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I LOVE NH. THE MARGINAL GENTRIFICATION OF AN IDEAL SOCIALIST CITY OF NOWA HUTA

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the chosen and initial issues relating to the potential of the historical gentrification in Nowa Huta – the part of Krakow that was erected as a new, perfect town of socialism in the 50s. In order to investigate the gentrification potential of this area, I take into account the important subject of urban changes present in the Polish conditions. In fact, I do it from a different perspective and in a different moment; I observe the gentrification process through the eyes of the new citizens and in its introductory phase.

Key words:

Nowa Huta, urban transformation, marginal gentrification, life satisfaction, social relations

The common perception of the citizens of Krakow is that Nowa Huta is a separate, “different” world. In fact, it is seen as a gloomy, dangerous world that one does not choose to enter unless they must. Yet, there are some people who willingly move to the old part of the town and who can initiate this process in the area. As Neil Smith argues, most of the research on gentrification focuses around the “final results”. At the same time, it fails to take into consideration the places that are under-

going the process¹. I believe that it is also linked to the places that can be perceived as “prepared” for the process itself.

1. Unsuccessful experiment?

In order to understand the context of this paper, one needs to go back to the socialist and post-socialist context, particularly in the Nowa Huta's instance². No other town or city in Poland reflects the idea of a socialist town better than NH. Socialist economy clearly preferred large and holistic space organization projects, not only because of their scale but also because of their symbolism. The town had a major role to play in the socialist economy, too. It was the place wherein the socialist awareness could be easily developed, i.e. it was the natural environment to achieve the perfect socialist society³. One may argue that a socialist town can be perceived in two ways. The first is as an idea and real existence, i.e. an invention of urban “real socialism”. It can also be perceived as an idea and a doctrine that is tremendously strong and present in European urbanization and architecture in 20th century⁴.

The necessity of urbanization in post-war Poland was unquestionably and primarily due to the forceful demographic and geographical changes. Additionally, the urbanization had a powerful relation with the true socialist branch of economy, i.e. the metalworking industry, which was strongly linked to the ideology and politics of the communist country.

The construction of NH in 1949 did not start without any negative opinions from the citizens of Krakow or other nearby villages. A group of architects were particularly supportive of the concept of urban NH. It was thanks to them that a highly interesting architectural formation could be created, i.e. the plan of NH is partially based on a classical renaissance city. The streets radiate from the central square. Furthermore, the idea of a ‘garden town’ and the ‘neighbor individual’ concept was introduced, thanks to which a substantial amount of green and leisure

¹ N. Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*, London 1996, p. 387.

² I intended to emphasise that the aim is not the presentation of the monographic area itself. Hence, the information on the social and historical changes and phenomenoes are rather on the limited side.

³ A.R. French, E.I.F. Hamilton, *The Socialist City: Spatial Structure and Urban Policy*, New York 1979, p. 7.

⁴ B. Jałowiecki, *Miasto socjalistyczne jako skansen urbanistyki XX wieku* [Socialist City as an Open Air Museum of the Twentieth Century Urbanism] [in:] *Społeczeństwo i przestrzeń zurbanizowana* [Society and Space Urbanized], M. Malikowski, S. Solecki (eds.), Rzeszów 1999. pp. 371–375.

areas were created. Moreover, NH provided the former countryside residents with relatively high-standard amenities, such as hot water, bathrooms, central heating, gas, and rubbish disposal. Children could participate in after school activities like ballet, acting, or sports clubs. They started going to theatres and cinemas. NH constituted a perfect socialist town, ensuring optimal relations between housing, work, services, leisure, and a mixture of various social classes and demographic categories.

On the other hand, what we gather from fiction, reports, and science projects related to the new town suggests that the reality was much more complicated. To elaborate, people migrating to NH found it difficult in the new location. And, construction work and social-cultural infrastructure did not keep with the pace of migration, which contributed to social problems and pathologies. This had a negative impact on the perception of the citizens of NH in the eyes of Krakow's residents. The isolation of NH's citizens continued even after various watershed events in the social and political areas (e.g. when the town's socialist workers fought for the cross in 1967 and the Solidarity period from 1980 through 1982). Nevertheless, the accommodation of social conscience and the integration of Krakow and Nowa Huta was a substantially advanced/complex and *continuous process* (emphasis added)⁵.

