

SENSE OF PLACE IN A NEIGHBOURHOOD – VRBIK (ZAGREB)¹

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Abstract

The understanding of the concept of place as a subjectively felt and experienced phenomenon opens the way to geographical exploration of human experiences in connection with a place, among them the study of the *senses of place*. The term *sense of place* denotes the structure of attitudes and emotions, which individuals or communities have in relation to the area in which they live. In this paper, the concept *sense of place* is used as a tool in the exploration of attitudes and feelings of residents in the Vrbik district in Zagreb, concerning their neighbourhood. The study is based on a survey conducted in Zagreb on the sample of 132 respondents. The study combined the application of different instruments in order to understand how Vrbik is felt and experienced by its residents.

The first tool looked at the level of importance that the residents attribute to various aspects of life in the neighbourhood, that is, functional, aesthetic and social. The second tool focused on the residents' feelings towards their neighbourhood, namely the feelings of indifference, rootedness and belonging to the community and to the place. In addition, the 5-point Likert scale measured the degree of satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a whole, as well as with specific aspects of the neighbourhood. Several open questions were also included in the survey questionnaire to explain the findings. The methodological flexibility used in this study allowed to get an insight into the wide range of attitudes and feelings of the residents of Vrbik concerning their neighbourhood.

We could also draw some general conclusions. Obtained data indicate the overwhelming predominance of the functional attitude to a place of life over the social or aesthetic attitude. Results also show that young people value the social relationships in the neighbourhood more than older people do. They are also in general more affectionate towards their neighbourhood than older residents. Comparative analyses on a larger sample should be necessary to understand whether the identified patterns are locally specific or point out universal phenomena.

Key words: sense of place, neighbourhood, Zagreb, Vrbik.

Résumé

La compréhension du concept de lieu comme un phénomène subjectivement ressenti et vécu ouvre la voie à l'exploration géographique des expériences humaines en relation avec un lieu. Parmi eux, l'étude des sens du lieu. Le terme « sens du lieu » désigne la structure des attitudes et des émotions que les individus ou les communautés ont par rapport à la région dans laquelle ils vivent. Dans cet article, le concept de sens du lieu est utilisé comme outil dans l'exploration des attitudes et des sentiments des résidents du quartier de Vrbik à Zagreb, en relation avec le voisinage. L'étude est basée sur une enquête menée à Zagreb sur un échantillon de 132 répondants. L'étude a combiné l'application de différents instruments, tous utilisés pour comprendre comment Vrbik est ressenti et vécu par ses résidents.

Le premier outil a examiné a été le niveau d'importance que les résidents attribuaient aux divers aspects de la vie dans le quartier, c'est-à-dire les aspects fonctionnels, esthétiques et sociaux. Le deuxième outil a été axé sur les sentiments que les résidents avaient au sujet de leur quartier, à savoir les sentiments d'indifférence, d'enracinement et d'appartenance à la communauté et au lieu. En outre, l'échelle de Likert en 5 points a été utilisée pour mesurer le degré de satisfaction vis-à-vis du quartier dans son ensemble, ainsi que des aspects spécifiques du quartier. Plusieurs questions ouvertes ont également été incluses dans le questionnaire d'enquête

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pour expliquer les résultats. La flexibilité méthodologique utilisée dans cette étude a permis d'avoir un aperçu du large éventail d'attitudes et de sentiments des résidents de Vrbik en ce qui concerne leur voisinage.

Nous pouvons également tirer des conclusions générales. Les données obtenues indiquent une forte prédominance de l'attitude fonctionnelle face à un lieu de vie par rapport à l'attitude sociale ou esthétique. Les résultats montrent également que les jeunes valorisent davantage les relations sociales dans le quartier que les personnes plus âgées. Généralement, ils sont aussi plus attachés à leur quartier que leurs aînés. Des analyses comparatives sur un échantillon plus large seraient nécessaires pour comprendre si les modèles identifiés sont spécifiques à ce quartier ou s'ils révèlent des phénomènes universels.

Mots clés: sens du lieu, quartier, Zagreb, Vrbik.

1. Introduction

With the publication of the famous book by Edward Relph, the concept of *place* in geography has been understood in human geography, and in cultural geography in particular, as a notion that combines landscapes, human activities and meanings (Relph, 1996, 908). In this context, the term *meaning* refers to place-related experiences, emotions, relationships, and thoughts. In the cultural geography discourse, our relationship with a place is seen as a phenomenon that is subjectively sensed and experienced. Such an understanding of the concept of *place* opens the way for the exploration of human experiences in connection with a place. Among them is the study of the *senses of place*.

