

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE KAMENNÁ DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT. The article describes the emergence of emergency and workers' colonies in the city of Brno from the beginning of the 20s of the 20th century. It also briefly introduces the Kamenná District and its inhabitants from its inception up to the present. Here, the social transformation of the locality is highlighted, which is proven mainly by research on education and professional representation in the locality. Furthermore, the introduction briefly describes the phenomenon of gentrification and the definition of individual phases by Philip L. Clay. The primary goal of the work was to find out the public's current opinion on the locality and thereby help to include the phenomenon of gentrification in one of the phases. The opinion of the public was ascertained using quantitative research by means of questionnaires on the Internet and in the field. The results brought the expected conclusions, the public views the Kamenná District positively and notices signs of renovation of buildings and streets, a richer cultural life or a change in the social structure of the quarter. Using the identified characteristics, gentrification was included in the third phase of its course.

KEYWORDS: Kamenná District, Brno, gentrification, phase of gentrification, public opinion about the Kamenná District.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE EMERGENCE OF WORKER COLONIES IN BRNO

Following the industrial revolution (1760-1840), new businesses were founded in Brno, which generated new jobs. It was not possible to fill them with the existing citizens of the city, and therefore many new residents immigrated to Brno. The influence of migration and the natural growth of Brno required a comprehensive solution to the housing issue – in 1919, a housing crisis occurred, when Brno lacked 2000 apartments. The city responded to this situation by building approximately 10 000 houses during the First Republic. These were mainly apartment buildings, which provided about 35 000 new housing units. In this period, functionalist housing estates of a housing estate nature, which were supposed to solve the housing shortage of the weaker economic strata of the population, became a prominent urbanistic element of Brno. There were plenty of vacant apartments in the city, but thanks to new construction, even workers' apartments were relatively expensive [1]. However, families with two incomes could normally afford to live as a rent in such an apartment building. During the 1920s, because of the approaching economic crisis, Brno businesses laid off workers or reduced their employment, which pushed many families below the poverty line [2].

The reaction to this was the creation of emergency colonies, which were built to a greater extent from the mid-1920s. To prevent the spontaneous and disorderly creation of these worker colonies, the city municipality approved and financed the construction of colonies in

Husovice and Komárov, but this was not sufficient in capacity. The city also bought disused railway cars and placed them in existing colonies, these cars were to serve as temporary accommodation for homeless families. In 1927, an extreme increase of 187 newly built emergency dwellings is recorded. In 1929, these emergency dwellings already formed several contiguous units, and the number of emergency dwellings was approximately 4.5 % of the total residential construction (see Table 1). After 1935, the growth of worker colonies began to decline. At the end of the First Republic, there were about 20 emergency colonies in Brno. In these colonies, over 7 000 inhabitants lived in 1 100 houses, another more than 500 inhabitants lived in shacks, stables, barns or sheds. The size and number of these colonies changed considerably during the 1940s, and some, especially those with more stable settlements, have survived to this day [1].

1.2. KAMENNÁ DISTRICT

1.2.1. BRIEF HISTORY

The Kamenná District was established on the territory of the municipal gravel pit on Červený kopec. Thanks to the division of the quarry into floors, the Kamenná District was naturally divided into two parts, the so-called “Upper Rock” and “Lower Rock”. The lands on which the district was established were both municipal and private but did not belong to the residents themselves.

The beginning of construction dates to 1925, when the existing house No. 1 was inhabited, and construction began in the Dolní skaly area. This construction was permitted by the city. In the course of 1928, construction also began in Horní skala, where, however,