Furthermore, the abrupt shift from the socialist to post-socialist period, which took place with the significant participation of NH's citizens, corresponded to the whole set of changes and "moral shifts" not only in the economy, but also in the social and cultural aspects of their personal lives. The crash of the centralized economy resulted in long-term chaos: the consequence of the changes in the country's economy was the change in the employment structure. Some of work positions in the industrial sector were made redundant for the sake of the new service sector. This resulted in the impoverishment of a significant part of NH's society. It also influenced an increase in social differences, or, as Grzegorz Węclawowicz states, "polarization or even social segregation"⁶.

The main problem of the post-socialist cities was the inadequate urban structure. As Leach pointed out, they were environmentally inadequate or structurally unstable, some were designed for the now redundant social program, while others

⁵ K. Sowa, *Nowa Huta – przypadek powojennej urbanizacji* [Nowa Huta – The Case of the Post-War Urbanization] [in:] *Socjologia miasta* [Urban Sociology], M. Malikowski, S. Solecki (eds.), Rzeszów 1998, pp. 299–301.

⁶ G. Węclawowicz, *Geografia społeczna miast* [The Social Geography of Cities], Warszawa 2003, p. 197.

still carry the stigma of the previous system⁷. All of those elements affected Nowa Huta's reality directly – the district came to be perceived as a “failed experiment” soon after 1989. All symbolic changes took a radical turn: the removal of the statue of Lenin in central square, changing the names of squares and streets, and, finally, the gradual collapsing of Huta bearing the name of Lenin. The local government has taken the land and housing which used to be the ironworks property due to changes in economic and political planning.

Nowa Huta, as a “city of paradoxes” and “failed experiment”, was turned into an area of intense changes in representation. Since the 1990's, the municipal authorities of Krakow presented Nowa Huta inter alia, as a “ready theme park” and an open-museum “for foreign tourists”⁸. The activities of such tourist agencies as the Crazy Guides, which organizes tours of Nowa Huta in the East Germany-produced “Trabi”, often depict the area in unfavorable light.

On the other hand, the last ten years showed the huge scale and the complex nature of the changes, which occurred there. One can point to the presence and actions of the Laznia Nowa Theatre and other bottom-up local, social, and cultural initiatives of a different scale, which showed how strong the local community is. All of this was helpful in reworking and establishing a new kind of strong and independent local identity, which was constructed most of all by young inhabitants around age of twenty or thirty. As Aliston Stenning, a British researcher who had a chance to observe the post-socialist life of the ideal socialist city, summarized in 2008 the confrontation of the earlier negative stereotype of the district with its present vision could be seen as the best example of the transformation of Nowa Huta.

To see new social and economic initiatives emerging and succeeding, new cafes appearing, new cultural spaces and activities developing and, most of all, young Nowohucianie wearing Nowa Huta T-shirts and hooded tops with an everyday pride is amazing thing⁹.

⁷ N. Leach, *Architecture and Revolution*, London 1999, p. 3.

⁸ Ł. Stanek, *Nowohuckie symulacje: polityka tożsamości i konsumpcja przestrzeni w Nowej Hucie* [in:] *Futuryzm miast przemysłowych 100 lat Wolfsburga i Nowej Huty* [The Futurism of Industrial Cities – 100 Years of Wolfsburg/Nowa Huta], M. Kaltwasser, E. Majewska, K. Szreder (eds.), Kraków 2007, p. 299.

⁹ A. Stenning, *Dlaczego Nowa Huta?* [Why Nowa Huta?] [in:] *Zrozumieć Nową Hutę* [To Understand Nowa Huta], A. Kurkiewicz (ed.), Kraków 2008, p. 17.

