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RESEARCH ARTICLE

'It is natural': sustained place attachment of long-term residents in a gentrifying Prague neighbourhood

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ABSTRACT

Recently, post-socialist inner cities have been transforming through various processes of revitalisation and gentrification. The resulting physical and social contrasts of neighbouring localities lead to the spatial fragmentation of inner-city areas that may produce variegated effects on the everyday life of local residents. This paper examines how long-term residents of an inner-city neighbourhood in Prague undergoing residential and commercial gentrification have perceived and lived through its change. Specifically, it reveals how the ongoing changes influence residents' place attachment. The paper relies upon qualitative methodology using semi-structured in-depth interviews with long-term inhabitants (>20 years). Empirical findings point to a strong and stable place attachment, despite ambivalent attitudes towards recent changes related to gentrification. The effect of gentrification on place attachment appears to be relatively limited. Many residents acknowledge that gentrification has reversed the deterioration that characterised the neighbourhood in the past. Moreover, negatively perceived changes to the neighbourhood are often not attributed primarily to the gentrification process but understood as a natural part of residents' own ageing, wider societal changes, and historical development of the neighbourhood. The article highlights the need to investigate the personal, spatial and temporal contexts to comprehend the complex effects of gentrification on long-term residents.

« C'est normal »: l'attachement constant au lieu des résidents de longue date d'un quartier de Prague en cours de gentrification

Les centres des villes de l'après-socialisme ont récemment subi des transformations au travers de divers processus de revitalisation et gentrification. Les contrastes physiques et sociaux entre des quartiers voisins qui en résultent mènent à la fragmentation spatiale de zones dans le centre-ville et peuvent produire des résultats variés sur la vie quotidienne des résidents. Cet article étudie la manière dont les personnes qui vivent depuis longtemps dans un quartier du centre de

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Prague en proie à la gentrification résidentielle et commerciale ont perçu et vécu ces changements. Il révèle spécifiquement comment ces transformations continuelles influencent l'attachement au lieu des résidents. Il s'appuie sur une méthode quantitative qui utilise des entretiens approfondis semi-structurés avec des habitants de longue date (> 20 ans). Les observations empiriques indiquent un attachement au lieu qui est fort et stable, malgré des attitudes ambivalentes envers l'évolution récente vers la gentrification. L'effet de cette dernière sur l'attachement au lieu paraît relativement limité. Beaucoup d'habitants reconnaissent que la gentrification a inversé la dégradation qui caractérisait le quartier auparavant. En outre, les altérations du quartier qui sont perçues de manière négative ne sont souvent pas attribuées essentiellement à la gentrification, mais considérées comme un élément naturel du vieillissement des résidents eux-mêmes, de changements sociaux plus généraux, et de l'évolution historique du quartier. L'article souligne le besoin de recherche sur les contextes personnels, spatiaux et temporels pour comprendre les effets complexes de la gentrification sur les résidents à long terme.

'Es natural': apego sostenido al lugar de los residentes de largo plazo en un barrio gentrificado de Praga

Recientemente, los centros de las ciudades post-socialistas se han estado transformando a través de varios procesos de revitalización y gentrificación. Los contrastes físicos y sociales resultantes de las localidades vecinas conducen a la fragmentación espacial de las áreas del centro de la ciudad que pueden producir efectos variados en la vida cotidiana de los residentes locales. Este artículo examina cómo los residentes a largo plazo de un barrio del centro de la ciudad de Praga que está experimentando una gentrificación residencial y comercial han percibido y vivido este cambio. Específicamente, revela cómo los cambios en curso influyen en el 'apego al lugar' de los residentes. El documento se basa en una metodología cualitativa que utiliza entrevistas a profundidad semiestructuradas con habitantes de largo plazo (>20 años). Los hallazgos empíricos apuntan a un apego al lugar fuerte y estable, a pesar de las actitudes ambivalentes hacia los cambios recientes relacionados con la gentrificación. El efecto de la gentrificación en el apego al lugar parece ser relativamente limitado. Muchos residentes reconocen que la gentrificación ha revertido el deterioro que caracterizó al barrio en el pasado. Además, los cambios percibidos como negativos en el vecindario a menudo no se atribuyen principalmente al proceso de gentrificación, sino que se entienden como una parte natural del propio envejecimiento de los residentes, los cambios sociales más amplios y el desarrollo histórico del barrio. El artículo destaca la necesidad de investigar los contextos personales, espaciales y temporales para comprender los efectos complejos de la gentrificación en los residentes a largo plazo.

Introduction

Gentrification is a neighbourhood change process with various consequences for different population groups. Its main negative impact for the original inhabitants is displacement, manifested directly through housing evictions and indirectly through displacement pressures (Doucet, 2009; Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020). Such effects may be particularly

severe for those people who have been residing and ageing in a now gentrifying neighbourhood for a substantial period of their lives, because they tend to form a strong functional and emotional attachment with the neighbourhood by experiencing numerous life-course events there (Buffel & Phillipson, 2019; Lewicka, 2011).