Locality	Formation of a colony	Established by	Number of houses in 1929	Notes	The demise of the colony	Number of houses today
Diviš's colony	after 1925	Landowners	154	Also, Shanghai		About 170
Kamenná District	1925	Residents	Over 100			About 140
Písečník	1919	The city	84	Only Písečník street (formerly Písečník + Lozíbky) has been preserved in the original spirit of the colony		About 27
Podstránská	1928		62 (1933)			About 100
V Chaloupkách	1928	The city			1946	
Na Hausberku	1928				1946	
Na Rybníčku	1927	Residents	60	Also, Planýrka colony	1940	
U Kostivárny	1925	Residents	42	Also, Černovičky		About 50
Colony Na novém hřbitově	1925	The city	144 flats	The name: In the old cemetery, was also used	1945	
Polní	1930–1932	Residents	34	Also, Baráková kolonie u Polní	1958	
Hálkova ulice	1750–1780		22	Today Fibichova		About 40
Resslova ulice	Throughout the 30s	Residents		Today Myslínova		About 65
Na Úhelnách	Throughout the 30s		26		1999	
U Olší	1932	The city	45			About 42
Vagónová Colony	Between 1933–1939	The city	8	Made up of discarded railway wagons	1980s	
Colony Za Zahradou	1926	The city			1942	

TABLE 1. Overview of workers' colonies existing in the 1930s in Brno [3].

it was built without a permit. The permit for these buildings was issued retroactively. The construction took place in stages lasting from 7 months to 3 years. Residents had to pay the so-called “annual fee”, which was a fee for the use of municipal land within a certain year and with the possibility of appeal even without giving reasons. Most of the houses were built in the most necessary formula “kitchen + room” and the material for construction was obtained mainly from demolitions – a frequent source was the demolished Na Rybníčku colony at the time. In the following years, basic hygiene rooms, utility rooms and additional bedrooms were built to the existing buildings. In 1927, the first water pump was built in the colony, and in the 1930s, sewage was installed in the lower part of the Kamenná District. During this period, the private land in the upper part was transferred to another owner, who allowed further construction there. The colony thus grew significantly with the houses of families from the Polní colony, which was being

destroyed at the time. In the 1940s, 132 emergency houses were registered in the Kamenná District. In the 1950s, the city intensively strove for the abolition of the district, which the communists opposed [4–6].

1.2.2. RESIDENTS OF THE KAMENNÁ DISTRICT

The first residents were very often workers working in the nearby Khona and Jílka brickworks with their families. The composition of the population of these mainly poor working men and women was changed only at the end of the 1970s, when part of the original population moved to new Brno housing estates. In the natural course of time, the remaining original inhabitants grew old and died out. During this period, the public perceives Kamenná District very negatively and its inhabitants as problematic and unadaptable. The inhabitants themselves often perceive their origin as a stigma that worsens their public relations and opportunities in education and employment opportunities. The opposite is the heightened “rock”

patriotism, which appears in a significantly smaller part of the local population [5].

Between the 1970s and the 1990s, a new wave of colonization of the Kamenná District took place, when young bohemians who were enthusiastic about the genius of the loci moved to the district. From the point of view of gentrification, it is possible to call them pioneers. From a professional point of view, they were often artists, teachers or craftsmen. Pioneers bought houses at low prices, renovated their dwellings, started families here and actively participated in the cultural development of the locality. After this transformation, the Kamenná District was perceived as a place of artists and bohemians. With the new residents came changes in the form of renovations and additions, which marked the new artistic spirit of the district [7].

Today's residents have changed a lot since the days when the residents were exclusively poor people with blue-collar professions. Both the economic situation and the tastes, trends and requirements of people to satisfy housing needs have transformed [8]. The transformation of the population from blue-collar professions, through predominantly artistic and craft professions, has transformed into today's form, when one could speak of an above-average educated locality, see Figure 1 from 2023.

As part of the Jufos 2023 conference, the results of a quantitative survey in the Kamenná District were published, which related to education (see Figure 1) and professions (see Figure 2) represented among the current residents of the locality. The professions that appeared among the respondents were divided into groups: labor, business, teaching, services, technical, artistic and creative professions, scientific and healthcare. This division took place based on the methodology specified by the Czech Statistical Office [9].

