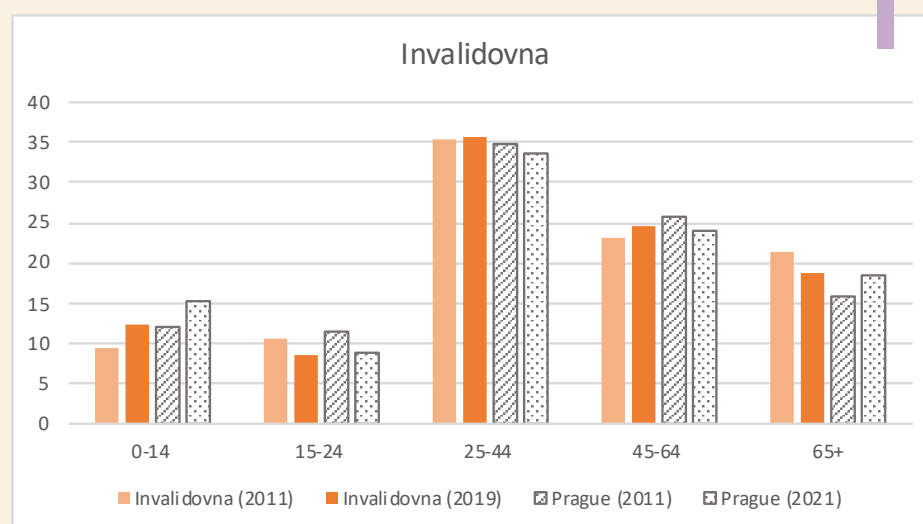
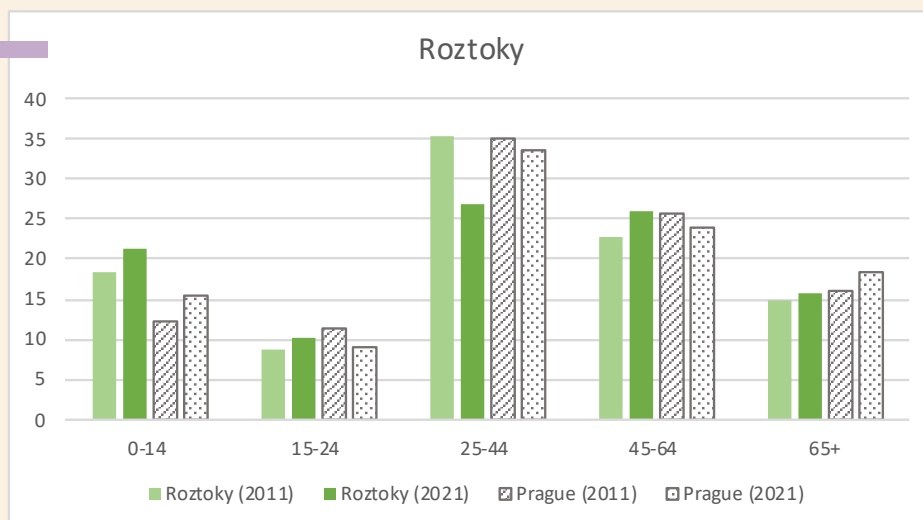


Figure 9. Shares of age groups (in %; Czech Statistical Office 2011, 2019, 2021)





# Results

## Evaluation of neighbourhood positives and negatives

### Children from suburbs

In general, the interviewed children are satisfied with their life in Roztoky. While evaluating the positive and negative features associated with life in this suburban municipality, children recalled many positives rather than narrating the neighbourhood attributes that are missed by them or bother them. In particular, Roztoky's proximity to Prague and good accessibility to public transport (buses and trains) enable the children to visit and arrange activities in the capital city whenever they want. Such activities include attending school (for some participants), leisure activities (e.g. visiting cinemas and swimming pools), and going on walkabouts with their friends.

Nevertheless, the need to use public transport to commute to Prague creates various negative emotions. First, children clarify that buses and trains are frequently overcrowded, particularly during the morning rush hour, which makes travel unpleasant. The second issue is related to the limited availability of connections at night. Since buses and trains do not run as often at nighttime as during daytime, children have to be more cautious about time when scheduling visits to Prague or participation in certain activities or events compared to their schoolmates and friends living in Prague. However, only the oldest children who like to spend evenings in the capital encounter this problem. Although Roztoky lacks several amenities, children generally appreciate their life in the neighbourhood. In particular, they value the area's village-like atmosphere, quiet environment, and proximity to nature. The children consider the absence of amenities in Roztoky to be balanced by the presence of these amenities in nearby Prague.

### Neighbourhood location



- Proximity to nature
- Closeness to Prague (particularly with the use of public transport)
- Combination of urban life and a village-like atmosphere



- Small to be explored during the COVID-19 lockdown



## Environment

- Calmness
- Greenery



## Community and social life

- Numerous local acquaintances
- Several cultural and social events



## Public spaces

- Suitable for walks



- High intensity of housing construction
- Gathering places for or groups of people who make children feel uncomfortable



## Amenities

- Availability of daily services
- Natural sites
- Public transport—an abundance of connections (buses and trains)



- Low quality of primary schools
- Absence of high schools
- Absence of some services (cinemas, fast food outlets, bookstores, swimming pools, etc.)
- Public transport—frequent occurrence of delays, availability of only a limited number of connections during nighttime, occurrence of overcrowding during rush hours



## Young families from housing estates

Young families consider Invalidovna a reasonable neighbourhood choice since they are satisfied with the area's services and amenities, as well as housing prices. Many interviewees selected Invalidovna to live and bring up their children over suburban areas because they value its village-like atmosphere, which is an environment suited to children's upbringing, and accessibility to the central parts of Prague. Overall, the neighbourhood's convenient location within Prague and availability of an efficient public transportation system, along with its abundance of green spaces and proximity to schools and kindergartens, are the most important aspects that attract young families. Consequently, such families have a strong inclination to continue living there.

However, the limited availability of everyday services within the neighbourhood and absence of a tight-knit community are the main factors that negatively affect residents' quality of life in Invalidovna. Additionally, the residents are dissatisfied with the local municipal government, whom they consider insensitive to their objections to the intensive residential and commercial construction occurring within and in the immediate proximity of the neighbourhood and favouring developers' interests instead (to maximise profits).