2. Theoretical background

Nowadays, we are dealing with a spectrum of more or less mature and considerably diverse processes conceived together as gentrification. The changes described by Ruth Glass that primarily took place in working-class neighborhoods in central London in 1960¹⁰ can be seen nowadays in many other metropolitan areas all-over the globe. The diverse forms of gentrification, or “the chaos of such a concept”, as critics would say, weaken the explanation potential. On the other hand, it expresses the variety of the postmodern city and its inhabitants. Tim Butler appreciates it’s potential, because, as he writes, “the greater range of people feel compelled to express who they are through the way they live and with whom they share their neighborhood”¹¹.

Culture and the economy are among the most extensively discussed topics within the research on gentrification. These disputes revolve around several complementary axes, such as supply vs. demand; or those designated by the dichotomies, i.e. the economy vs. culture; and production vs. consumption, which are the “pillars” of any literature in such research areas. Here, I would like to shortly indicate the differences between the revanchist vs. emancipatory visions of gentrification in order to explain my own perspective and to point out the main research problem of the paper.

From one side, gentrification has been recognized as a process that brings significant profits to the central parts of the cities. It is often an equivalent to the displacement of indigenous, less affluent residents whose housing situation is constantly deteriorating while the process is intensifying. Benefits, such as improving the quality of services or the renovation of buildings, turns out to be shared only by a part of the district’s population—the more affluent newcomers. The increase in the number of wealthier, better educated strata leads to social segregation. Hence, the term “urban revanchist”, which was taken from Smith. In his opinion, gentrification is a process in which the middle class returns to the city center as a kind of revenge for previously pushing its members into the suburbs of the western cities. It is than an extreme expression of spatial segregation, inequality, and social barriers, because gentrified spaces define a new urban frontier – “the frontier of profitability”. Although its form varies depending on the city’s size and geographical location (continents, or regions), it is still influenced by the local economy and culture according to the logic of the free market economy.

¹⁰ R. Glass. *London: Aspects of Change*, London 1964.

¹¹ T. Butler, *For Gentrification?*, “Environment and Planning A” 2007, No. 1, Vo. 39, p. 163.

The return of the so-called new middle classes to city centers also meant important changes in the expectations for sufficient economic and social infrastructure. For each strata, the acquisition of properties in the formerly unattractive places means looking for well-maintained and safe public and commercial spaces in which they can fully experience the charms of urban life without feeling threatened by the dark side of the urban realm. Those changes in urban spaces and social relations between old residents and newcomers lead to the processes of urban life thematization, which are well documented in literature on urban studies¹². The universal theme is subordinate to the new values and consumption patterns: the nighttime economy, cafes, and art infrastructure suit the needs of newcomers and is supported by nearly invisible technologies of security, such as CCTV. The revanchist vision of the process is underscored by the prevalence of terms, such as “outpost”, used to describe the newly renovated apartments or new housing projects in the gentrifying areas and explicitly referring to take over enemy territory. These militaristic or even directly colonial narratives show how different groups are fighting for “the access to the city and the symbolic control of the center”¹³. As one can imagine, the colonization takes on a particularly dramatic character in a situation of sharp conflicts and far-reaching social changes in the districts in which the tenants are forced – even through the use of illegal methods – to leave their rented homes, just like it takes place in the center of Kraków for the past few years.

By contrast, the so-called “emancipatory theory of the city” proposed in the context of gentrification by Loretta Lees shows a much more peaceful and less dramatic vision of such changes than the revanchist one. The latter presents the urban environment as a space of threats or pure violence while the former depicts the same spaces as welcoming, safe, and habitable. In this sense, gentrification is a part of a much older and more fundamental process of city formation – the process of connecting people with the different backgrounds in the city center, creating opportunities for social interaction, tolerance, and the development of cultural diversity. Loretta Lees’ thesis is the continuation of previous studies of Jon Caulfield and David Ley. Ley was the one that stressed the role of counter-culture gentrification in the context of the class dimension of the process. However, Caulfield, who perceived gentrification as a kind of social practice that stands in opposition to the dominant patterns derived from the practice of suburban life, articulated those emancipatory sources of gentrification. Taking gentrification, the

¹² M. Sorkin, *Introduction: Variations on the Theme Park* [in:] *Variations on the Theme Park. The New American City and the End of Public Space*, M. Sorkin (ed.), New York 1992, pp. XI–XV.