A comparison of education and professional composition helps to classify current residents into a social class according to the internationally used classification, which indicates individual social strata with letters. This division refers not only to the profession and property, but also to the highest level of education achieved. According to this classification, Kamenná District is currently composed of representatives of the so-called upper and upper middle class supplemented by the lower middle class. According to the results of the investigation, representatives of the working class or the lower class are no longer present in the Kamenná District. In terms of professional representation, 2% were classified in the labor profession, given that this profession was also qualified and conditional on a secondary school education, according to the division used, it would be classified in the lower middle class.

Even if there are no data on the composition of the population from the years when the Kamenná District was established, we can consider it an axiom that it was a working class that had at most a basic

Educational Attainment in Kamenná District

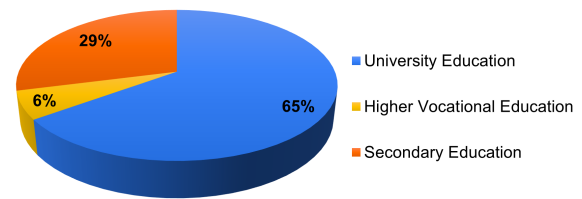


FIGURE 1. The result of a questionnaire on the topic of education in the Kamenná District from 2023 [7].

education. Illiteracy in this district was higher than in ordinary Brno districts [10]. However, education has increased over the years. It is important to compare the Kamenná District with the rest of the republic or the whole of Brno. In this comparison, the current level of education in the Kamenná District appears to be extremely high and does not correspond in the least to the original working-class population, see Figure 3. The only city with a population of over 100 000 in the South Moravian Region is Brno.

1.3. GENTRIFICATION

Gentrification is the socio-cultural-economic transformation of an originally poor or excluded city location into a lucrative and expensive location. As part of this phenomenon, the population of the locality gradually changes, new services and shops are created, properties are repaired and rebuilt, and their value increases during the process. Above all, the increase in rents and real estate prices has the effect of displacing the original population and replacing them with people from higher social strata. Those affected by gentrification are people with limited economic income. These are mainly the poor, migrants and senior citizens of retirement age [11, 12].

Gentrification needs to be understood as a process, not as a final stage. This process unfolds in individual stages that do not have clear boundaries and it is not possible to find the end of the overall phenomenon [13, 14]. In the 1970s, Philip L. Clay defined the individual phases based on Timothy Pattsenem's research in Boston, and this division is still used today [11].

1st Phase: The arrival of a small and non-risky group, i.e. pioneers, in a working-class or deprived locality. These pioneers buy real estate here, renovate it for their own needs. The district has vacant properties. The area is perceived as risky and for this reason investors and entrepreneurs do not invest in the district [11].

Phase 2: The neighborhood's reputation improves in the eyes of the public and the first gentrifiers begin to move into the area. Their number is higher than the first pioneers, but in their way of thinking they are like the pioneers. Newcomers can still find available properties in the locality. Real estate agencies are

Percentage Representation of Profession

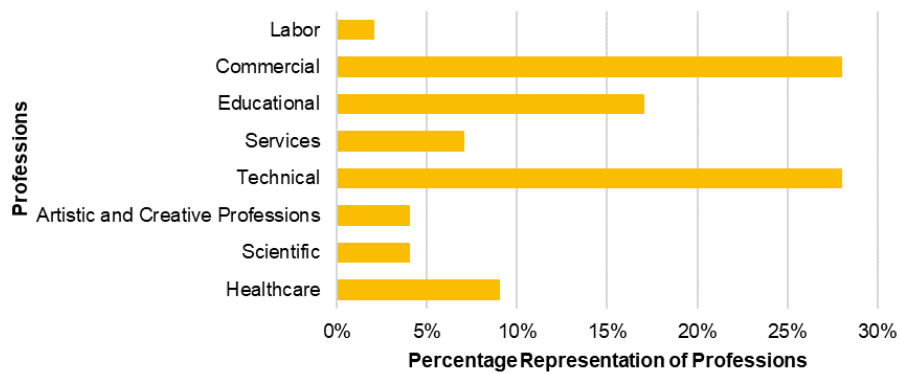


FIGURE 2. Representation of professions in Kamenná District in 2023 [7].