### Community and social life

- Sense of community created by primary school pupils playing in the neighbourhood
- Ongoing efforts of community development



- Absence of an established community
- Unfamiliar neighbours and anonymised ties with neighbours
- Absence of places to conduct community events and socialise with neighbours

### Neighbourhood location

- Convenient public transportation options
- Proximity to the Prague centre (the availability of employment, amenities, and social life)
- Ease of access to other Prague neighbourhoods



## Environment

- Improving safety and security (particularly for children)
- Proximity of local and city-level parks
- Tranquil atmosphere despite the area's proximity to city centre



## Housing estate design

- Sufficient distance between individual blocks of buildings
- Fewer apartment units than in other large housing estates
- Energy-efficient apartments compared to older units in tenement houses in the inner city



- Overheating caused by an abundance of sunlight in upper floors during summer



## Public spaces

- Creation of physical barriers and limits to the neighbourhood's permeability by new-residential and commercial constructions
- Demolition of historic elements like statues, heating plants, and a kindergarten with a distinctive architecture as a result of developers' financial interests



- Ongoing improvements (the installation of modern and aesthetic sidewalks)
- New developments promoting optimism regarding further physical upgrades
- Traffic calming measures and well-lit streets
- A pedestrian-friendly atmosphere, which is ideal for walks and bike rides
- A variety of pedestrian pathways connecting parks and playgrounds (child-friendly area)
- An abundance of large trees that ensure heat regulation



## Amenities



- Availability of parking spots
- Accessibility of daily services in nearby easily accessible neighbourhoods (e.g. Karlín)
- High-quality schools and kindergartens in nearby neighbourhoods
- Accessibility to general practitioners and paediatricians
- New developments promoting optimism regarding the influx of new services



- Only one grocery store
- Absence of library, pharmacy, and post office services
- Capacity and availability of schools and kindergartens
- Concerns regarding the decrease in the availability of kindergartens caused by new residential developments
- Newly established markets targeting affluent customers from the nearby newly developed business district, rather than the Invalidovna population



## Local government

- Lack of attention to Invalidovna (small share of the voters of Prague 8)
- Insufficient representation in negotiations with developers—unfulfilled promises to improve Invalidovna while building new buildings
- Unfulfilled promises made by developers to improve Invalidovna





## Older adults from the inner city

The interviewed older adults of the gentrifying neighbourhood have positive perceptions of the recent renovations of apartment buildings and improvements of public spaces (e.g. the addition of greenery, revitalisation of parks, and cleaning of streets). They believe these activities make the neighbourhood a better living place. In several instances, these upgrades are made in connection with new residential and commercial construction (e.g. the improvement of deteriorated areas). Further, the older adults value the wide range of local services (e.g. shops, restaurants, cafés, and cultural venues) available in the area. They feel these services have improved recently, as well. Moreover, several participants appreciate the activities of newcomers who are actively taking care of some common premises in residential buildings (e.g. backyards) and initiate neighbouring activities (e.g. communal barbecues).

However, the interviewees indicate that some features of the neighbourhood are negative. Further, some of their favourite services are not available anymore. They regret that some of these services have been replaced by new ones that are considered very expensive, unnecessary, and suited to different population groups (i.e. more affluent people, youngsters, and hipsters). Moreover, they are aware that housing expenses have increased and, currently, all the newcomers to the neighbourhood are high-income individuals or young adults who are willing to share apartments. These newcomers sometimes displace or replace the interviewees' long-term neighbours and, thereby, disrupt local social ties, as well. Further, older adults often feel incapable of establishing relations with newcomers, since the latter are different from them (not only socially but also in terms of lifestyle orientation and everyday needs) and mainly communicate with each other. Similarly, residents often negatively perceive newly built housing, which destroys some of the 'old places' within the neighbourhood; causes a loss of greenery, overpopulation, housing densification, and car traffic intensification; is visually unappealing; and disrupts the neighbourhood's overall visual experience. This causes some residents to feel that the neighbourhood is changing to accommodate new residents at the expense of long-time 'natives'.

### Neighbourhood location

- Proximity to Prague centre (walking distance or accessible by public transport)
- Easy access to other neighbourhoods in Prague
- Easy access to all parts of the neighbourhood due to its small size



## Community and social life

- Long-time neighbours and close acquaintances
- Care of common premises in residential buildings by newcomers
- Initiation of neighbouring activities by newcomers



- Displacement of long-time neighbours caused by the increase in housing prices
- Arrival of newcomers with different social backgrounds and lifestyles
- Displacement and replacement of long-time neighbours by newcomers leading to the disruption of established communal ties
- Communication of newcomers only with each other



## Environment

- Large, accessible parks



- Neighbourhood's transformation to a visually appealing and pleasant residential area
- Lack of greenery and trees among and within buildings



## Public spaces

- Physical renovation (e.g. renovation of building facades, streets, and parks)
- Upgrades to deteriorated public spaces caused by new residential and commercial development



- Appearance (aesthetics) of new construction
- Nonconceptuality and lack of permeability of new development
- Replacement of old places by new residential and commercial development
- Creation of problems (overpopulation, housing densification, and car traffic intensification) by new residential and commercial development





## Amenities

- Wide choice of services (e.g. speciality shops and cafés)

Absence of any need to leave

- the neighbourhood to avail of additional services



- Deterioration of several established services (shops and pubs)
- Lack of parking spots
- Thoughtless development of bicycle transport infrastructure

## Local government

- More open and approachable government compared to the previous one



- Perception of some decisions as being populist and nonconceptual
- Perception of some decisions as fulfilling the needs and preferences of particular population groups (particularly, young and affluent newcomers)





## Participants' movement within the neighbourhood

Analysis revealed that interviewees form and shape their relationship with the locality through different types of movements, which can be divided into two main groups: obligatory and optional. Both these types of movements help create, deepen, and maintain social ties in the neighbourhood. Therefore, we interpreted the various links of the interviewees to their neighbourhoods through the lens of movements.

### Obligatory movement

The nature of participants' movements around the neighbourhood is predominantly influenced by their daily duties. The following subsections discuss the obligatory movements of the three groups of participants.

#### Children from suburbs

For children, movement is associated with school attendance, organised leisure activities, and relevant journeys (travel to and from these activities). The activities (and, consequently, movements) are closely related to specific phases of the children's life course. To some extent, the journeys (or moves) associated with these activities determine the children's temporal and spatial use of the neighbourhood. Their spatial behaviour indicates that the participants mostly perceive moves to be an integral part of their duties (i.e. it is something I have to do anyway). Therefore, they frequently select the most time-efficient route possible for their moves. Some others add a voluntary dimension to these moves since they are usually connected to some pleasant activity, such as taking a long calm walk from a bus stop or selecting the same route as a friend to socialise with him or her (this topic is discussed in more detail in the section Movement and social relations).

*P: How did you decide which way to go?*

*I: Well, I guess when it's dark in the morning, it's more pleasant to walk along a bigger road, where there's more light, so that if something happens... I don't know; it's just more pleasant to walk there. And, on my way back, I usually walk the other way, where there's light; so, it's, like, cool. And, it's so much nicer that there aren't that many cars, probably ...*

*P: Do you take the shortest route?*

*I: I guess I don't know. I've never thought about it like if it's longer or shorter. Most of the time, the paths are pretty much the same. (Norman, 14 years, suburban municipality)*

Throughout the life course (childhood), children modify their obligatory moves to a certain extent. The main adaptations follow the role played by parents in children's activities. For instance, when children started commuting to school, they were guided by their parents or other family members who thus determined the routes of the children's movements. After a while, children stopped being accompanied by their parents and started travelling the same route by themselves. In other words, they learned the basic route from their parents and gradually modified it as per their comfort (Kullman & Palludan 2011). In our case, these modifications included selecting a route that was slightly different from the basic route to the bus or train stop, travelling together with a friend, and listening to music during the trip. Moreover, parents' influence on the children was apparent in not only the latter's movements but also their perceptions of the space and place of their residence.

## Young families from housing estates

In the second life-course group, obligatory moves were associated with parenting duties and primarily performed by the mothers on maternity leave. The young families living in the Invalidovna housing estate follow traditional gender roles, according to which mothers are responsible for children's upbringing. This creates more apparent gender differences in obligatory movements around the neighbourhood for this group compared to the other life-course groups studied.