Sense of place is a concept used by many social sciences: geography, psychology, sociology, anthropology. The term *sense of place* denotes the structure of attitudes and emotions, which individuals or communities have in relation to the area in which they live. The term implies a personal and emotional relationship to a place in which an individual lives. Sometimes, the sense of place is simply defined as "space + meaning" (Stedman, 2003). The term has been present in human geography since the 1970s (Tuan, 1974), and it was used in many works (Eyles, 1985, Butz and Eyles, 1997, Feld and Basso, 1996, Shamai and Ilatov, 2005, Bilig, 2005 Brown and Raymond, 2007, Carter, Dyer and Sharma, 2007 De Wit, 2013, and others). Agnew (1987) pointed out that the sense of place was one of the three main dimensions of place. Traditionally, in geography this term has been associated with attachment, belonging, and closed communities (Tuan, 1974, Relph, 1976). Today, however, the concept has been expanded – and is now present in research on dynamic, multicultural, and changing environments within global cities (Massey, 1994).

Sense of place can be studied on different scales: on the level of a region, city, or neighbourhood. In this paper, the concept *sense of place* is used as a tool in the exploration of attitudes and feelings of residents in the Vrbik district in Zagreb, concerning their neighbourhood. The question of what defines the sense of place in Vrbik does not interest us purely theoretically. Our starting point is the assumption that the sense of place, which is grounded in the living experiences of the residents, can be used as a basis for urban policy development. Urban policy regarding place construction has an impact on the visual and functional transformation of neighbourhoods. Thus, urban policy comes from above and influences the physical space and social practices in the

neighbourhoods *top-down*. Exploration of the sense of place can contribute to the *bottom-up* policy development, which would take into account the attitudes and feelings of the residents themselves.

2. Study area

The research focused on the idea of practical application of the sense of place as a concept. The survey was carried out in the part of Zagreb that is clearly outlined by the four major traffic routes: Slavonska Avenue, Hrvatske bratske zajednice Avenue, Savska Street and Vukovar Avenue. Although there are three administrative city units in this area (three local councils), the residents perceive it as a homogeneous region, under the common name of Vrbik. Therefore, we will also use that name to denote the whole neighbourhood. The researched area covered 77 hectares with over 6,500 residents of this spatial zone².



Figure 1. Part of Vrbik constructed in late 1940s.



Figure 2. Part of Vrbik constructed in 1990-ies.

² Data from the official web site of Zagreb city hall.

It should be noted that so far the concept of a sense of place has not been used in the studies of either Vrbik or any other neighbourhood of Zagreb.

Although it is close to the city centre, Vrbik was urbanised relatively late. Between the two World Wars, it was considered a deprived area at the periphery, with a worker population living in single-storey or two-storey houses, which were for the most part built illegally. In the eastern section of Vrbik (called Miramare), the remains of these old houses have been preserved until today. The reconstruction of Vrbik as a planned structure began only after the Second World War. The construction of typical multi-storey residential buildings began in the late 1940s, and several tower blocks were erected during 1960s. The construction of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences as well as the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture in the neighbourhood in the early 1960s significantly contributed to the development of this area. The presence of higher education institutions provided Vrbik with a social upgrade. The educational function of the district further increased in 1995 after the construction of the new National and University Library. In the late 1980s and during the 1990s, the central part of the district was renovated. The old, illegally built workers' houses were torn down and replaced by new three- and four-storey residential buildings, in which new residents settled, attracted by the favourable location near the city centre and the proximity of educational institutions. These new parts of Vrbik were designed in line with the logic of the terrain with its irregular lines and old alleyways. Similarly, the newly built areas are characterised by typical narrow streets and the network of irregular streets (Maroević, 1999, Kolar-Dimitrijević, 1981).

3. Sample and methodology

How do residents of Vrbik perceive their immediate environment, what meanings do they attach to their neighbourhood? These were the central questions in the research conducted in the spring and summer of 2016 on the sample of 132 respondents. The structure of respondents is shown in Table 1.

The study combined the application of three instruments in order to understand how Vrbik is felt and experienced by its residents.

The first stage of the research looked at the level of importance that the residents attributed to various aspects of life in the neighbourhood, i. e. – the functional, aesthetic and social. The respondents were given the choice of 11 variables or neighbourhood characteristics and asked to pick three that they considered most important (see Appendix 1). Subsequently, their answers were divided into three groups. The first group included the variables regarding the functional aspects of the neighbourhood – presence of shops and services, its location within the city and transport connections; proximity of educational and health institutions (nursery schools, schools, medical clinic, pharmacy, university); proximity of recreational facilities. The second group encompassed the variables related to the aesthetic aspects of the neighbourhood – beauty of the natural environment, beauty of the man-made environment, tidiness, cleanliness and its general appearance. The third group consisted of the variables connected with the social aspects of the neighbourhood: level of sophistication and tidiness

of neighbourhood residents; proximity of friends; wide variety of acquaintances; supply of places to go out and socialize.