Educational Attainment in Percentage by Groups

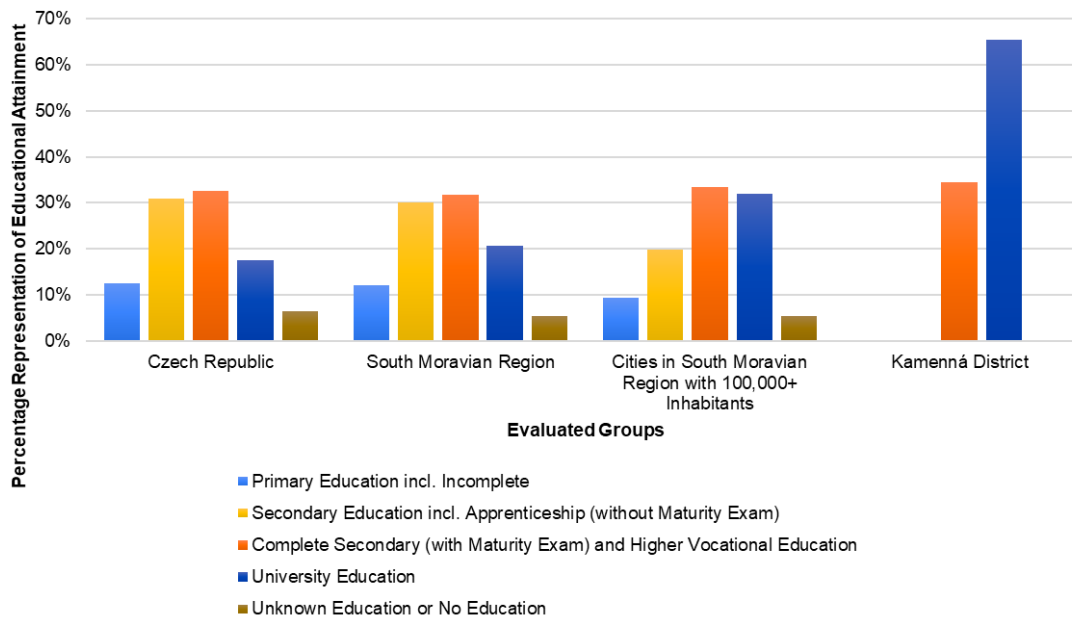


FIGURE 3. Comparison of education in the Czech Republic/South Moravian Region/Cities in the Czech Republic with over 100 000 inhabitants (only the city of Brno)/Kamenná District 2021–2023 [7].

starting to get involved in the process and are starting to buy up the remaining vacant properties. Following the higher utilization of real estate, rents are starting to rise slowly. At this stage, developers are starting to notice the area. The media are becoming interested in the district, articles are written about it and reports are shot [11].

3rd Phase: In this period, the location is already popular with the public and the public is moving to the district. In general, the district is considered relatively safe for investment, and in this connection, developers are also investing in the area. This can also be seen from the outside and the location is improving physically. Real estate prices will start to rise dramatically. The pioneers are slowly becoming a minority group. Investors owning apartments in the locality are starting to offer them to the middle class.

The process of displacement of old settlers is at its maximum [11].

4th Phase: The location is understood as completely safe, fashionable and a great investment. There is still a large influx of new residents from the middle and upper class to the area. Developers and other investors perceive the location as a safe and lucrative investment and are starting to establish specialized shops and services here. To satisfy the demand for housing, non-residential spaces are converted into apartment buildings. The process will also begin to determine the surrounding neighborhoods to satisfy the demand for housing. At the same time, the original inhabitants of the gentrified area are moving into these neighborhoods. At that stage, the displacement of the original inhabitants and pioneers escalates, as the

price of real estate and rents in the area increases drastically [11].