Taking children to and from school is a significant parental duty for young families, particularly those families with children studying in the kindergarten or primary school who cannot travel alone. Therefore, young mothers generally make the obligatory movement of carrying their children to and from the school or kindergarten. These mothers often use this time to run errands like grocery shopping, taking care of daily or weekly family needs, and satisfying their children's needs.

*I usually try to buy everything in the shortest time. So, I usually go to Albert or somewhere nearby when I take my older son to kindergarten. It's a kindergarten in Karlínské náměstí. So, when I go back, I go shopping somewhere on the way. (Lucie, 35 years, housing estate)*

In the Invalidovna housing estate, mothers have to go outside the neighbourhood to access public services such as schools and supermarkets. The nearest public school and kindergarten are located in the adjacent neighbourhood, and the only supermarket in the Invalidovna neighbourhood has limited options, which causes mothers to travel outside the neighbourhood. However, they generally limit their travel to the nearby Karlín neighbourhood, which is within walking distance, since they have to carry their young children while performing these daily activities. To counter the inconvenience of travelling outside the neighbourhood, the mothers modify their movement by selecting routes that are suitable for walking and connect several parks and playgrounds. This makes it easier for them to manage their small children while performing their daily activities. Additionally, public transportation is widely accessible, which eliminates the need to use a private car.

*I won't need a car to get to work or go to kindergarten or attend other children's events in the future. As a result, I walk everywhere. I also like to use public transportation. Because it's easier for me to place the stroller on the tram than to drive with my kid sitting behind me and not knowing what she's doing. (Barbora, 32 years, housing estate)*

Young families in the Invalidovna neighbourhood typically perform daily activities, such as grocery shopping and dropping off their children to school, within the neighbourhood or in nearby areas. However, a visit to the paediatrician, who is typically located within the neighbourhood, often requires only movement within the neighbourhood. Some families may need to travel to other parts of the city to visit their paediatrician. In such cases, public transportation options are available.

*And, also, I don't know if we were lucky; yeah, we are probably lucky that it's like a 10-minute walk from here to our family doctor's office and our child's paediatrician works near our place. It's just opposite to this house. And, we can, like, see the windows of her office from our windows. So, it's like, I don't know, two minutes before I can go there in my slippers. (Václav's wife, 28 years, housing estate)*

According to interviewees, changes to the Invalidovna neighbourhood, particularly new constructions, influence obligatory movement. The area's accessibility to the city centre and infrastructure make it an attractive location for developers. Although some residents were hopeful about the improvements made to services and the environment, others reported that the new shops were too expensive and of little benefit to the residents. Therefore, there has been no significant change in the provision of services to assist obligatory movements.

*You always expect that there will finally be something like a new grocery store or bakery shop or something because whenever they introduce a new project, they say that new offices and shops will appear. But, these shops end up being shops with cars and kitchens and shops that you never use or use maybe once in a lifetime or something like that. So, locals feel cheated because new buildings do not benefit them. After all, you will be able to do shopping there. And, eventually, you will find that there is some stupid organic shop. (Lucie, 35 years, housing estate)*

Finally, working parents often make employment-related obligatory movements. They prefer residential areas that have proximity to the city centre, which is the typical location of workplaces. This ensures they have sufficient flexibility to work irregular shifts and return home early to spend time with their family. The availability of day care facilities is important, as well. Interestingly, many workplaces are located in the nearby Karlín neighbourhood at about the same distance from their residential areas as the schools or kindergartens attended by their children.

*We don't often go to the city centre. But, for me, living here is connected to the job opportunities enjoyed by my husband in the city centre. He works at Karlovo náměstí; he works nearby. So, it's important to me that he spends some time with us after work. So, when we live in the city centre and he works, I hope that I will also work four years from now; so, that's important. (Kateřina, 32 years, housing estate)*

## Older adults from the inner city

Older interviewees often mentioned duties such as employment (unless they are retired) and using necessary services (e.g. grocery shopping and visiting healthcare facilities). Similar to the cases of children and young families, the activities (and related movements) performed by older adults are to some extent linked to their life-course phase. For some, this influences the size of the extent of their daily activities. For instance, with age, these residents gradually develop difficulties with physical movement and, soon, moving around will become problematic. However, these challenges are significantly weakened by the features of their residential neighbourhood. Participants' narratives clearly indicate that older adults highly value the neighbourhood's small-scale dimension and presence of all necessary services within walking distance:

*It would be possible too [to move to a cottage]; we thought about it. But, there, it creates complications with shopping for food, importing everything, and having a car, whereas, here, we hardly need a car. I don't drive anymore; my wife uses it. But, here, I can walk a few steps and I'm everywhere you need me to be. It's a little more complicated at the cottage. (Jakub, 79 years, inner city)*

However, older interviewees not only change the nature of their movements according to shifts in their life course (ageing) but also adapt their movements to various changes in the neighbourhood itself. On the one hand, they adjust their movements to conform to the changes that they perceive to be positive. For instance, following the beautification of places considered dirty, unmaintained, or dangerous, older adults rediscover these places by appropriately adjusting their movements around the neighbourhood. They adapt their movements to changes they perceive to be negative, as well. These adaptations occur in two forms: They either avoid certain places and modify their movements within the neighbourhood or strengthen their negative emotions regarding these places because they must continue to visit them to meet certain obligations. Subsequently, this aspect becomes inscribed in the negative perception of these transformations in the neighbourhood. Both positive and negative evaluations of neighbourhood transitions indicate the concurrent roles of sensorial memories and present-day perception in shaping residents' experiences within the neighbourhood.

## Optional movement

Optional movement refers to residents moving around the neighbourhood in a 'getting out and about' sense, mostly taking walks. Unlike the movements related to obligatory activities, optional movements can be characterised as movements that are relatively unorganised and have mostly indeterminate goals. Often, the key purpose of such optional activities is the journey itself, whereas the main aim of obligatory moves is to reach a certain destination.

### Children from suburbs

For children, there are different forms of optional movement in terms of whom they go out with; they can go out with their friends from the neighbourhood, classmates, or family, or they can go out alone. These moves usually enable the children to appreciate their neighbourhood, because they tend to select routes that please them since their movements are voluntary.

In some cases, a movement is negatively influenced by a person's perceptions of danger or discomfort regarding a space. These emotions partially affect compulsory movements; however, for optional movements, the effect of such emotions is particularly noticeable in children. Subsequently, participants modify their move to make it more pleasant. In other words, this modification is a reaction to the negative sensory experience associated with some spaces. Some examples of such spaces are the dark and poorly lit places mentioned by Norman and the gathering of former classmates referred to by 16-year-old Erik.

*P: Well, and then it kind of annoys me that there are these places where people who are ironically just a little bit older than me go to that are like the underworld. But, I know where those places are located; so, I either avoid them or go there when those people aren't there.*

*I: What kind of places are those?*

*P: They are like the gazebo ... or the park in Tyrš Square, which is paradoxically on the square, but because there's not a single lamp in it, there isn't possible to see anything. I mean, like, when you're driving down the road, there's nothing to see; so, you can hide like a lot of things there. (Erik, 16 years, suburban municipality)*

### Young families from housing estates

Young families often engage in optional movements within their neighbourhood for entertainment and spending time with their children. These activities are closely associated with the families' life stage and not primarily for parental duty fulfilment, unlike obligatory movements. Many young families spend most of their time in nearby parks and play areas during the week. Often, both spouses are seen engaging in such activities, and there are only small gender differences in their performance. They enjoy walking their dogs while tending to their children in strollers or letting their children play outside or ride bikes without specific goals.