Gentrification can be observed around the world; however, its particular forms are shaped by local historical and sociocultural contexts (Lees & Phillips, 2018). Accordingly, the evolution of gentrification in post-socialist inner-city neighbourhoods of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has been influenced by post-socialist institutional reforms and the historical development of individual neighbourhoods. Under socialism, inner cities in the CEE were characterised by physical and social decay (Smith, 1996). Following the regimes' demise in 1989 and subsequent institutional, economic, and social changes, these urban areas have been gradually transforming. Individual neighbourhoods have experienced varied development because they differ in the nature of their long-term physical and social structures, the actors influencing their development (e.g., developers), and the concrete character of housing market reforms applied by individual cities and districts. Residential structures of neighbourhoods have been particularly influenced by the tenure restructuring leading to increasing homeownership rates among population groups of various social statuses (L. Pastak & Kährik, 2021; Sýkora, 2005).

As a result, whereas some inner-city localities have undergone physical and social improvement, other areas have remained stagnant, resulting in the spatial fragmentation and varied trajectories of individual districts, streets, and even housing units (Haase et al., 2011; Temelová et al., 2016). In this context, post-socialist gentrification differs from that in Western Europe because it is rather slow-paced and has a hotspot character, to the extent of single apartment buildings being shared by residents of different socioeconomic statuses (e.g., high-income gentrifiers, ageing long-term homeowners). Moreover, gentrification frequently occurs along other neighbourhood change processes, such as incumbent upgrading or physical and social decline (Haase et al., 2011).

We argue that the nature of post-socialist gentrification may produce effects on everyday life for long-term residents that may differ from those of people residing in similar areas in Western Europe (Galčanová & Sýkorová, 2015). Moreover, those effects may be particularly different because post-socialist inner cities are inhabited by residents who have lived in the neighbourhood for almost the entirety of their lives, but who have diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and tenure statuses (e.g., low-income homeowners, renters with long-term rental contracts). These people may then become vulnerable to various forms of indirect displacement (Pastak & Kährik, 2021). Therefore, this paper uses the concept of place attachment to examine whether and how long-term residents' attachment to a neighbourhood changes under the conditions of gentrification in a post-socialist city. Specifically, we investigate how long-term residents of an inner-city Prague neighbourhood (Prague 7), which is undergoing residential and commercial gentrification, have perceived and lived through the changes over approximately the last 20 years.

The article provides three contributions to the scientific debates on changing residents' relations to gentrifying neighbourhoods (e.g., Hoekstra & Pinkster, 2019; Rozena & Lees, 2021). First, examining lived experiences with gentrification in the post-socialist context broadens the gentrification theory beyond its original Anglo-American conceptualisation (Lees & Phillips, 2018; Maloutas, 2012). Second, only a limited number of studies have scrutinised indirect consequences of gentrification for residents remaining in post-

socialist inner cities, even though these effects may be particularly intense because direct impacts (e.g., direct physical displacement) are limited in the post-socialist housing markets dominated by homeownership (Pastak & Kährik, 2021). By centring our research precisely on residents staying put in the neighbourhood, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of those particular gentrification outcomes. Third, focusing on long-term inhabitants enables examination of how gentrification affects residents' links with a place that have developed throughout their lives spent there (e.g., Buffel & Phillipson, 2019; Torres, 2020).

Place attachment, neighbourhood change, and gentrification

A neighbourhood serves as a physical, social, and symbolic space that provides a context for the everyday life of its residents (Cresswell, 2009). Residents may be attached to a neighbourhood through a tangible or emotional connection with various neighbourhood attributes. Moreover, residents develop a sense of identity with a neighbourhood, given they accumulate various experiences and live through numerous life-course events within the spatial and social context of that locale (Lewicka, 2011; Ziegler, 2012).

The relationships people develop with a neighbourhood can be viewed through the concept of place attachment, which can be understood as a functional or emotional bond of people with locations that are important to them in certain ways (Low & Altman, 1992). We define place attachment through the theoretical framework developed by Livingston et al. (2008) and more recently by Visser et al. (2015), which builds on the relationship between place attachment and the formation of personal identity. According to this approach, place attachment contributes to the formation of personal identity through its four dimensions: continuity, distinctiveness, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Firstly, people develop a sense of continuity by connecting certain places with specific past experiences allowing them to compare their wishes and attitudes at various points throughout their lives. Secondly, a sense of distinctiveness emerges when people feel their place is different from others and that they are different from people who inhabit other places. Thirdly, certain qualities of places contribute to the development of one's self-esteem by supporting a positive evaluation of oneself or developing a feeling of social value through being proud of one's residential environment. Fourthly, people become attached to places that enable them to satisfy their desires to engage in certain forms of activity and thus maintain their sense of worth as effective actors in the world (self-efficacy; Livingston et al., 2008; Visser et al., 2015). Examining place attachment through these four dimensions enables us to explore in detail residents' links to various attributes of and changes in their neighbourhood, while also considering these connections in the context of personal histories within the neighbourhood (Ziegler, 2012).

Place attachment evolves during the life course (Buffel & Phillipson, 2019) and strengthens with the length of time lived in a certain place because people gradually deepen their familiarity with the surrounding physical environment, integrate into local communities, and incorporate life experiences into a coherent narrative in which events are related to a single place (Galčanová & Sýkorová, 2015; Lewicka, 2011). Thus, place attachment becomes particularly important for long-term residents, especially the elderly. Place attachment enables them to recall events that happened during their lives within their residential environment (Rubinstein & Parmelee, 1992), thereby maintaining a robust

sense of personal identity (Phillipson, 2007) and continuity while facing changes in their personal lives (Rowles & Ravdal, 2002) and within neighbourhoods (Lager et al., 2013).