1.4. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

As part of previous research, the development in the transformation of the population and the growth of real estate prices in the Kamenná District were outlined. Given the fact that these are not the only characteristics of the gentrification phenomenon, it was necessary to ask ourselves how the Kamenná District as a former emergency colony is perceived by the public today. Is it still stigmatizing to live in the Kamenná District or is the location already popular and living in it is more of a privilege? If the hypothesis were confirmed, it would also be possible to completely rule out the course of the first phase and include gentrification in one of the following phases of its development.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

As part of this work, the goal was to obtain data from a quantitative survey using the questionnaire survey technique in the city of Brno. Questionnaires were sent out using e-mails and social networks, pasting QR codes directly referring to the questionnaire, and further personal data collection took place in the field. The key questions of the questionnaire asked if the citizens of Brno know the Kamenná District, how they perceive it and how they perceive the residents of the Kamenná District.

113 respondents took part in the survey, it is an ongoing evaluation, as the survey will continue for several months. 63 women and 50 men were interviewed. Most respondents were in the age group of 26 to 40 years. Due to the need for an up-to-date perception of the Kamenná District, the questionnaire was not age-limited in any way. 68.1% of university-educated people, 28.4% of secondary-educated people and 1.8% of people with completed basic education answered the questionnaire. There was a total of 11 questions in the questionnaire, and after the first three, a set of additional questions was opened only to those who answered that they knew the Kamenná District. Those who do not know the Kamenná District were 15.9%. The questionnaire also contained semi-open research questions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As part of the questionnaire survey, in addition to the already mentioned 15.9% of respondents who do not know the Kamenná District, it is also worth mentioning those who heard about the former emergency colony but were not there. This group of people is 6.2% and the majority perception of the locality is positive or neutral, which shows that the Kamenná District does not currently have a primarily bad reputation. Furthermore, the answers of only respondents who visited the Kamenná District will be evaluated.

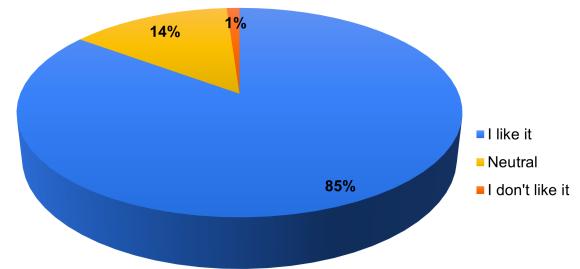


FIGURE 4. Perception of Kamenná District.

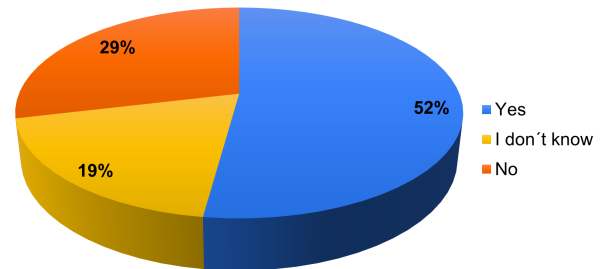


FIGURE 5. Willingness to Live in Kamenná District.

Most respondents like Kamenná District, a smaller number of respondents perceive it neutrally. It is an exception among those interviewed that someone has a negative view of the KČ (see Figure 4). Specifically, there was one respondent in the 41–55 age group.

One of the questions was directed at the development of opinion on the Kamenná District in the years. Rather, the opinion of the respondents remains the same or improves. The biggest change is observed in the reconstruction of houses and streets, there is also a change in the social occupation of the district and a change in the increasing possibilities for cultural and civic enjoyment. Despite the positive perception of the Kamenná District, half of the respondents would clearly like to live here (see Figure 5). They would like to live in the locality because of the location, the people, the atmosphere, the *geniu loci* and the cultural events. Opponents of living in Kamenná District have similar reasons, and these are primarily the location, the atmosphere, the people, but also the too cramped and community environment without privacy.