¹³ S. Zukin, *The Cultures of the Cities*, Oxford 1995, p. 43.

actors in this process “evaded the dominance of social and cultural structures and the establishment of new conditions of experience” and the source of their inspiration was not so much the old buildings, and a longing for the past, as subjectively experienced present: the desire to escape from the routine¹⁴. In this vision, the process of gentrification creates tolerance and the meeting itself and the contact is more important than the negative effects of gentrification described by “revanchists”.

This study presents only the initial phase of the more complex research project focusing on so-called marginal phase of gentrification, as investigated from the of “new” inhabitants’ perspective. One of the main objectives of the project was to verify the emancipatory character of such marginal change, i.e. to verify if the pioneers of gentrification are really and consciously searching for social diversity. The members of the group, defined by Damaris Rose as “pioneers of gentrification”¹⁵, are the actual actors who can prepare the devaluated areas of the city for the advanced stages of the process. As Loretta Lees and Tim Butler observed in the context of Barnsbury, London, representatives of such a marginal group consciously sought for social diversity and difference¹⁶. My hypothesis was that in the case of Nowa Huta the so-called marginal gentrification could be perceived in categories of emancipatory practice. Distancing myself from Caulfield’s perhaps overly enthusiastic vision and taking a more balanced approach to gentrification, in my opinion, one can get an interesting description of reality, defined in terms of the process, not the final result.

Marginal gentrification seems to be the relevant theoretical frame for this study for two reasons. Firstly, gentrification processes, as it was mentioned earlier, are primarily described from the perspective of global cities, such as New York or London. If one took into account research in smaller urban centers of regional importance, the characteristics of the gentrifiers would be different from those in London or New York¹⁷. I am not sure whether changes in smaller centers have as strong importance and as distinctive form as those occurring in the large ones.

¹⁴ J. Caulfield, *Gentrification and Desire*, “Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology” 1989, No. 4, Vol. 26, p. 624.

¹⁵ D. Rose, *Rethinking Gentrification: Beyond the Uneven Development of Marxist Urban Theory*, “Environment and Planning D: Society and Space” 1984, No. 1, pp. 47–74.

¹⁶ T. Butler, L. Lees, *Super-Gentrification in Barnsbury, London: Globalization and Gentryfying Global Elites at the Neighborhood Level*, “Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers” 2006, No. 31, pp. 467–487.

¹⁷ G. Bridge, *Time-Space Trajectories in Provincial Gentrification*, “Urban Studies” 2003, No. 12, Vol. 40.

Secondly, marginal gentrification is gaining importance in the context of labor market flexibility and the dynamics of individual biographies. The risks associated with the postmodern conditions, especially the difficulties in obtaining stability both in the job market and in the household, resulted in the search for low-cost, yet attractive places of residence located in the central districts of cities.

3. The methodology of the study

The main objective of the research project was to develop case study material and socio-cultural manifestations of gentrification in the old district of Nowa Huta in Krakow, which was based on critical discourse analysis, in-depth interviews, and participant observation. Aside from the material and spatial aspects of gentrification (1) and symbolic creation of the image and representations of Nowa Huta in media discourses, (2) I wanted to depict the behavioural and socio-spatial practices of new residents of the old part of Nowa Huta (3) in order to determine the level of integration between new and existing residents of the neighborhood.

The part of the study presented here was based only on some of the preliminary findings of the first, i.e. the quantitative, phase of the research, which was an online survey of 96 households whose members moved into the old part of Nowa Huta within the last few years (mostly since 2009). The household members responded to a 68-question questionnaire published online just after the research was announced in article in the local supplement of "Gazeta Wyborcza".

The tool was designed to get answers on the housing preferences of new residents, their daily activities, and relationships in and with the district. On its basis, I wanted to see whether (and if so, how) the behavior and attitudes of residents can be regarded as characteristic of the pioneers of gentrification. It consisted of four main parts, describing the topics of:

1. The biography of housing, in which I asked the respondents to describe their residential history and previous experiences;
2. The strategy for buying an apartment: which information on how they purchased or rented homes currently occupied and the details of the same (area, number of rooms, etc.). I asked, inter alia, as to whether the respondents limited their searching only to the district, or the old part of it;
3. The life in the district, which has been studied topics related to new residents' opinions about life in the district and on issues related to their daily functioning within it;
4. Employment and income.