Place attachment also provides a certain level of stability and predictability, in that people know what to expect from their residential environment. However, as a neighbourhood changes, so does residents' place attachment (Livingston et al., 2008). Gentrification can profoundly affect residents who remain and live through a neighbourhood's transformation. However, the effects of gentrification on their place attachment are neither clear nor straightforward. They depend on local specificities (Kern, 2016), as well as on individual characteristics of residents, like life course position (Buffel & Phillipson, 2019), tenure status (Sullivan, 2006), or socioeconomic status (Shaw & Hagemans, 2015). Studies often express the negative gentrification effects on remaining residents, usually framed within the concepts of pressures towards indirect displacement (Davidson, 2009). They usually stem from the disruption of neighbourhood social ties (Watt, 2006), the transformation of spaces for everyday activities (Pinkster & Boterman, 2017), replacement of established amenities (Hyra, 2015), spatial segregation or exclusion from familiar spaces (García & Rúa, 2018; Torres, 2020), along with the perceived shift of symbolic power over place-making to incoming wealthier residents (Benson & Jackson, 2012; Doucet, 2009). These situations create feelings of discomfort and loss of familiarity with residential surroundings (Watt, 2006), sentiments of alienation from places (Valli, 2015), un-homing (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020), or disruption of personal identity (Pinkster & Boterman, 2017). As a result, a gentrifying neighbourhood may turn into an area of tectonic social relations (Butler & Robson, 2003).

However, gentrification also creates positive outcomes for long-term residents. Examples include a wider offering of amenities (Torres, 2020), the improvement of physical health compared to neighbourhoods with lower quality of life (Smith et al., 2018), the renovation of housing, public spaces, and infrastructure (Grabkowska, 2015), and potential financial profit from rising housing prices (Pinkster & Boterman, 2017), especially relevant for homeowners (Sullivan, 2006). Shared opposition towards changes may also lead to the engagement of locals in neighbourhood development, thus strengthening one's ties with the neighbourhood (Hoekstra & Pinkster, 2019).

Post-socialist inner-city neighbourhood change and gentrification

The development of post-socialist urban neighbourhoods has been influenced by housing market reforms, particularly housing stock privatisation, rent deregulation, and liberalisation of the real estate market (L. Sýkora, 2001). In Prague, privatisation occurred through the restitution and privatisation of whole apartment buildings and individual apartments. Privatisation of apartment buildings allowed their transfer to private landlords together with sitting tenants, who had been protected by regulated rents, and who are until now often living under the original indefinite lease contracts. Even though the legislation regulating rents was repealed in 2012, landlords can only slowly increase the rents of these contracts. On the other hand, new rental contracts can be signed for definite periods and unregulated market rents since the 1990s. This has induced gentrification in some parts of Prague, but without the involuntary direct displacement occurring in some Western countries (e.g., the USA), since moving out tenants often requires their consent (L. Sýkora, 2005). The remaining individual municipal apartments were

gradually sold for below-market prices to sitting tenants whose wealth thereby increased suddenly, because the assessable value of their assets significantly exceeded the price they paid for them (Stephens et al., 2015).

Housing market reforms have had mixed effects on residential changes. On the one hand, rising homeownership rates following privatisation, only gradual rent deregulation, and the persistent indefinite nature of some rental contracts have impeded population turnover, thus hindering the wider emergence of neighbourhood changes related to residential mobility (e.g., gentrification and direct displacement) and stabilising the socio-economic and demographic composition of some localities (Ouředníček et al., 2015). Conversely, the reestablishment of the private real estate market and the potential capitalisation of individual privatised apartments have led to an intensifying population turnover in other localities (Špačková et al., 2016). Moreover, the termination of rent regulation created the potential for the direct displacement of some households (e.g., low-income) who had until recently resided in apartments with regulated rents (Jahoda & Špalková, 2012). For these households, even slowly rising rents may become unaffordable, despite their rental contracts remaining valid for indefinite periods.

In inner cities, the varied effects of housing reforms have led to spatial and typological fragmentation of trajectories of neighbourhoods, streets, and even apartment buildings (Haase et al., 2011; Kährik et al., 2015). As a result, inner cities constitute a landscape of gentrifying localities blended with residentially stable areas, as well as places of relative physical and social decline (L. Sýkora, 2005; Temelová et al., 2016). The slow-paced and spatially limited gentrification may preserve place attachments of long-term residents. However, various displacement pressures may also gradually disrupt those links as gentrification proceeds (Pastak & Kährik, 2021).

Methods

Our research focuses on Prague 7, an inner-city district in Prague. Gentrifying Prague neighbourhoods share enabling mechanisms (e.g., housing market reforms, inherited urban structures, demand for inner-city housing), but their concrete impacts depend on the specifics of individual localities (e.g., district-based privatisation policies; L. Sýkora, 2005). For instance, the gentrification of traditionally high-valued neighbourhoods adjacent to the historical core has been tied with commercialisation and internationalisation of the city centre (e.g., Old Town, Vinohrady), while the formerly industrial districts have gentrified along with deindustrialisation (e.g., Karlín).

Prague 7 developed during the end of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, partly as a residential area for the middle and upper classes, and partly as an industrial district housing low-income residents. Subsequently, several neighbourhood parts became crowded, with factories interspersed with residential houses, which resulted in overpopulation and worsening quality of life. Like other inner-city areas, Prague 7 deteriorated during the Socialist era. Since the regime change, the neighbourhood has gradually become an area of high investment potential and residential attractiveness.