Similar to the previous type of movement, young families' optional movements are influenced by the neighbourhood characteristics that are perceived positively by them. The construction of housing estates, which is based on modernist theories, creates green spaces between high-rise and separate complexes, which enhances the neighbourhood's positive atmosphere. Additionally, the estate's urban spaces have been transformed to include facilities such as playgrounds for children and dogs and basketball and football lots and to pave new and renovate old sidewalks. Invalidovna's green spaces contain tall trees that create scenic pathways and maintain a comfortable temperature in the region. Despite its location in Prague's inner city, the neighbourhood is surrounded by places of natural beauty (Vitkov Hill in the south and Vltava River in the north) and parks, which makes it an excellent location for families to walk around or cycle.

*There are a lot of trees and a lot of green areas everywhere. We also have two dogs. And, before that, when I moved to Prague, I lived in Holešovice where there were no trees, no grass, and so on. But, in Invalidovna, there are a lot of places where you can be outside with the dogs and kids. There are a lot of places where you can just lie down next to your house. The playground for kids is big and there's a lot of space in the neighbourhood. (Kristýna, 29 years, housing estate)*

New constructions in the neighbourhood can influence young families' decisions regarding optional movement. Such developments can make it either easier or more difficult for families to move around voluntarily. For instance, recent upgrades have provided residents with access to well-maintained urban walkways, and the functional mix has revitalised the previously dull streets. However, the low permeability of modern constructions often necessitates families to go around them to pass through them.

*Václav: Yeah, all new construction has its pros and cons. For instance, that building creates quite a nice space around it. And, while about Futurama [a business park located to the west of Invalidovna], you can't walk in quite a few places. So, that's what I really hate when they build a new development, and they actively prevent you from walking there.*

*Václav's wife: you need to walk around if you want to go to Karlín*

*Václav: But, otherwise, like architecture, that's not bad. It's not bad. And, one thing that I like is that it's becoming more functionally mixed so that you have offices; you have living spaces. We want to have such amenities and services. (Václav and his wife, 30/28 years, housing estate)*

Young families prioritise the safety of their children while evaluating a neighbourhood's suitability for movement. Invalidovna is considered suitable for movement due to its implementation of traffic calming measures, which ensures the safety of children. This issue is a very important consideration in the everyday lives of these families, particularly those with living experiences in the previous inner-city districts of Prague.

*It is really safe here. Yeah. I do not like the centre. My son walks, and he does not like to be in the stroller, and the centre is not very safe for walking with little kids and for me also. (Adéla, 30 years, housing estate)*



## Older adults from the inner city

For older participants, the optional type of movement around the neighbourhood is modified or even increased by retirement, particularly since they do not have to attend regular employment outside the neighbourhood and have the time to develop those optional movements.

This specific life-course phase involves taking up more leisure activities after reaching the retirement age (e.g. joining a chess club), which become an important aspect of their everyday lives. Compared with other life-course groups, older adults tend to connect voluntary moves to the use of certain types of services, such as visiting galleries, theatres, cafés, and so on, or the fulfilment of their new leisure activities.

The changes in the neighbourhood influence not only obligatory movement but also optional movement. This is evident from interviewees' accounts, as well. Positively perceived transformation (e.g. the beautification of certain places that gave rise to negative perceptions and emotions) causes participants to start visiting a place that they did not visit before (or adjusting their movement around the neighbourhood).

*It was quite a cycle, and then you usually went to the cottage in the weekend. Or, if you didn't go, you'd go with the kids to Stromovka [a park], which is accessible, or to Letná [a part of the Prague 7 neighbourhood], rather than spending the weekend down here in Holešovice [a part of the Prague 7 neighbourhood]. Now that we're alone with my husband, it's true that it's improved a lot such that you can go to the harbour for a walk to the Vltava River. It's quite nice there and it has calmed down actually; the brewery was quite smelly ... The market has also improved gradually, although now it's kind of sad. It was better in the summer when the markets were out. (Ivana, 60 years, inner city)*

Similar to the aforementioned case, the negatively perceived transformation of some places causes residents to stop going to the place in question and, at the same time, express a feeling of regret or sadness. They feel the loss of the places that they used to visit (e.g. in their childhood or when they were employed).

Further, the participants' narratives are pervaded by their feelings of a lack of safety while going for walks and their consequential selections of places to visit and not to visit. In some instances, such feelings indicate the participants' subconscious fear or feelings of insecurity associated with the poor mobility and less physical fitness attributable to their advanced age. Examples include their feelings of insecurity while going for a walk to a park and the associated fear of occurrence of an accident on the way (e.g. slipping and becoming injured) or their inability to ascend or descend the stairs in their apartment house. The general feeling of fear that she experienced while moving around some places in the neighbourhood was expressed by 56-year-old Kamila. Further, she said that she goes for walks in such places only in the company of a friend.

*Well, I walk all the time. When I don't go, when I don't go to Stromovka [a big park in Prague 7], I come back here, walk around the street U Průhonu. I pick up my friend there or not because, usually, her feet hurt; so, ... So, I'll go around the whole thing. And, sometimes we walk, when I walk with her, because I'm scared myself, around the water, around the, like, the concrete factory and around the water back to the new bridge, and then I'll walk up the hill, like around the Merkurie and stuff. So, yeah. It's like, those little walks. (Kamila, 56 years, inner city)*



## Movement and social relations

The interviewees in this study developed relations with the other residents of the neighbourhood by residing in and performing their daily activities or, in general, 'functioning' within the neighbourhood. However, the nature and intensity of these relations vary depending on the analysed life-course group and the neighbourhood's features. Hence, the relations among residents include various interactions with people close to them, such as friends and family, neighbours, and some passers-by. Many such relations are shaped by the obligatory and optional moves within the neighbourhood's spatial context. Further, moving within the neighbourhood (i.e. performing voluntary or involuntary movements) is part of the residents' social activities.

### Children from suburbs

For children, moving around and outside the neighbourhood (particularly, in and around Prague) is closely associated with spending time with the people close to them. The children's narratives indicate that they frequently spend time with people while moving around and experiencing the neighbourhood or engaging in some type of social interaction. This specifically included going to or coming from a leisure club or school (an obligatory move) and taking a walk with one's family or friends (an optional move). For instance, when travelling home from a leisure club, the children accompany each other home (walk home together). Often, such a journey is as significant a part of the children's social life as their participation in the club. This is clearly illustrated by Olivie's statement on how the social role of these movements (i.e. spending time with her friends) is more important than the walk itself:

*But, for example, when we go from the leisure club, we go like to Žalov [a part of the municipality] and that, so actually I'm walking through the municipality too, but not alone and not like my goal is the walk, but my goal is that I'm still walking with these people and I'm not disconnected yet. (Olivie, 14 years, suburban municipality)*

Moreover, children's trips to school indicate the importance of engaging in social interactions along with physical movements. Since there is no high school in the Roztoky suburb, students must commute to Prague to attend high school. This is true of students attending multi-year high schools, as well. Six of our participants used to commute to Prague, whereas five directly attended school in Roztoky. In both cases, journeying together to and from school represented an important aspect of developing, maintaining, and strengthening the participants' social ties. This is particularly true of the commutes to and from Prague, since these journeys are of long duration and enable children to spend time together. This was the case for Gustav, a 13-year-old pupil, who enjoyed the reassurance that he would always meet someone on his way to school.