Table 1. Respondent structure.

	No	%
Gender		
Male	58	43.9
Female	74	56.1
Age		
18 – 24	21	15.9
25 – 44	43	32.6
45 – 64	42	31.8
Over 64	26	19.7
Length of residency (years)		
5 – 9	36	27.3
10 -19	38	28.8
Over 19	58	43.9

Another tool we used focused on the feelings that the residents had about their neighbourhood. The respondents were asked to choose between 14 statements (see Appendix 2.) and check all those they agreed with. Subsequently, the answers were divided into four groups. The first group included the variables that show indifference towards the neighbourhood. Namely, statements like: “I would rather live somewhere else”; “The neighbourhood is just the place where I live”; “My neighbourhood is nothing special”. The second group encompassed the variables that point to how deeply rooted the respondents felt in the neighbourhood. To be exact, the statements like: “I feel deeply rooted in the neighbourhood”; “I like my neighbourhood and I would not like it to change!”; “Many memories connect me to this neighbourhood”. The third group contained the variables that denote the social aspect of belonging to the neighbourhood – belonging to the community. Specifically, statements like: “My friends are one of the most important things in the neighbourhood”; “I like the fact that I get to meet many people in the neighbourhood”; “I would be sad to see people I appreciate move out of the neighbourhood”; “I don’t know many people in the neighbourhood, but I like the composition of its residents”. Finally, the fourth group comprised of the variables that point to the general affection for the neighbourhood, a feeling of belonging to it. That is to say, statements like: “I feel I belong to my neighbourhood”; “I’m proud of my neighbourhood”, “I like the spirit of my neighbourhood”, “I would be sad if I moved out of this neighbourhood”.

The third instrument we used was the 5-point Likert scale that measured the degree of satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a whole and with its specific characteristics. The list of

characteristics offered generally corresponded to the standard indicators for evaluating the quality of life in the urban environment (see e.g. Knox, 1976, Pacione, 1982, Oktay and Marans, 2010, Slavuj, 2012). The respondents were asked to evaluate each of the characteristics by giving it a score from 1-5.

Finally, several open questions were included in the survey questionnaire to clarify the findings.

The combination of different tools, i. e. methodological flexibility used in this study allowed to get an insight into the wide range of attitudes and feelings of the residents of Vrbik concerning their neighbourhood.

4. Research results: Vrbik from the point of view of its residents - attitudes, feelings, evaluations

The first tool that we used in this study looked at the level of importance that the residents attribute to various aspects of life in the neighbourhood, that is, functional, aesthetic and social.

The results showed that the functional aspect was given most significance (Table 2). As many as 80% of the respondents picked at least two items from this group of characteristics. It is interesting to note that men and women alike, as well as respondents of all ages, have rated the functional aspects of the neighbourhood most highly. One of the statistically significant characteristics was that young respondents attributed slightly higher importance to the social relationships in the neighbourhood (see figure 3).

Table 2. Relative importance of the different aspects of life in the neighbourhood

Aspects of life in the neighbourhood	The frequency of statements marked as important	Ratio of share in statements marked as important by respondents to share in listed statements
Functional	261	1,83
Social	55	0,38
Aesthetic	77	0,71

Furthermore, the analysis of the individual variables has shown that the fact that their friends live nearby is more important to the young people, aged 18 – 24, than to the working age population between 25-44 and 45-64, (for post hoc Tukey test after significant variance analysis, $p_s = .003$ and $.003$). Also, they consider the supply of places for going out and socializing more important in comparison with the people aged 25 – 44 ($p = .034$).