According to J. Sýkora and Špačková (2022), who analysed the neighbourhood transition since 2001, Prague 7 has been undergoing physical renovation and social improvement accompanied by the emergence of new amenities. Former industrial areas have been redeveloped as new housing prompting inward migration. It has become one of the

most desirable neighbourhoods in Prague leading to rising housing prices. Nevertheless, individual localities have experienced various trajectories ranging from gentrification and incumbent upgrading to continuous stagnation. A wider emergence of gentrification has been impeded by high homeownership rates, favourable rental agreements, temporary rent regulation, and an ageing population (J. Sýkora & Špačková, 2022). Currently, the neighbourhood houses approximately 45,000 inhabitants (Table 1) and consists mainly of multi-story apartment buildings. The population structure remains heterogeneous; nevertheless, the neighbourhood is a slightly younger area with a rather higher social status within Prague.

To understand long-term residents' place attachment, we conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews. Participants were selected based on three criteria. Firstly, they had to be living in the neighbourhood at the time of the research. Secondly, they had to have been living there for at least the last 20 years. This enabled us to capture perceptions of the recent neighbourhood changes, as well as residents' experiences with previous neighbourhood development. Thirdly, they had to have become adults before the targeted 20-year period, as we wanted them to have been a part of their household decision-making processes.

In total, 25 interviews were completed in 2020. Participants were contacted using the snowball sampling method. In the first phase, researchers' social networks within the neighbourhood were used (e.g., friends, relatives, and colleagues) which provided initial contacts with the targeted group of residents. In the second phase, potential participants were contacted through two local Facebook groups. Several interviews needed to be conducted online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, this method proved to be fairly smooth and did not pose major problems for the research. The length of the interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 1.5 hours.

The interviews consisted of several interconnected topics related to place attachment. Initially, we asked the participants about their residential histories and current places of residence. Then we focused on their everyday activities and social ties in the neighbourhood, the changes to these during the last 20 years, and their perception of the ongoing changes to the neighbourhood. Interviews concluded with inquiries about the participants' plans for the future. Surprisingly, tourism did not emerge as a major topic, despite the presence of several touristic attractions. This may be because the neighbourhood lies outside the touristic Prague centre, thus limiting the everyday presence of tourists.

Table 1. Selected population and housing stock characteristics of Prague 7 and Prague.

Area	Population (2020, thsnd.)	Age (2020, %)				Education (2011, %)[ab]			Occupation (2011, %)[ac]	Legal use of apartments (2011, %)[ac]
		0–19	20–39	40–64	65+	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Managers, professionals	Rental
Prague 7	45.8	19	31	34	16	11	57	32	37	45
Prague	1,335.1	20	27	34	19	11	60	29	34	34

[a]The latest available data.
[b]Tertiary education includes completion of higher vocational school or university.
[c]Occupation of residents derives from the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) where managers and professionals represent categories 1 and 2.
Source: Czech Statistical Office (2011, 2020).

The interviews were anonymised. Each participant was assigned a unique code and a nickname. An orthographic transcription style was used. ATLAS.ti software was used for the analyses. We opted for the thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). A combination of deductive and inductive approaches was used while coding (open coding) the interviews. We focused not only on the overt semantic data content, but we also explored the participants' underlying assumptions, and conceptualisations (see Braun & Clark, 2006). Additionally, the role of cultural context and other factors for the interviewees' experiences was emphasised during the data analysis and interpretation.

We were able to secure a fairly diverse sample regarding the housing tenure, age, occupation, and economic activity of participants, with a slight overrepresentation of women (16) and homeowners (15), which to a certain extent resembles the neighbourhood's population and housing characteristics (Table 1). The median age of the interviewees is 60 years, with the youngest being 45 years old and the oldest 79. Seven participants are retired. Those still in productive age are of various occupations (kindergarten teacher, doctor, private driver, second-hand shop manager, seller etc.). Renters (10) mainly occupy privately rented dwellings, while only one lives in a municipal (subsidised) apartment. Five interviewees rent apartments under contracts for an indefinite period. Homeowners dominate among the older participants: only two participants aged over 60 years (14) are private renters. In contrast, seven of the interviewees younger than 60 years (11) are private renters. The median period lived in the neighbourhood is 57 years. A majority of the interviewees (18) have resided in the neighbourhood since their birth or early childhood.

Results

This section presents how neighbourhood transition influences the place attachment of long-term residents and is structured around the four dimensions of continuity, distinctiveness, self-esteem, and self-efficacy.