*Then, I go out; I take a short walk to the train station; so, sometimes I run because ... it depends, but sometimes I go out later. But, it's nice that if I miss one train, then another train comes in ten minutes and then there's an Arriva [a train operator/company], which is a passenger train that goes a bit differently. And, actually, the good thing is that I meet some friends when I go on any train, which is good. (Gustav, 13 years, suburban municipality)*

Those attending school in Roztoky followed a similar system to travel to leisure clubs. Usually, children start alone on their way to school; however, gradually, they group with other classmates living in neighbouring streets. The same practice (in the reverse order) is applicable to their travel back from school. For example, for Erik (16 years old), spending time with his classmates on the way to school is so important that he is willing to get up early and extend his route.

In addition to the trips to school and leisure clubs (obligatory movements), the movement also served as a social activity in the case of optional moves (e.g. free-time walks), most frequently in the form of walkabouts with friends, parents, or siblings several times a week. Particularly, their strolls with siblings were an important aspect of the children's accounts. For Norman (14 years old), regular walks with his sister or father were a weekly routine. They habitually followed a specific circuit around the neighbourhood, and the walks enabled Norman to develop a deep relationship with not only his family members but also his residential environment.

*And, I go out when I can, like with my sister, and we talk like, or I talk like with my parents about stuff that we need to do or go shopping for or something. Or, we just talk ... We have this circle that my sister and I made up there; so, that's where we go to most of the time. It's like five kilometres or something; so, we always go for a walk ... Then, my dad and I used to do another circuit and then Tesco and Albert [supermarkets] and stuff like that; so, I usually go and maybe buy something good and at the same time I'll walk like round there and if my mum needs something in the pharmacy, I'll go to the pharmacy, as well, and do a circuit like that. (Norman, 14 years, suburban municipality)*

Such location-based social experiences help children develop an overall image of their neighbourhood. Moreover, their walks within the neighbourhood help children create experiences and related memories. These socio-spatial memories play a role in creating a home and enhancing an individual's neighbourhood attachment since they constitute an important link between one's place and identity.

However, it is noted that children did not use their walks solely for the purpose of maintaining their social interactions. Sometimes, they completed their walks alone, either intentionally or due to external factors. For example, Michal (12-year-old boy) mentioned instances of walking alone. Even though he prefers not to walk alone, he considers walking with his friends impractical, because his time options generally do not match his friends' options. Therefore, he often takes walks by himself. Hence, his strolls are part of a personal routine and habit. The absence of companions enables Michal to achieve a focused perception of his residential surroundings and, thereby, develop a close relationship with his neighbourhood. On the contrary, Lewis (14-year-old boy) emphasised the necessity of taking his walks with somebody since this enabled him to talk to someone and, thereby, maintain and deepen his social interactions. However, sometimes, he deliberately completes his walkabouts by himself to devote time only to himself. These narratives show how the regularity of movement, involving social interactions, material encounters, and sensory experiences with the surrounding environments, develops children's attachment to their neighbourhood. The memories and

relations formed during childhood may be reflected in the participants' neighbourhood relationships as they progress through the subsequent stages of their lives.

Additionally, children (particularly, those living in detached family houses) develop social ties by interacting with the neighbours living in their immediate proximity (e.g. neighbouring houses). These relations materialise in different forms and with varying intensities. The neighbours who are considered friends usually belong to the same generation. Further, although participants were generally aware of the people living in their immediate vicinity, they did not establish any close contact with the latter in case they belonged to different generations.

*I: Do you know the people who live in your neighbourhood?*

*P: Mostly yes.*

*I: Do you talk to them or just say hello?*

*P: There are only a very small number of people living in my street who are my age and meet my criteria for being friends with them. But ... there are mostly older people there. But, otherwise, in my neighbourhood of maybe 500 m or 1 km, I talk to a lot of people. (Ivan, 13, suburban municipality)*

The interviewees perceived that their close relations with neighbours (i.e. those relations that are considered to be friendships) are weakening. They mentioned that, currently, they do not go to the playground with neighbouring kids as often as they used to. Moreover, their parents have ceased to organise joint events with neighbouring families. This indicates how the strength of neighbourhood relations varies among life courses.

The factor that is frequently considered a cause of the recession of neighbourhood relations is a shift in duties. For instance, the local neighbourhood-based friendly relations weaken when a child starts commuting to school in Prague. This is because children often form friendships at school or during leisure activities. Similarly, during their early childhood, children often develop friendships among their immediate neighbours indirectly through their parents who are highly involved in their leisure time and actively seek similar families with children in the vicinity to connect with and develop relationships.

*I know my neighbours and we used to go canoeing when we were kids. And then, actually the whole elementary school, we never went around Prague at all. We just always got home and rang the bell, especially with the Novak family, Jelinek family, and Hamar family. And, we'd be there in our playground, and we'd do all kinds of games and stuff. But, gradually, other people started moving in. I don't know them anymore, and we don't go canoeing anymore either. When I do go out with somebody, it's only with Tereza; but, it isn't often she rings the bell; so, it's kind of died down. Well, I know them by name. Just, classmates always say that they don't even know what their neighbours' names are or what they look like. (Olivie, 14 years, suburban municipality)*

As children progress through their life course, they become more independent of their parents and their daily activities and location undergo modification. Their platform to meet friends within the neighbourhood changes, as well. They frequently find new friends at school or in newly enrolled leisure clubs. In this manner, most of the established friendly relations gradually weaken and, in some cases, disappear completely. Old relations are frequently replaced by new ones with the emergence of novel platforms for interaction, which are usually less neighbourhood based than the former platforms.

Interviews further revealed the participants' thoughts on their social relations with 'familiar passers-by. Interviewees often mentioned that their residential surroundings (i.e. neighbourhood) are small-sized. Moreover, they usually used familiar terms or verbal diminutives while talking about certain places within their neighbourhoods. The perceptions of neighbourhoods as being familiar and having a small size create circumstances under which it is almost always possible to meet or observe 'someone familiar' while moving through the neighbourhood (e.g. obligatory moves and optional moves). This is clearly illustrated by the testimony of Erik (a high school student), who compared Roztoky to a village and expressed her strong attachment to the neighbourhood.

*I like the surroundings; there's the valley, the hill, and then the grove. The Vltava river is here. It's nice; you can travel towards Úhličky [a municipality] or along the riverbank, either towards Prague or towards Řež [a municipality], and so on. And, at the same time, I know quite a lot of people here. By the way, I'm involved in these events; so, there are not many walks where I don't say hello to somebody or something. So, I like the fact that even though it's a city, there's like, I guess, a village community where everybody knows everybody and they know everybody's name and where everyone lives, at least if they live in Žalov [a part of the municipality] or here. (Erik, 16 years, suburban municipality)*

However, the participants' strong attachment to the neighbourhood may be unsurprising; the neighbourhood has always been their lives' most important social-spatial context since they have been living in the suburb since they were born.





## Young families from housing estates

The existence of playgrounds and parks along commuting routes enables families to engage in both the obligatory activities of commuting to work or other destinations and voluntary movements within the neighbourhood. However, mothers, who typically fulfil their family duties, never mentioned that they progressively create groups with other parents from the same area (at the Invalidovna housing estate).