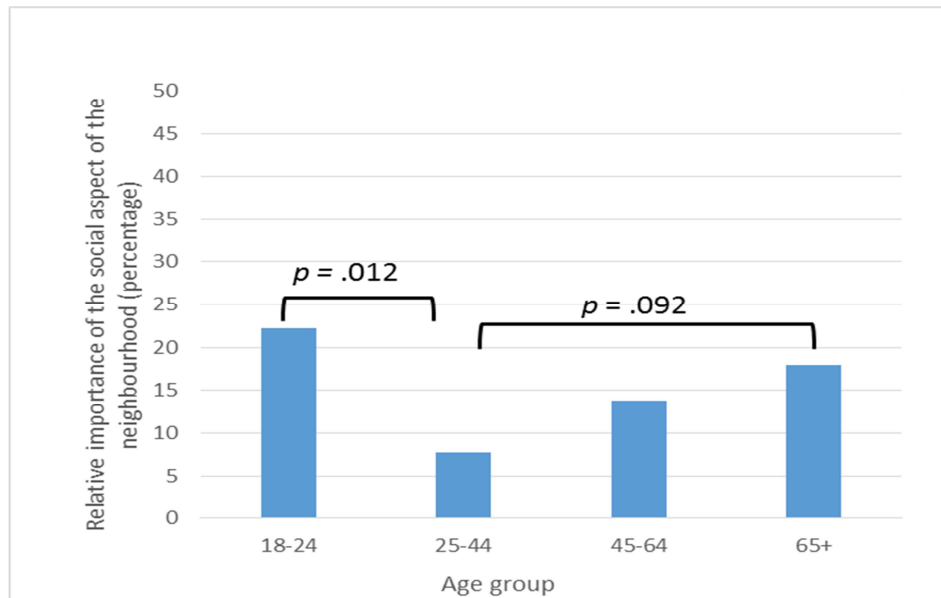


Figure 3. Percentage of the social aspects marked as important among all the marked choices (total of three) related to the important aspects of the neighbourhood. Significances relate to post-hoc Tukey tests after a significant ANOVA: $F(3, 128) = 3.86, p = .011$.

The second tool we uses focused on the residents' feelings towards their neighbourhood, namely the feelings of indifference, rootedness and belonging to the community and to the place.

Table 3. Feelings regarding the neighbourhood

Feelings	The frequency of statements marked by respondents	Ratio of share in statements marked as important by respondents to share in listed statements
Indifference	40	0.4
Rootedness	149	1.3
Belonging to community	134	0.9
Belonging to neighbourhood	206	1.3

The analysis of the results showed that very few respondents felt indifferent towards their neighbourhood. Among the feelings Vrbik residents expressed for their neighbourhood the sense of being rooted in the neighbourhood and the feeling that they belonged there clearly prevailed (see Table 3).

In this respect, as could be expected, the sense of being rooted in the neighbourhood was more prominent among the respondents who had lived there for a long time (more than 20 years) than among those who had moved there relatively recently (5-9 years) (for post hoc Tukey test after significant variance analysis, $p = .009$). The comparison of feelings and attitudes according to gender didn't show statistically significant differences. There were no age differences on the level of the

variable groups (in spite of the statistically significant variance analysis, Tukey post-hoc tests did not point to the significant differences between particular groups). Nevertheless, there were differences on the level of individual variables. The youngest generation of respondents chose the statement “My friends are one of the most important things in the neighbourhood” more frequently (significantly more than the adults aged 25-44 and 45- 64, for post-hoc Tukey tests $ps = .016$ and $.034$). This substantiated again how important having friendships in the neighbourhood was to the young population. Although the sample was too small for drawing conclusions about the general trend, it pointed to the fact that the young displayed more affection not only towards having friendships in the neighbourhood but also for the neighbourhood itself. Specifically, two of the youngest groups of respondents (18-24 and 25-44) chose the statement “I like the spirit of my neighbourhood” more than the other respondents (statistically significant in case of the oldest group, $ps = .034$ and $.034$).

The fact that the young felt more affection for their neighbourhood was further substantiated by the fact that they were happier with the neighbourhood than the older population on average, which became evident from the following research tool (see Appendix 3.). When asked “How happy are you with the neighbourhood as a whole”, on the 5-point Likert scale, the youngest participants expressed more satisfaction in comparison with other groups (although the same tendency can be seen in other groups, the difference reached statistical significance only in comparison with the age group 45-64, for post-hoc Tukey test after significant variance analysis, $p = .003$).

The 5-point Likert scale measured not only the degree of satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a whole, but also with the particular aspects of the neighbourhood. Table in Appendix 3. shows the average scores which Vrbik residents gave to the different aspects of their neighbourhood. Consequently, it was evident from the data that Vrbik was considered most satisfactory in terms of its location and infrastructure needed for everyday life – the network of convenience stores, banks and ATMs, availability of education and health services. The respondents were least satisfied with the supply of higher order services and goods (culture and entertainment facilities, possibility of luxury shopping), with the characteristics of neighbourhood related to health (shortage of recreation facilities, noise, lower air quality), as well as with the significant traffic impact (shortage of parking spaces). Although we think that the aspiration to have culture and entertainment supply (usually characteristic for the central parts of the city) and at the same time lower traffic impact (as we know high traffic impact is connected with the central parts of the city) seemed controversial on the surface, still it provided insight into the fact that participatory urban planning entailed the complex processes of negotiating and reconciling different interests, which can at times be contradictory.