Continuity

The participants' narratives reflect continuity in various ways. Firstly, they express feelings of being used to the neighbourhood and its attributes (e.g., specific pubs, long-time neighbours) resulting in feelings of certainty about what to expect from the neighbourhood. For instance, they go to a pub where the bartender knows them, or they recognise people on the street whom they encounter every day or know indirectly. Secondly, the participants have developed ties with their neighbours throughout their lives ranging from greetings in hallways to deeper relations, such as spending free time together. These relations are often based on a certain level of trust because the neighbours have lived next to each other for a long time, so they know what to expect from each other:

> I've known people here since I was a child. Today, we're all somewhere else with our lives. But since I have known them for more than 30 years, I know who can be relied on or not. (Karel, 56 years, private rental, contract for an indefinite period)

Thirdly, the participants are attached to the neighbourhood through experiences they gained at different times of their lives. Thus, they have both positive and unpleasant

memories of various activities, places, and people. Their recollections enable them to feel a sense of belonging and strengthen their emotional ties to the neighbourhood (Rowles & Ravdal, 2002). Aneta talks about a particular memory:

> We used to stand there on the street corner during the Socialism, where the kindergarten is now, I think. And there was the butcher shop. And I remember we had to get up early to even buy something. So, we were standing there from six o'clock in the morning with our parents. And they just brought the freshly baked bread rolls around us, and they smelled so good! (Aneta, 57 years, homeowner)

Gradually, interviewees' place attachment changes because changes in some places, people, and other neighbourhood attributes add elements to the neighbourhood's character to which they are not accustomed. These are narrated mainly through attitudes towards physical changes (e.g., loss of familiar public spaces, the closure of a favourite pub), along with changes in population structure and social ties (e.g., long-time neighbours dying, unknown newcomers moving in). Consequently, the interviewees often feel the neighbourhood is becoming unfamiliar and more anonymous than it used to be, even though attitudes towards concrete neighbourhood features vary among the participants. For instance, Martina describes the transition of neighbourhood ties in connection to strange newcomers:

> I see young families moving in, but they are all college educated, they are IT guys, lawyers, or managers who have the above-average income to make it. Unfortunately, the problem is that many of those people, who have the funds, only rent their apartments, so life becomes so anonymous. We all knew each other in that apartment building before, we greeted each other. (Martina, 65 years, homeowner)

Even though the interviewees regret the transformation or disappearance of some places, people, and relations, their effect on disrupting continuity seems to be limited because they often consider them as inevitable and a natural part of life. In other words, the sense of continuity does transform with the ongoing neighbourhood changes, but the changes are often perceived as occurring along with the person's ageing (e.g., old neighbours die, new residents move in), or as accompanied by general changes in society (e.g., people have different needs, do not talk to each other as before). As expressed in these narratives:

> Some people who had lived here moved out and some died. But this is a natural development. (Aneta, 57 years, homeowner)

> Every ten years, a third of the residents [of our apartment house] changes somehow. There were parents with children living here, then the children inherited the apartment, but they don't live here anymore, and they rent it to other people instead. So that is the standard mechanism [of the population change]. (Pavel, 65 years, homeowner)

Recent changes also do not seem to make much of an impression on the interviewees, because they consider the familiar neighbourhood features as being reshaped continuously throughout their lives. Accordingly, they do not perceive the changes as severe compared to what has happened in the past. Often, they identify them as merely another phase of neighbourhood development to which they adapt constantly, and thus are able to retain their attachment (Rowles & Ravdal, 2002). As Martina describes ties with neighbours:

> When my grandfather retired, he missed doing some creative activity, so he did all the repairs in the house here, so we knew everyone. That was during the First Republic [the 1920s–1930s]. And then, of course, my grandparents and my mother lived here through World War II, so they experienced those times in the house together. So, everyone in the house knew each other this way. Then came the Socialist times, so it was known who is who, with whom you should speak about certain things and so on. And now it's just different again. (Martina, 65 years, homeowner)

Perceiving neighbourhood changes in the context of one's ageing and long-term neighbourhood development strengthens with age. The older the interviewees, the deeper they delve into the past when evaluating the recent changes. Consequently, they develop a stronger sense of continuity enabling them to consider the ongoing transition as natural and not as dramatic, which in turn contributes to smoother dealing with the changes. The four youngest interviewees compare the ongoing changes with the past less frequently. Therefore, continuity does not play such a major role in their place attachment as it does for the older interviewees.

Distinctiveness

Distinctiveness is evident mainly in how the interviewees perceive the neighbourhood as being distinct from similar Prague districts. For instance, they perceive the difference in that the neighbourhood offers a wider range of amenities, combines a location close to the city centre with a village-like community atmosphere, and in general is pleasant to live in:

> I definitely have the feeling [my residential area] is different. And the shops, they certainly correspond to that. The shops are smaller, but there is such a great variety of them. (Ivan, 45 years, homeowner)

Being a long-time resident further supports a strong sense of distinctiveness among some interviewees. They connect the neighbourhood's unique character to its past and the role it plays in their memories. This is especially true for the older participants who remember various states of the neighbourhood throughout the 20th century. Moreover, the sense of distinctiveness is reflected in interviewees' narratives about familiar places or people. In this regard, they use personal labels such as 'our' or 'we'. They also perceive the neighbourhood as distinctive, but express this notion as something rather abstract and difficult to explain:

> I used to live in Vinohrady [Prague's inner-city neighbourhood], and maybe there was less greenery than here? I don't know. I just felt it is not for me compared to here [Prague 7]. I just did not like it there; I cannot describe it completely. (Zuzana, 54 years, private rental, fixed-term contract)

Even though changes in the sense of distinctiveness were frequently not pronounced compared to other dimensions of place attachment, they were identified in several cases. On the one hand, some feel the neighbourhood has become more distinctive within Prague. Parts of the neighbourhood were heavily industrialised in the 20th century, which led to a gradual worsening of the living environment. Prague 7 was also on the fringes of interest during the Socialist era, leading to the decay of buildings and public spaces (e.g., parks). Because the neighbourhood has shifted from being an industrial, dirty area with a negative

image to a visually appealing and residentially attractive city district, it has become more distinctive:

> Significant improvement has been in how one feels on the street and how happy I am when I just go through the neighbourhood. I would say it has been improving, especially compared to other Prague neighbourhoods. (Pavel, 65 years, homeowner)

Others feel that particularly the image of a shabby area with a village-like sense of communal ties made the neighbourhood distinctive and somehow more adventurous than other Prague districts. Accordingly, the neighbourhood has been transforming, but it has been gradually losing the atmosphere that made it unique, thus weakening its distinctiveness from other parts of the metropolis.