Data obtained through the questionnaire has been developed and analyzed as a background for the second, qualitative phase of the study, which is based on the 18 in-depth interviews (IDI) with the household members and additional IDIs with local experts or entrepreneurs. The findings presented in this paper are primarily based on the data collected during the first phase of the study.

4. Is the old part of Nowa Huta the case of marginal gentrification?

The historical and social context of the district was briefly mentioned in the introduction to the paper. Now, I would like to focus on the values that make the district a subject of potential gentrification. At this point, it is not to prejudge the nature of the process, but merely to point out a few examples suggesting that the old part of the district is the subject of gentrification.

I would like to look at some of the directory attributes introduced by David Ley in the 1980s. The first and most crucial element is certainly location. The proximity to the city center and the working areas is only one of the aspects of a good location. The others factors are the proximity to leisure destinations, to culture centers, and to the services that are available in the city center. The second element is the socio-economic status of the area. The cheaper spaces will be settled if they have certain advantages, such as availability and lifestyle atmosphere. Another attribute is the presence of environmental amenities, such as a park; a wharf; the presence of the arts and the artistic community in the district; or the architecture of a particular historical period, which “is a carefully restored as part of the urban lifestyle habitus”¹⁸.

The old part of Nowa Huta is located relatively close to the city center (10 km from the Main Market Square), as well as the business and scientific centers (Technical University, Krakow Technology Park, and Comarch). The potential attractiveness increases if we define the closeness not only in terms of the distance, but also the accessibility understood as the amount of time necessary to get to the workplace or leisure centers. The district position may increase soon with the implementation of projects aimed at reducing the gap between the NH and the city center, including investment in the fast tram line, which will also reduce the travel time to the center; the continuation of the ring road construction; or international competitions, such as “The Krakow – Nowa Huta of the Future” in March 2012.

¹⁸ D. Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*, Oxford 1996, p. 105.

Secondly, the district has an interesting architectural and urban environment; and, apartments are available here at favorable prices. The old part of NH was, as mentioned earlier, entered into the register of monuments by the decision of the Regional Conservation. NH is the best-known example of the urban planning of the socialist era. And, because of its urban compactness, it is more interesting than Dunaújváros in Hungary or Eisenhüttenstadt in former the GDR. As art historians point out, in Nowa Huta, planners attempted to transplant the utopian concept of an ideal industrial town – developed in the Soviet Union – while simultaneously combining references large, 18th century Baroque assumptions into the Polish reality. In other words, “the urban beauty of socialist realism in version referring to the native tradition, as designers tried to play was national in form and socialist in the content”¹⁹.

This part of the district became crucial to the Local Regeneration Program in 2008. In 2011, the central square area and the Avenue of Roses became the object of the regeneration that, according to the program principle, should “present a new, contemporary look at the formation and functioning of the public space of the historic center of Nowa Huta”, as “the result of a consensus between creative thinking and aspirations of its inhabitants”. Buildings, especially those located closer to the Central Square, have a particularly representative character. As one of the estate agents’ mentioned, “the flats here are a big plus of the area; they were built immediately in the post-war period. Some of the apartments in this area retain a bit of the atmosphere of 19th century buildings” (AN1).

Thirdly, many of the old inhabitants of Nowa Huta are at retirement age and were able to buy flats on their own. Those flats, which are not private property, are the responsibility of the municipal authorities. Although the old part of the district indicates “a high degree of depreciation of buildings and the use of technical and functional aging buildings and infrastructure”, the buildings in the district are very architecturally attractive and the efforts of housing communities show the process of a bottom-up renewal. This means the potential for investment and revitalization. The housing market is clearly singled out, has its own unique character, and its potential seems to be significant, though it is dormant.