During the research the respondents were asked a series of open questions, which were aimed at understanding the degree of their satisfaction with particular neighbourhood aspects, albeit in different ways. The respondents answered the questions “What are the advantages of living in your neighbourhood?” and “What are the disadvantages of living in your neighbourhood?”. The textual parts of the answers were coded with the code frequency shown in figure 4. and figure 5. There is clear concurrence between the degree of satisfaction with the particular aspects of life (by using the above mentioned tool based on Likert scale) and the frequency of the codes that occur in the answers to the above mentioned questions. According to the subjective perspective of its residents, the biggest

advantage of Vrbik is its location. 100 (76%) respondents stated that the biggest advantage of the neighbourhood was its location, proximity to the centre, the fact that one could reach the central point of the city, i. e. Ban Jelačić square, in 30-40 minutes on foot. The residents also highly value the availability of public transport and good transport connectivity especially the availability of transport connections to the centre (42 respondents). Vrbik facilities are also included among its greatest advantages (62 respondents). Vrbik has a supply of various services, i. e. educational institutions, convenience stores, green grocers, organic food shops, butcher's, coffee bars, bakeries, hair dressers', cobbler's, tailors', copy shops, restaurants, pharmacies, outpatient clinics, banks and ATMs. Therefore, it was no wonder that the degree of satisfaction with the services and infrastructure required for everyday life was so high, as was clearly demonstrated by the analysis of the tool using the Likert scale. All age and gender categories mentioned the "proximity of everything that one needs for life", "everything is conveniently close here", "availability of all necessities" as an advantage.

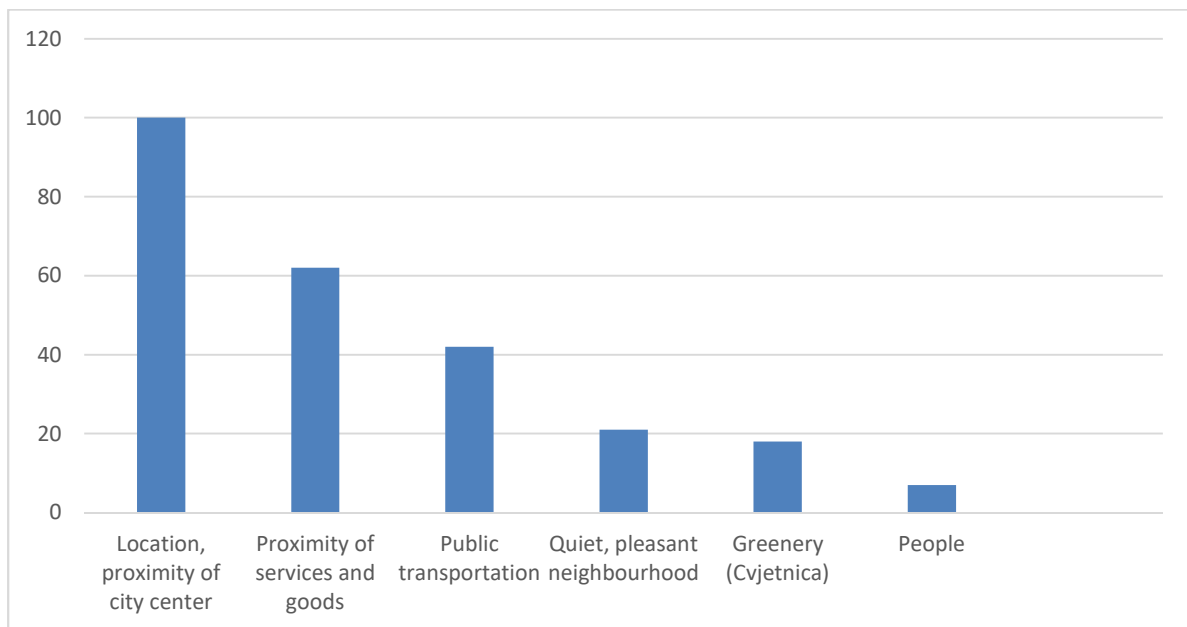


Figure 4. Code frequency in answers to the open question "What are the benefits of living in your neighbourhood?"