Self-esteem

The interviewees manifest self-esteem by expressing feelings of being proud of the neighbourhood and devoted to it, especially through appreciating everyday neighbourhood life. Self-esteem is also pronounced when talking about future residential plans and reasons for not leaving the neighbourhood. Frequently, the interviewees are aware of the ongoing changes and express various attitudes towards them. However, their life-long attachment seems to be strong enough that they do not plan to leave, do not want to leave, and often cannot imagine any kind of disruption that would make them leave. This is supported by their housing security, as many interviewees either live in their apartments (10), under rental contracts for indefinite periods (5) or under definitive rental contracts with only mild rent growth. Potential future relocation is usually mentioned in connection with ageing and health issues, the life course (e.g., moving to the countryside for retirement), or significant unexpected events (e.g., family tragedy).

Occasionally, the recent neighbourhood development further strengthens the sense of pride in the interviewees' residential environment. For instance, even though some features of new housing construction are perceived negatively (e.g., being too modern), they are in general viewed as a positive contribution. They represent a development phase that transforms places of longstanding decay connected with the industrial and Socialist past of the neighbourhood, thus making the neighbourhood more appealing:

> The new buildings? But they mostly cultivate places that were not so nice anymore. In the port area, we could only walk along the fence there when our children were little. And there were such strange places where there was nothing, it was overgrown, and the port even no longer worked much. Today it's much nicer. (Lucie, 65 years, retiree, homeowner)

Conversely, in other cases, neighbourhood development weakens self-esteem because the changes intensify physical and social contrasts accompanied by new neighbourhood attributes with which the participants do not identify. Consequently, those interviewees express negative attitudes (e.g., anger, regret, or frustration) towards certain changes. Several interviewees, regardless of their age, articulate feelings of loss of being part of the neighbourhood, frequently represented by the image of a typical newcomer. They perceive the transformation as occurring mainly for the younger and wealthier incomers with different lifestyles, and thus developing without them and not for them. As Ivan describes the newcomers:

> I think among the newcomers there is a certain feeling that we live here now because we can afford it compared to others. I call them local bio-mothers and hipsters. They are sometimes a bit detached from reality, they do not realise there is another world outside the neighbourhood, the real reality with people with real problems. (Ivan, 45 years, homeowner)

For these interviewees, the newcomers symbolise the loss of community. As their neighbours nowadays change frequently, they often do not know them, and they consider them as different. In several cases, they express more hostile attitudes to the newcomers, because they perceive them as behaving as though they are better than them. Similarly, the newcomers symbolise the new shops, restaurants, and cultural events emerging only because of their needs:

> It is built for the younger generation. Now it is, as they say, such a hipster place here. And everything is going in this direction and that is no longer for me. It is more snobbish than I would prefer. I prefer something more ordinary, calmer and so on, but maybe I am just getting old. It's true that I used to like it more here, but now it's getting on my nerves. (Anna, 45 years, private rental, fixed-term contract)

Consequently, the new amenities are not considered part of the organic neighbourhood development desired by the participants. Even though these additions usually do not displace interviewees' amenities, they do not like them and would never use them.

Additionally, the newcomers symbolise rising housing prices and new housing construction. As housing has become more expensive, only wealthier people can afford to move in, indicating the presence of exclusionary displacement (Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020). Those incomers are then perceived as replacing (sometimes displacing) interviewees' well-known neighbours, which further supports the sentiments among some participants of losing 'their' neighbourhood. Moreover, the interviewees living in the neighbourhood since their childhood frequently note the disruptions of ties with lifelong friends who had to move out because they could no longer afford the rent, so they can no longer meet as often as before:

> Many people we know had to move out because of the rent increases. And nowadays we are spread all around Prague. So, apart from having fewer mutual activities because our children grew up, we spend less time together because we must meet far away, somewhere else than in the neighbourhood. It is a horror to manage to get together now. (Zuzana, 54 years, private rental, fixed-term contract)

However, the participants acknowledge that those negative opinions are frequently related to natural replacement (e.g., dying out) and their ageing within the neighbourhood, which has been changing continuously throughout their lives. Moreover, described negative emotions related to the influx of newcomers are often based solely on visual experiences and do not alter substantially the participants' everyday activities. Thus, those neighbourhood changes are often perceived as natural which to a certain extent limits their impact on self-esteem.

Self-efficacy

In general, the interviewees can still achieve their goals and desired activities, thereby maintaining their sense of self-efficacy. This stems from the diversity in neighbourhood amenities (e.g., shops, restaurants, cultural venues) and leisure activities, which offers the interviewees a wide choice. The sense of self-efficacy is further supported by good

accessibility both within the district and the city. Due to its position within Prague, the city centre is accessible from the neighbourhood in 10 minutes by foot, and the natural sites outside of the city can be reached in 15 minutes by bicycle. Even though some aspects of self-efficacy weaken or diminish over time (e.g., several established pubs and cafés close), others emerge (e.g., small, specialised shops, new community activities). Thus, the interviewees can retain their sense of self-efficacy while their functional links to the neighbourhood are transformed.