The level of socialisation that occurs as a result of optional movement is more obvious than that occurs due to the obligatory movement that is required to fulfil a parental duty. However, many families prefer to spend their leisure time together as a family, rather than socialising with others. Children and the older adults feel free to move throughout the neighbourhood by themselves. Families can do the same, as well. Accordingly, mothers and couples spend most of their evenings with their children within the neighbourhood or surrounding area and are busy bringing up their children. They are content to be full-time parents and have little time for their friends and other acquaintances. These families are satisfied with their neighbourhood and the surrounding area since they can spend quality time together as a family in this area.

*For example, we went to the zoo yesterday, which was a long trip. But, we generally go to playgrounds, which is good because we have a good number of them around here. You can do a lot of stuff here, and there's also an open pub with a garden. We like spending our free time together. (Yakub, 28 years, housing estate)*

Despite spending most of their time together, families maintain social relations with relatives, friends, and other acquaintances. However, it is noted that their social circles are not centred on the neighbourhood environment (immediate residential area). Instead, people take advantage of the neighbourhood's accessibility, which is valued by most families. They appreciate the neighbourhood's connections to different parts of the city whereby they can conveniently interact with their acquaintances. However, as their children grow older, couples prefer to visit families so that their children can play or have fun with other children. Instead, people take advantage of the neighbourhood's accessibility, which is valued by most families.

*So, I guess one of the reasons I'm so happy right now is the place where I live because I can communicate with my parents and grandparents, who live very near to here. Also, my sister has a small son, and I spend my time with them. There are some other friends who have small children, as well. So, it is simply a perfect time. Everyone changes from the young professional mode to the young parent mode. So, it was somehow a perfect transition for me. (Barbora, 32 years, housing estate)*

The perspective of new families on the evolution of their relations with neighbours is different from the perspectives of the other two life-course groups. New families claim that nothing has changed, for better or worse, in the years they have been living there. Their interactions are greeting one another and interacting with other families living in the same building. In addition, many families living in high-rise apartment buildings do not know all their neighbours in the same building because of the prevalence of anonymous living in housing estates and large

number of apartments in each building. High-rise buildings do not have shared indoor spaces for occupants to get to know each another. For instance, Sára (a 44-year-old woman) mentions that helping to maintain the shared garden in front of her building is the only way she can communicate with her neighbours in the building.

*I think that people in small villages and towns maintain close relations. Your neighbours help you, and you help them. This, I think, is not the case with housing estates. It may not be the same in other countries; but, it is in Czech housing estates. Even though you live on the same floor, you have no idea who your neighbours are. You simply say hello to everyone you see. (Jana, 28 years, housing estate)*

Although these families tend to maintain strong relations with their friends and acquaintances outside the neighbourhood, they may develop close relations with other families within their neighbourhood since they spend much time in the neighbourhood's spaces, for example, playgrounds. In this respect, interviewees did not mention that they were completely unfamiliar with other families. Instead, they indicated that they are acquainted with several of the families and their children play together. However, their bond with the families is not deep enough for them to call those families their friends. Consequently, the new connections established by parents while their child is playing in the playground are the 'by-products' of the situation. A few local families, particularly those who experienced the shrinking of their social circle after having children, were eager to meet new people and form new connections, despite the absence of any previous intimate bonds between them.

*I think we are missing a club, a family club, or a place to meet new people. I believe the moms who live here and have children do not know each other. And, perhaps, it would be great especially in winter, when it's very cold and you don't have anywhere to go. We have a few cafés and restaurants. If we had a sports club, it would be better. (Jana, 28 years, housing estate)*

Despite having a communication gap with their neighbours, young families in Invalidovna enjoy a sense of community. As described by Lucie (a 35-year-old woman), 'it's a small, green housing estate with a village-like vibe'. Young families are newcomers to the locality unlike the other two life-course groups. As a result, they have not had sufficient opportunity to establish a good community. However, the majority of these families are satisfied with their decision to live and raise their children and plan to settle down in this neighbourhood. Further, several of these families have stated that they are actively trying to establish a thriving community in this neighbourhood. A significant motivation to adopt this approach is the increase in the number of young families who are replacing the neighbourhood's ageing residents.

Having a safe and scenic place to raise their children is a primary incentive for young families to establish a community. Further, these families have already decided to settle in the urban environment. In general, urban areas are stereotyped as being unsuitable for raising children.



Hence, many families move to the suburbs to start a family. This neighbourhood has a suburban vibe, and its village-like atmosphere and focus on community development make it a good place for kids to grow and thrive. One of the first and most recent initiatives towards developing a strong community is the formation of an association named 'Za Invalidovnu'.

*There is one group, and its leader is Lukáš. They're trying to popularise this sort of developer concept; so, I joined them quite recently, maybe two months ago or so. But, honestly, one of the weaknesses that I see in the estate is there is no community. They're like the neighbours don't know each other so well. There are no community activities. (Barbora, 32 years, housing estate)*

## Older adults from the inner city

In general, older participants do not experience socialisation through obligatory moves (e.g. going to work and using services). It is assumed that for older interviewees, the socialisation achieved during these moves is replaced by that achieved while spending time together at a certain place or facility before or after the obligatory activity (e.g. visiting a pub or restaurant). For instance, 56-year-old Kamila, who regularly attends a choir, mentioned that she hangs out in a local pub with other choir members before or after rehearsals. However, it is noted that the topic of sharing one's free time after performing leisure activities was not much emphasised by the older participants.

Among older interviewees, the level of socialisation is higher for optional movement than obligatory movement. They frequently go for walks, during which they spend time with their loved ones (e.g. friends and family members). Repetitive walks along the same routes help deepen their relationship with their neighbourhood, as well. Moreover, older participants are significantly influenced by their memories in determining the route and nature of their walk. In other words, their memories help the older participants create imaginative and material geographies of their neighbourhood. The participants' memories help them deepen and revive their relationship with specific places and the entire neighbourhood. For instance, they frequent the places where they used to go with their parents or children or areas where it was once forbidden or impossible to move around, as mentioned by Jakub, a retiree:

*You can walk along the Vltava River. Here, for example, I like to go to the former harbour area. It was forbidden to go there when I was a child; so, I only used to watch. And, now, you can walk there. The Vltava River has several peaks here. There is one right across us; in the first peak, you can go all the way to the end. So, I like to go there. \*\*\*So, it's nice to go all the way under Bulovka to the Troja Bridge. And there's a nice and also the closest walking route to me, you could say. Of course, on the other side, towards Stromovka to the Park of Culture, there is another area; it's a bit further away. (Jakub, 76 years, inner city)*

Several older interviewees prefer to intentionally stroll through the neighbourhood alone to spend time with themselves and feel relaxed (e.g. getting off the tram a few stops earlier and walking through the park on their way home from work). Moreover, older adults develop social relations by interacting with their neighbours living in immediate proximity, particularly within the spatial context of an apartment house. These relations may have different forms and intensities and include close friendships. Usually, the neighbours who are considered friends belong to the same generation. Sometimes, although the participants were aware of there being neighbours of different generations in the same building, they did not develop any close relationships with them. Their mutual encounters were limited to everyday greetings in hallways or streets.