It was also evident that Vrbik was perceived by part of its residents as a peaceful and pleasant neighbourhood (21 respondents). In the textual answers to the question about its advantages, we find the following descriptions: "quiet", "family oriented", "cosy", "no disturbances of the peace", "country life atmosphere".

Small part of respondents (7) expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their neighbours. They listed "decent people", "sophisticated people", "the profile of the residents", "good neighbourly relations", "familial atmosphere" among the advantages of the neighbourhood.

When it comes to the disadvantages of Vrbik there is again a high degree of result concurrence based on the two tools which were applied in the research. Namely, the aspects of the neighbourhood

that the residents mention as disadvantages (figure 5.) correspond to the aspects of the neighbourhood that contribute to the low level of satisfaction (Appendix 3.).

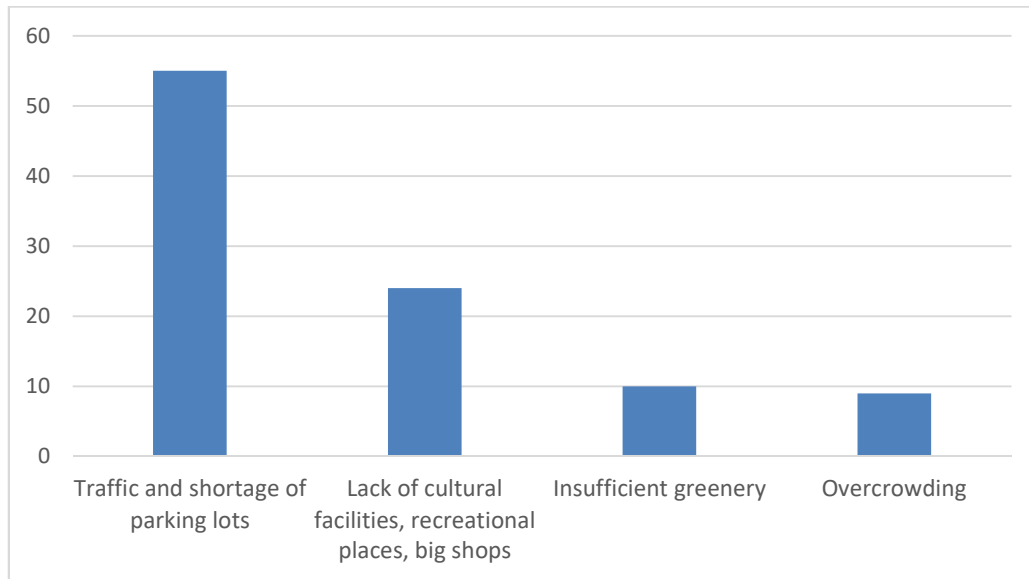


Figure 5. Code frequency in answers to the open question “What are the disadvantages of living in your neighbourhood?”

As we could see, the problems that concern the residents of Vrbik most of all are associated with heavy traffic and lack of parking (55 respondents). The residents who live in the streets on the edges of Vrbik (primarily Savska and Vukovarska Streets which residential buildings face directly) were dissatisfied with the dense car traffic, as well as the noise and pollution that they caused. However, the residents who live in the central parts of the neighbourhood encountered other types of traffic problems. Firstly, the traffic was too heavy during the rush hour, causing congestion on the narrow streets at the beginning and end of every working day. Secondly, the proximity of the university, library, embassies, modern business buildings, made it considerably harder for the neighbourhood residents to park their cars and turned the shortage of parking spaces into a chronic problem. Thus it was no surprise that among the answers to the question “What are your suggestions for improving your neighbourhood?” appeals for better traffic regulation dominated.

This research tool also pointed to the need for high-order facilities. Some respondents (24) mentioned the lack of cultural activities, recreational facilities, and shops with a wider range of products. It needs to be said that the same needs appear in the answers to another open question in the survey: “What would you suggest in order to improve your neighbourhood?”. Namely, many respondents suggested opening a larger number of different shops, introducing cultural activities, and improving the recreational facilities.

The assessments that the local residents made about the natural and man-made environment perhaps most clearly reflect equally their heterogeneous approach and taste and the heterogeneous nature of the neighbourhood itself with a mosaic of areas whose characteristics are often extrapolated

to the entire Vrbik. As we could see, different people approached the Vrbik physical environment in different ways – through the positive or through the negative register. While some of the respondents (18) described Vrbik as a neighbourhood with lots of greenery and well-planned physical environment, others (10 respondents) criticised it for “not enough parks and meadows”, “shortage of green space”, “too much construction”, “too many buildings”, etc.