Nevertheless, several participants emphasise and regret the termination and replacement of traditional services and shops, but they frequently perceive these changes as due to the overall societal transformation of consumer behaviour. In this regard, Jan pointed out the reorientation from small local shops to mass consumption from superstores outside the neighbourhood:

> Till this day, there is a shop with household goods on the corner. You can buy screws, nuts there. But the selection of those stores used to be better. Today it is just that the little traders are falling. Everybody actually goes to those [hobby] markets or [big] stores. (Jan, 50 years, homeowner)

Moreover, the changes in the sense of self-efficacy relate mainly to the perception of the changes in neighbourhood amenities as a series of phases (e.g., after World War II, during the Socialist era, after the 1989 Revolution). Accordingly, the neighbourhood transformation during the Socialist era (pre-1989), and after the regime change (the 1990s), resonates much more in the narratives than the recent past, especially for the older participants. Notably, during the Socialist era, several interviewees appreciated certain amenities, such as the offering of goods through specialised shops. This positive evaluation contrasts with the following period. Despite the pronounced positive political transition happening in the Czech Republic, the participants remember life in the neighbourhood as rather poor. They associate it with the worsening supply of services and the emergence of undesirable businesses (e.g., casinos and pawn shops). However, since the end of the 1990s, the neighbourhood's offer of services has improved once again (e.g., resurging small shops):

> Many businesses were along the main street. And in the 90s, it got totally ruined. There was nothing here, just the bank, the gaming rooms and casinos, the savings bank, and even the restaurants disappeared. And during the last 10 years, a lot has changed, and many restaurants and cafés have emerged again. (Nina, 64 years, retiree, homeowner)

The interviewees' sense of self-efficacy also changes as their functional neighbourhood links change with life-course events. As residents reach middle and older age, they have lived through various life stages during which they had different requirements of the neighbourhood, and thus developed particular functional links. For example, while raising small children, their radius of everyday activities revolved mainly around the children's needs:

> It is more our needs that tend to change [than the neighbourhood]. Of course, I used to spend more time in those parks. Now that the kids have grown up, they do not need me at all, so I don't need to go to Stromovka [local park]. Now it is more that I just go and sit down with friends and have some wine. (Zuzana, 54 years, homeowner)

The childcare phase is often considered a period of developing new neighbourhood ties, mainly with other parents. Nevertheless, these relations quite naturally diminished as participants navigated through subsequent life phases. In addition, specific life events (e.g., new employment, divorce) further modify the way interviewees use the neighbourhood features.

The functional links further transform as the interviewees enter old age or retire. These changes are expressed mainly through the perception of emerging physical and psychological barriers. On the one hand, the interviewees consider these obstacles as being a natural part of ageing. For instance, they talk about movement hindrances, such as feeling too tired to go out and certain amenities being too far away to visit or complain about the absence of benches. Moreover, they frequently lose their functional ties with long-term neighbours, because they also become elderly, and they gradually die out, move closer to their families, or enter retirement homes:

> Unfortunately, I'm the oldest here. All of them [neighbours] have died, or they have gone to live with their children, because they can no longer be here alone. So unfortunately, it was like waving a wand. I'm just in that category of witnesses of the old times, you know the category: go back to your grave! (Martina, 65 years, homeowner)

On the other hand, the natural difficulties connected with ageing are often exacerbated by the ongoing neighbourhood changes, which several interviewees perceive as being mainly for the benefit of younger residents. Consequently, they consider emerging neighbourhood amenities as not being for them anymore and label them as being 'for different generations'. These sentiments of partial exclusion are reflected not only in the transformation of functional links, but also in the aforementioned dimensions of emotional place attachment (especially self-esteem).

Discussion

This paper aimed to reveal how the place attachment of long-term residents of a post-socialist inner-city neighbourhood has changed with the gentrification process. Despite the emphasis on the negative effects of gentrification in the literature (e.g., Doucet, 2009; Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020) and the potential for the intense presence of indirect displacement in post-socialist cities (Pastak & Kährik, 2021), our interviewees' place attachment can be understood as quite strong and stable. Both positive and negative attitudes towards the recent changes were identified (similarly Shaw & Hagemans, 2015; Sullivan, 2006). However, as the changes do not significantly limit residents' use of amenities, social ties, or everyday activities within the neighbourhood, they do not weaken substantially their attachment to the neighbourhood. Further, several changes are perceived as improvements to the neighbourhood, which actually strengthen place attachment (similarly Torres, 2020). The gentrification effects that have the potential for more negative outcomes do exist (e.g., neighbourhood becoming anonymised, loss of familiar public spaces), but their disruptive effect on place attachment is limited due to the three factors discussed in the following paragraphs: the reflection of the changes against the historical neighbourhood development and against the residents' individual life-course positions, and the continuous impact of shifts in the post-socialist housing market leading to persisting housing stability.