*I was used to, as I told you, people knowing each other, saying hello, and communicating somehow. I moved here in the '70s; There were some older people like Mr Vorel, and so on. But, I was not friends with anybody here. No. And now, as it's changing, there are a lot of young families here. So, when they come, I mean when they move in, they hardly say hello at first; then, it gets better with time. So, yes. But, it's not like we're making any friends here today. (Spouses Jana and Pavel, 70 years, inner city)*

Older participants were concerned about the gradual weakening of their relations with neighbours (i.e. friendships). They commented that, in the past, having small children provided a basis for them to develop and maintain neighbourly relations and organise collective activities with other families within the neighbourhood on a regular basis. This is an example of how the succession of individual life-course phases imprints on the neighbourhood's phasic role as a changeable social arena for residents throughout their lives. In other words, it demonstrates that the neighbourhood's impact on residents' social lives varies across life-course stages.

Additionally, older participants frequently perceive the weakening neighbourhood relations to be part of wider societal changes, such as the general decline in people's communication with each other and the increasing anonymity of interpersonal relations. In several instances, they mention other reasons for losing their acquaintances, such as ageing (e.g. death or relocation due to health issues) or people moving out of the neighbourhood due to increases in housing costs. During their life course, older adults often lose the relationships that were established through their children (e.g. families living nearby), as well. Once children stop living with or find leisure activities independently of their parents, the parents lose some common interests (e.g. organising free-time activities for their children) and, thereby, some relationships. Often, children and young families (intentionally or unintentionally) replace disappearing friendships with new ones while transitioning to a new life phase. However, such replacements do not usually occur to the same extent for older interviewees. For older adults, the main barriers to such replacements are the intensive turnover in apartments and varying life-course stages of newcomers. Therefore, although they often consider their neighbours to be trouble-free and easy-going individuals, older adults find it difficult to develop close relationships with their neighbours. However, they still feel that they can rely on some neighbours in their vicinity in case of emergencies.

Interviews further revealed the participants' thoughts on their social relations with familiar passers-by. Interviewees often mentioned that their residential surroundings (i.e. neighbourhood) are small-sized. Moreover, they usually used familiar terms or verbal diminutives while talking about certain places within their neighbourhoods. The perceptions of neighbourhoods as being familiar and having a small size create circumstances under which it is almost always possible to meet or observe 'someone familiar' while moving through the neighbourhood (e.g. obligatory moves and optional moves). This is clearly illustrated by the testimony of Miroslava (a pre-retirement-age woman), who compared her neighbourhood to a village and expressed her strong attachment to the neighbourhood.

*We know each other; so, we know our neighbours in the street. We know each other by sight, and we say hello. We just, I don't know, we met for a beer somewhere and we just got talking. It's like actually this part, this northern part of Bubny [a part of the neighbourhood]; it's like a bit of a village. I just know that this guy lives down the street, and I know something about him. (Miroslava, 60 years, inner city)*

However, the participants' strong attachment to the neighbourhood is unsurprising. The residents have been living in the inner-city neighbourhood for the majority of their lives due to which the neighbourhood is their most important social-spatial context. Such a residential trajectory can lead to the evolution of strong attachment to a place.

Further, the nature of the residents' relations with familiar passers-by depends on their age. While moving within the neighbourhood, older adults met various inhabitants, such as neighbours, other older adults, and long-term acquaintances. An example is provided by pensioner Jitka, who talked about meeting older adults of similar age in the streets.

*Or the kids, so, they don't push you away; so, I can only talk about the consideration on their part, and the doctor when I go on the tram; we at least say hello like that. (Jitka, 77 years, inner city)*

The existence of familiar passers-by is an important consideration for older residents because the extent of their everyday activities decreases with age and visits by passers-by enable the residents to meet people near their home. To some extent, these relations compensate for the aforementioned loss or weakening of neighbourhood relations. The encounters with passers-by range from the recognition of familiar faces to exchange of greetings and commencement of chatting in the streets, which occasionally progress to going for a drink or to a café together. These meetings usually evolve into close friendships because the older participants frequently reflect on their past while talking about their current social relations. The basis of these encounters is the participants' long-time residence in and memories associated with the neighbourhood and their experiences of various life-course phases within the neighbourhood. Therefore, they can recognise or meet people who, for instance, attended elementary school with them, who were their parents' friends, or whose children attended the same school as theirs. Moreover, they are aware of their relations with people from the same age groups whom they meet in the streets (e.g. the oldest inhabitants of the neighbourhood from our generation).

The participants frequently do not even greet these inhabitants; however, they are all aware of one another. They share a sense of belonging and support each other. Further, the significance of such social relations increases with the gentrification of the neighbourhood because they cement the older adults' sense of belonging to the neighbourhood.



# Summary

In the Final Report, we focused on the life-course similarities and differences in how residents experience, perceive and become satisfied with their residential neighbourhoods. We clarified how distinct life-course groups living in different neighbourhood types experience and perceive their neighbourhoods. Further, we examined how residents are functionally and emotionally attached to their neighbourhoods.

To examine the study topic, we considered the perspectives of three population groups belonging to various life-course stages and residing in distinct neighbourhood types in the Prague Metropolitan Area. The groups were older children from the suburbs, young families from housing estates, and older adults from the gentrifying inner city.

First, we presented a general evaluation of the neighbourhood's positive and negative aspects, as perceived by the participants. Second, we focused on the participants' movement around the neighbourhood and identified movement as an important element that forms and shapes residents' relationship with the locality. These movements can be divided into two main groups: obligatory and optional. Third, we discussed social relations in association with the movement, because the participants develop various social links while residing, performing daily activities and generally functioning within their neighbourhoods. Those in turn are part of the overall relationship of residents to their neighbourhoods.

Our analysis indicated that temporal and spatial use of the studied neighbourhoods (performed activities, social ties, emotional links) is impacted by a mixture of the **life course** (memories, experiences, personal needs and preferences) and **neighbourhood attributes**. This result was evident for all three age groups.

Overall, the three groups have one similarity: their **obligatory movements** are primarily influenced by their daily obligations and responsibilities. However, they differ in terms of the specific obligations that influence their movements. Nevertheless, the duties are closely linked to the specific life-course phase. Moreover, each of the studied population groups modifies the character of their obligatory moves through their life course, but the drivers and the extent of such modifications differ among the three groups.

**The movement of the children living in suburbs** mainly relates to the attendance of schools and centres for organised activities. The main adaptation seems to follow the role their parents occupied and presently occupy in those activities. As they age, the role of parents in their obligatory moves weakens. Consequently, the children gradually divert from the routes fixed by their parents and, eventually, modify the routes as per their comfort.

**Young families living in housing estates** mainly link their obligatory activities to parental duties, including taking care of their children's needs and running errands. Those are particularly performed by mothers on maternity leave which highlights that the gender differences in movements are more noticeable among young families compared to the other two groups. Many activities are also impacted by the specific small-sized spatial context of the neighbourhood which leads to the need to perform activities in nearby areas that are accessible by walking or public transportation. Their activities get mainly modified along with the changing needs of

their children. Other shifts relate to spatial changes in urban design, mainly connected to newly built constructions within the neighbourhood.

Finally, **older adults in the inner city** have fewer obligations than the other two groups and move according to the availability of services and amenities within their neighbourhood. Potential difficulties related to ageing that impact the radius of daily activities are frequently balanced by advantages provided by the neighbourhood. However, they also need to adapt their moves to the changes in the neighbourhood related to gentrification.