The open questions related to the sense of pleasantness or unpleasantness gave us an insight into the overall sense of place in the neighbourhood. To be exact, the respondents were asked: “Which places in the neighbourhood do you consider the most pleasant?” and “Which places in the neighbourhood do you consider the most unpleasant?”. The analysed replies led to the conclusion that pleasant places in Vrbik can be divided into two categories. The first category included the places rich in greenery (97 respondents). Respondents mentioned parks in general or specific places like Zeleni trg (The Green Square), Poljane (in Cvjetnica - a part of the neighbourhood with most greenery), newly designed fountains with lawns and flower beds. All these places were connected with spaciousness, space for children’s games, being relaxed, and enjoying the greenery.

The second category of pleasant places encompassed the places for meeting, communicating, socializing. As it turned out, this function was mostly fulfilled by coffee bars in Vrbik (32 respondents). Proximity of the University meant that opening a coffee bar in Vrbik was cost-effective, so there was no shortage of them here. A widespread network of coffee bars seemed to have become a part of the neighbourhood identity. It is interesting to note that coffee bars were pointed out as pleasant places in the neighbourhood by both men and women and by members of all age groups. The elements contributing to the pleasantness included “the atmosphere”, “well maintained”, “aesthetic appearance”, “pleasant music”, “friendly staff”, “tidy and quiet”, “family atmosphere”, “meeting and socializing with friends”, “aesthetic look”, “relaxed”, “people who meet there”, “good company we know”, “accessible”, “relaxed”, “pleasant to sit so that children can play”.

Respondents rarely mentioned specific parts of the neighbourhood. Among the specific parts of the district, Kninski Square was most often mentioned as a pleasant place (24 respondents). In a way it was a local centre with a football pitch and a children’s playground, a meadow, residential buildings with various services available on the ground floor. This was how Vrbik residents described it: “[a place to] meet friends and socialize”, “coffee bars”, “relaxed”, “neighbourhood residents socialize there”, “spaciousness”, “proximity of shops, playground, coffee bars”, “greenery”, “vibrancy”, “various facilities (shops, coffee bars, playground, hairdressers)”, “a meeting place”, “well preserved trees, beautiful shrubbery, benches”, “fairly well maintained lawns”. If we define the image of Vrbik as immediate diversity, as one of the respondents did, then Kninski Square definitely represents Vrbik in miniature.



Figure 6. Kninski Square

As regards the unpleasant places, it should be mentioned that around a third of the respondents could not remember a place in Vrbik where they felt unpleasant. Among the places which were most often mentioned by the respondents as unpleasant there are three distinct types:

1) Places alongside the edges of the neighbourhood – roads that frame Vrbik and their crossroads – because of “traffic jams”, “noise”, “smog” (23 respondents). As we could see, the problem featured in the answers to almost all questions, as was mentioned above.

2) Places with overflowing rubbish containers (respondents named parts of Miramarska and Ružička’s Streets in particular). Much like the other parts of Zagreb, Vrbik is struggling to resolve the waste issue. How much concern this issue caused to the residents could be seen from the fact that when asked how they would improve the neighbourhood around 20% of the respondents gave suggestions in connection with the waste, i.e. opening a recycling yard nearby, replacing open rubbish bins with closed ones, introducing old clothes and shoes bins and other recycling bins, more frequent park cleaning, rubbish collection control.

3) Dark and poorly lit places were mentioned by 17 respondents (among them 12 females). Our research corroborated the conclusions from other studies (Valentine, 1989, Koskela, 1999): women find such places especially unpleasant. Female respondents named two specific areas which they connected with the feeling of unpleasantness or even fear:

- A long passageway connecting the garages under the three tower blocks – the so-called “Rockets” – was described as extremely unpleasant due to “bad lighting”, “neglected state”, “suspicious people who gather there”.

- A paved pathway bordered by hedgerows called Gagarin’s Path, safe and busy during the day, turned into an unpleasant, unsafe, and even frightening place for many female respondents during the night, due to bad lighting, thick shrubbery, and poor visibility. One of the female respondents described the experience of walking there in the evening as “feeling isolated in the woods”.

5. Conclusion remarks

Geography is still in the process of contemplating *sense of place* as a concept and is searching for the methodology to explore this phenomenon. This study used the method that combined the application of different tools, all of them being used to understand how Vrbik is felt and experienced by its residents. Such methodological flexibility made it possible for us to make the following conclusions. First and foremost, Vrbik is perceived from the inside as a family friendly neighbourhood near the city centre. Its residents have the advantages of a metropolis “at hand” and readily available while at the same time being able to avoid the alienation and the hustle and bustle of living in a city centre.