The last set of questions dealt with how the public characterizes the Kamenná District and its residents (see Figure 6). Most respondents perceive the surveyed locality as a village situated in the city or as a bohemian and artistic district. Roughly 20% of respondents still perceive the Kamenná District as a workers' or emergency colony. A minority of respondents perceive it as a classic district.

The current residents of Kamenná District are perceived by 36% of the answers as free thinkers, by 29% as normal citizens and then by 18% of the answers as an educated class with open opinions (see Figure 7). Today, none of the respondents perceives the residents of Kamenná District as working class, but the impres-

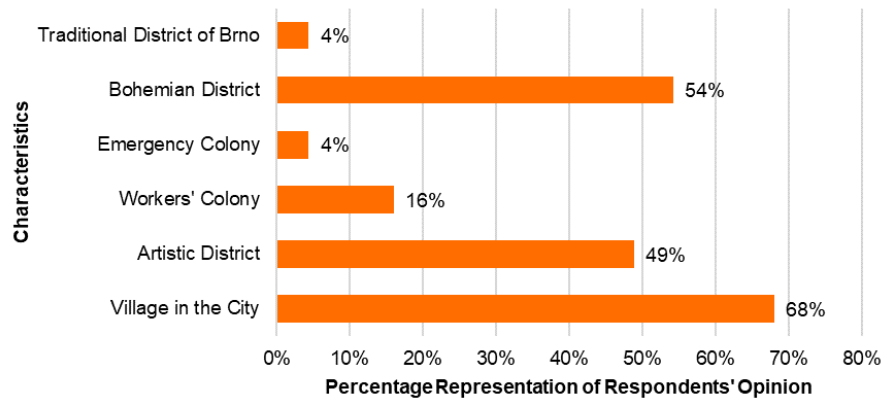


FIGURE 6. Characterization of Kamenná District.

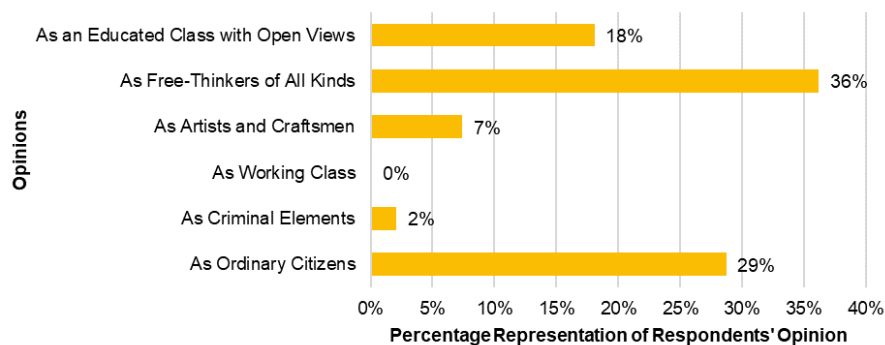


FIGURE 7. Perception of Kamenná District Residents.

sion of an emergency colony and the perception of the residents as criminals remained, even if clearly among the minority group of respondents. Here, it was specifically about two respondents who were united in their answers only by the male gender. It was possible to answer this question in several ways, and some respondents used this option, and the answers thus overlapped.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Research into the public's perception of the Kamenná District showed that the location is popular and perceived very positively. Half of the respondents answered that they would like to live in the Kamenná District. Whether the locality is still perceived as an emergency colony, which is often fondly confused with a worker's colony, or whether it is outwardly an artistic district is not clear, but it is clearly evident that this is such a specific area that, due to its location, dense population and cultural life, it acts district as an independent community different from the rest of the city of Brno. Several respondents answered that they perceive how the Kamenná District has improved physically. A few others perceive the development of cultural and civic use in the locality, others a social transformation.

All the above-mentioned results of public perception of the Kamenná District point to the third or fourth

phase of gentrification. Previous research on the development of the real estate market or the change in the social structure of the research location also corresponds to this (these are largely visible in the introduction).

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