First, the sustained place attachment reflects the interviewees' long-term residence in the neighbourhood. Although we focused primarily on the most recent changes, the interviewees view them through a particular frame of historical processes of fundamental social changes within the neighbourhood. They often do not consider the neighbourhood as a stable area that has started to change only recently. Rather, they perceive the transformation to be a long-term process (i.e., pre-socialist, socialist, post-socialist). Ongoing changes thereby represent yet another phase of gradual long-term development (similarly Doucet & Koenders, 2018). Consequently, the participants' current place attachment has been influenced by their memories of various states of the neighbourhood rather than through unchanging and stable places. Situating themselves in the history of the place (neighbourhood) and placing current gentrification in the context of successive phases of neighbourhood development enables the development of more resilient place attachment in the face of the ongoing neighbourhood transition (Lager et al., 2013; Phillipson, 2007). This points to the importance of past neighbourhood transitions in understanding contemporary personal links with places (Rowles & Ravdal, 2002). Moreover, it highlights the need for a thorough investigation of local contexts to comprehend the complex effects of gentrification on residents in individual neighbourhoods (Maloutas, 2012).

Second, the interviewees sustain their place attachment because they reflect upon neighbourhood changes from their individual positions, particularly in the context of their ageing and numerous life-course shifts experienced in the neighbourhood. Consequently, they consider gentrification as natural and as part of general societal changes happening everywhere. This illustrates how personal pasts mediate residents' current engagements with the residential environment (Barron, 2021). Thus, as participants situate the narratives about their attachments within the course of their lives, perception of the neighbourhood as developing more for the younger generations proves to be crucial for the emergence of negative attitudes towards certain changes. Accordingly, they perceive the changes (which they do not like or oppose) as a 'naturally negative' part of the ageing process (similarly Galčanová & Sýkorová, 2015; Lager et al., 2013). We argue that the perceived 'natural' division along lines of age is then exacerbated by ongoing gentrification and deepening physical and social contrasts. An example of our contention is the perception of newcomers as possessing higher 'spatial capital' (Benson & Jackson, 2012) or 'not-for-us' feelings towards some changes.

Third, the sustained place attachment relates to the persisting housing security of most of the interviewees. Thus, they do not perceive gentrification as a direct threat to their everyday needs and housing, despite developing negative attitudes towards certain changes (similarly Doucet & Koenders, 2018). This relates directly to the particularities of post-socialist housing market transitions. Following post-socialist privatisation, the interviewees frequently live in their own apartments, often regardless of their socioeconomic status. Some renters also perceive their housing as secure, because they live under contracts for indefinite periods with limited options for rent increases. The perceived housing security is further evident in participants' future plans. Mostly, they consider it improbable they would have to move out of the neighbourhood for any reason other than their choice. The strong attachment also seems to be the main reason why the participants do not desire to sell their apartments to profit from increasing housing prices in the gentrifying neighbourhood (Pinkster & Boterman, 2017). Interestingly, several

renters with indefinite contracts express a desire to move to another apartment within the neighbourhood that would better suit their needs as they age (e.g., to a building with an elevator). However, moving out would require termination of their favourable rental contracts tied to their current apartments, and signing regular market contracts with more uncertainties (e.g., wider possibilities for rent increases). This rationale for not moving shows how some residents choose immobility as a strategy to retain secure housing despite their life-course needs (Cresswell, 2012).

Despite the general housing security, a certain level of uncertainty regarding the potential for future rent increases exists among the interviewed renters, especially among those with contracts for definite periods. However, they have not experienced substantial rent increases yet, so the uncertainty does not yet worry them.

Despite the currently limited effect of gentrification on the participants' place attachment, the neighbourhood continues to gentrify as long-term residents are replaced by the natural process of dying and some are displaced by gradually rising rents, more young and wealthier people move in, and the neighbourhood transition brings changes not fitting well with the lifestyles of the original residents (J. Sýkora & Špačková, 2022). Such development may weaken residents' place attachment, even of residents with secure housing (García & Rúa, 2018; Torres, 2020). Thus, the fragmented and hotspot post-socialist gentrification has a double-edged effect on long-term residents' links to the neighbourhood. On the one hand, it limits a more intensive onset of gentrification, impedes the neighbourhood transition, and contributes to sustained place attachment, which is supported by residents' secure housing and perception of the changes as a natural neighbourhood development. On the other hand, it strengthens the contrasts among various residential groups on spatial microscales (e.g., individual apartments; Haase et al., 2011). Consequently, the negative attitudes that some residents are already harbouring may increase as gentrification becomes more common in their vicinity. This may multiply the currently dominant 'naturally negative' sentiments associated mainly with ageing in the city and may set the stage for further displacement pressures reminiscing the 'slow violence' of gentrification (Kern, 2016).

Our findings show the need to include residents' functional and emotional links with the neighbourhood while preparing housing and developmental policies. We particularly highlight the importance of residential stability and security for long-term ageing inhabitants in dealing with gentrification while sustaining place attachment. This points towards the need to address the concept of 'ageing in place' (Buffel & Phillipson, 2019) as a strategy which can help residents to navigate through urban transformations and prevent ageing displacement. Moreover, the ageing process itself needs to be considered as a relational process impacted by various forces occurring at different temporal and spatial scales (Barron, 2021). The relevant policies should thus ensure decent living conditions in the neighbourhood. In this regard, an adaptation of amenities and housing should be considered, such as favourable rental legislation (e.g., rent regulation). These steps may not be politically viable and financially rewarding in the short term, particularly in the post-socialist context with reserved public attitudes towards regulatory and planning policies (Vobecká et al., 2014). However, they are unambiguously valuable in the long run, especially in the context of concurrent population ageing and gentrification.

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