The proximity of the University is one of the crucial features of the neighbourhood identity. It facilitated the development of infrastructure that would otherwise not be sustainable in market terms in the neighbourhood itself and defined Vrbik as a place of “attainable diversity”, as one of the respondents in the research put it.

Vrbik is a place that offers balance between functionality and relaxation. Thus it was interesting to see that the residents’ suggestions favoured maintaining the balance by further developing their neighbourhood through expanding its facilities, i. e. parks, cultural and recreation supply, better and more diverse offer of goods.

One of the biggest problems that Vrbik has is the inadequate traffic regulation. It seems that the traffic load has reached its upper limit, which is something that any large construction project should take into account.

The research has opened a series of questions that require further consideration. Some of them being:

Are the patterns identified in the research locally specific or do they point to general trends? For example, is the overwhelming predominance of the functional attitude to a place of life over the social or aesthetic attitude a phenomenon that is locally specific or is it universal? In which communities do traffic load problems shape the negative pole of the sense of place, as we could see in Vrbik? Is it possible to extrapolate the Vrbik example and claim that the young appreciate the social relationships in the neighbourhood more than the older people, or that they are in general more affectionate towards their neighbourhood than its older residents? The answers to such questions can only be obtained by comparative analyses. Moreover, repeated research on larger samples could, among other things, provide better insight into the heterogeneity of the sense of place which is in line with the heterogeneous identity of the people in every local community. An insight into this type of heterogeneity was highlighted in the research however it was limited due to the small sample size.

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Appendix 1. Part of the questionnaire

Please, mark on the following list three features that you find most important for living in the neighbourhood:











1. Availability of stores and services
2. Location in the city and transport connections
3. Proximity of educational and health facilities (kindergartens, schools, outpatient clinics...)
4. Proximity of recreational areas
5. Beauty of the natural environment
6. Beauty of man-made environment
7. Tidiness, cleanliness and the general appearance of the neighbourhood
8. The level of sophistication and tidiness of the neighbourhood residents
9. Proximity of friends
10. Wide circle of acquaintances
11. Availability of places for going out or socialising










Appendix 2.: Part of the questionnaire

Please, mark in the following list only those statements with which you agree:

1. I would rather live somewhere else
2. For me a neighbourhood is just a place where I live
3. My neighbourhood is nothing special
4. I feel deeply rooted in the neighbourhood
5. I like my neighbourhood and I would not like it to change
6. Many memories connect me to this neighbourhood
7. My friends are one of the most important things in the neighbourhood
8. I like the fact that I get to meet many people in the neighbourhood
9. I would be sad to see people I appreciate move out of the neighbourhood
10. I don't know many people in the neighbourhood, but I like the composition of its residents
11. I feel I belong to my neighbourhood
12. I'm proud of my neighbourhood
13. I like the spirit of my neighbourhood
14. I would be sad if I moved out of this neighbourhood

Appendix 3. Level of satisfaction with particular aspects of the neighbourhood: average assessment on Likert scale from 1 to 5.

Assessed aspects	Average assessment
Proximity of public transport	4.8 
Location	4.7 
Proximity of coffee bars (cafes)	4.6 
Proximity of educational institutions (schools, kindergartens)	4.5 
Proximity of health services (pharmacies, outpatient clinics)	4.3 
Proximity of banks, ATMs, post offices	4.2 
Proximity of convenience stores	4.1 
Availability of services in general	4.1 
THE NEIGHBOURHOOD IN ITS ENTIRETY	4.1
Street safety during the day	4 
Number of green areas	3.9 
Proximity of restaurants	3.9 
Public lighting in the district	3.9 
Relations with neighbours	3.9 
Neighbours is general	3.9 
Natural environment in general	3.8 
Street safety during the night	3.8 
Aesthetic appearance of natural environment	3.8 
Using the roads near your place of residence	3.7 
Forthcoming neighbours	3.7 
Neighbourhood's general appearance	3.6 
Neighbours' level of sophistication and conduct	3.6 
Road quality	3.5 
Transport infrastructure	3.5 
Neighbourhood organization	3.5 
Maintaining the cleanliness of the neighbourhood	3.5 
Aesthetic appearance of man-made environment	3.3 
Air quality	3.2 
Recreational facilities	3.2 
Number of parking spaces	3.1 
Protection from traffic noise	2.9 
Culture and entertainment supply (cinema, culture centres etc.)	2.6 
Proximity of shops with luxury goods	2.4 

 - location,  – availability of infrastructure needed for everyday life,  - safety,  – natural environment,  – man-made environment,  - neighbours,  - traffic  characteristics related to health  availability of high order services and goods