The second type of movement that we analysed was labelled as **optional moves**. For all three groups, the moves involve strolls around the neighbourhoods with rather undetermined and unfixed goals, oftentimes the journey itself being the desired activity. Moreover, optional movement is less structured and more focused on leisure and enjoyment than obligatory movement, which is associated with the fulfilment of necessary tasks. Again, the nature of optional moves gets formed through a mixture of life-course determinants and attributes of specific neighbourhood types (i.e., spatial context).

For **children in the suburbs**, optional movement is frequently tied to social ties (i.e., who they go out with). They modify their movement within the neighbourhood according to sensory experiences with certain places that are usually based on personal experiences and memories with those places (e.g., perceived discomfort in some places).

**Young families** engage in optional movements for entertainment and to spend time with their children, often in nearby parks and playgrounds. The character of moves is strongly influenced by the life-course phase (bringing up children), but also by neighbourhood characteristics, such as the availability of green spaces and safety concerns pertaining to their children.

For **older adults from the inner city**, optional movement may involve walking in the neighbourhood for exercise or leisure, and their movements are influenced by accessibility and mobility issues. Similar to the children from the suburbs, older adults may have concerns about safety and avoid certain areas in the neighbourhood. The nature of those moves is further influenced by the evaluation and perception of changes occurring in the neighbourhoods, regardless of whether they are perceived positively or negatively. Negatively perceived transitions impact their emotional ties because they usually have quite a strong attachment to the neighbourhood since they have lived there almost their whole life. The impact of spatial context then gets moulded by life-course attributes (memories, experiences of the past).

The interviewees developed **relations with the other residents** of the neighbourhood by residing and performing their daily activities, or functioning, within the neighbourhood. However, the relations are varied in terms of depth, regularity, quantity and with whom they are developed. Their nature usually depends on the life-course group and the neighbourhood's characteristics. Therefore, the relations range from different interactions with people close to oneself, such as friends and family, neighbours, and various passers-by. Many of them are shaped by the obligatory and optional moves within the neighbourhood's spatial context.



**Children** typically spend time together during obligatory movements (e.g. going to school or an organised leisure club), thus being firmly tied to a particular phase of life. The same is true of optional movements such as free-time walks, which the children often take with their siblings, parents, or friends. These social experiences are crucial for them to develop a sense of home and strengthen their neighbourhood attachment; further, they create social-spatial memories that connect place and identity. They are also particularly important because of a certain spatial detachment of the neighbourhood (being a suburb) from the capital city (Prague). The spatial context of a rather small suburban municipality also leads to an awareness of a variety of familiar passers-by.

**Families**, particularly mothers, tend to prioritise spending time with their children and fulfilling family obligations over socialising with others. Quality time spent with family is enabled by the qualities of the neighbourhood. They do maintain social connections outside the neighbourhood, but they can effectively use those ties due to the advantages of the neighbourhood (i.e., central location within Prague and accessibility to other urban districts). Nevertheless, they are aware of their neighbours and recognize familiar people in the streets of the neighbourhood. However, compared to children and older adults, those connections are not connected much to long-term residency within the neighbourhood, but more to shared lifestyle with other people, such as unintentionally spending time with other families in the playgrounds, and the small size of the neighbourhood itself (e.g., a limited number of playgrounds).

For **older interviewees**, the level of socialisation decreases during obligatory moves since they often limit the movements and spend their time in a place or facility before or after performing the activity. However, the older interviewees exhibit a higher level of socialisation during optional than obligatory movements, such as going for walks with close friends or strolling through the neighbourhood alone to achieve relaxation. Their repetitive walks help deepen their relationship with their place of residence; moreover, their memories help them create imaginative and material geographies of their neighbourhood. These memories are of the places they used to go with their parents or children and areas where it was once forbidden or impossible to move around. Their long-term residency within the neighbourhood also provides them with various ties with familiar passers-by. Those relations are rather important for them compared to other analysed age groups because they consider them as an integral part of the neighbourhood.

**Children** and **older adults** commented on the gradual weakening of their close relations with neighbours (i.e. friendships). Children mentioned that they do not go to the playground with neighbouring kids as often as they used to. Moreover, their parents stopped organising joint events with neighbouring families. Similarly, older participants commented that, in the past, having small children provided a basis for them to develop and maintain relations and organise collective activities with other families from the neighbourhood on a regular basis. This shows how the succession of individual life-course phases imprints on the neighbourhood's phasic role as a changeable social arena for residents throughout their lives. In other words, it demonstrates that the neighbourhood's impact on residents' social lives varies across life-course stages. At the same time, the participants' groups differ in their perception of the causes of the recession of neighbourhood relations. For both groups, the main cause seems to be the shift in duties and activities through the life course, but for older adults, the neighbourhood changes (e.g., rising housing costs) and wider societal changes seem to play an equally important role.

**In conclusion**, there are interesting similarities in neighbourhood perceptions and attachment among all three neighbourhood types. It is noted that the participants' neighbourhoods are quite different from one another since the first one is an inner-city gentrifying neighbourhood, the second is a suburban municipality bordering Prague, and the third is a housing estate close to the city centre. However, the participants' strong attachment to their neighbourhood is unsurprising because their neighbourhoods are probably the most important social-spatial contexts of the lives of all three groups of participants: For instance, the older adults have resided in the inner-city neighbourhood for the majority of their lives, children have been living in the suburb since their birth, and young families (particularly, mothers) are closely connected to the neighbourhood through their children (since moving long distances is difficult with children). Such a residential trajectory can lead to the evolution of strong place attachment (Lewicka 2011).

Moreover, both past and current movements influence the character of current ties to residential localities. Our analysis revealed that the length of residence affects one's relations with residential localities. This is evident from the narratives of children and older adults, who are both long-term residents and whose past movements seem to influence their current relations. In contrast, this result was not evident in the narratives of young families. Since they either are new to the neighbourhood or have not had much time to spend within the neighbourhood prior to having children, young families have diverse experiences within the locality. After having children and spending more time in the area, they become more attached to the neighbourhood and their movements influence their relations.

We conclude the report with a few **policy recommendations** based on the aforementioned findings. Our results reveal the importance of considering various age groups while designing urban strategies and planning and community policies. The specific age groups and areas within the city should be accounted for in target policy creation. Different age groups have different needs, and different localities face different problems and shortcomings; none of the needs or shortcomings should be neglected. Finally, children, older adults, or mothers on maternity leave should not be excluded from urban planning, particularly since all these individuals spend a large part of their regular days within the neighbourhood in which they live.

In a suburb, for instance, creating a safe and comfortable space where children can spend time is desirable, as existing ones are often occupied by groups with different lifestyles. Additionally, more favourable and comfortable transport connections like a 'school bus' could help children avoid crowded public buses while commuting to school.

For older adults, for instance, we recommend supporting activities that create meeting places for them and effectively communicating these opportunities to them. In general, better communication from the municipality government towards older adults is essential to ensure they do not feel neglected or forgotten while the neighbourhood is transforming. Supporting long-term and established businesses that cater to older adults could also be explored.

For young families, we suggest building community centres as a space for socializing and recreational activities while serving as a hub for community events and services. Encouraging their participation in community planning and decision-making can ensure policies and initiatives are tailored to their needs. Moreover, expanding the range of desired and currently unavailable public services, such as public libraries or supermarkets with diverse products, can improve their quality of life and lead to increased residential satisfaction.

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