Finally, the presence of the early signs of gentrification is the factor that highlights the possibility of changing of the status of the district on a larger scale. For example, the “urban pioneers” – the newcomers who play a crucial role in the

¹⁹ L. Sibila, *Muzeum Rozproszone Nowej Huty. Przewodnik* [The Ecomuseum of Nowa Huta. The Guide], Kraków 2007, pp. 3–4.

early stages of gentrification appreciate the atmosphere of the neighborhood. For example, students, who declare their willingness to remain in Huta and buy a house on the property, also rent apartments. However, most of the new inhabitants are around 30 years old, starting their life on their own – buying the first flat as a couple, expecting kids, etc. This means that the existing social structure of the district will change in the coming years given the age of the existing population; housing area (preferred by young buyers); and a well-developed infrastructure necessary for families, especially those who want to raise children.

The new inhabitants of this part of the district can be described loosely as ascetic consumers or, in some cases, artists and other members of the creative class. In most cases, these are young people. The low cost of purchasing or renting housing and adaptability could certainly explain the interest in this part of the district. The presence of this group can be a starting point for further spontaneous, extended, and market-driven gentrification of this part of the district. So far, the trend is still in its infancy, mainly because of the “bad reputation” attributed to the district and because of the presence of other “hotter” areas of the city, which are potentially interesting places and offer greater investment security. What can determine the changes is the group of relatively consolidated pioneers.

5. Preliminary Findings

Trying to answer the question of the changes in the district, I direct my interest toward the group that I call the “new residents of old Nowa Huta”. The new residents, who are not only influenced by the real estate market situation, are a key element in shaping the district in the present and near future, particularly in the early stages of the process.

The sequence of acts involved with renting or buying a home largely determine the recognition of a living space as the “right” place to live and, therefore, to restore its value. The arranging and adapting of one’s house allows one to see the “the life world” both at the level of an individual home and on the level of the wider neighborhood and the district.

Moving into apartments in the old part of Nowa Huta began relatively recently. Its popularity is a new trend that is not only linked to the boom in the prices on the property market, as it is observed in the times of crisis on the housing market and resulting from the specificity of the local market in the area of housing (low-cost, comprehensive and well-built).

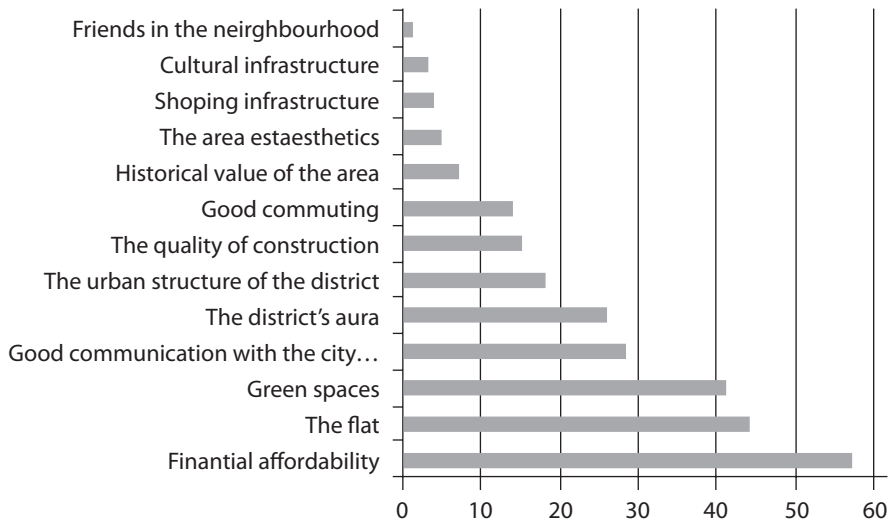


Figure 1. Most important arguments for the decisions to move to old part of Nowa Huta.

Almost half of the analysed households moved to the old part of the district since 2009 (16% in 2009 and 32% in 2010). It is worth noticing that this process was based largely on their own “sweat equity” as well as private investments and mortgages. The vast majority of respondents, i.e. 82% of them, decided to renovate the apartments. In 45% of cases, the renovation took the form of fundamental changes involving the total replacement and installation of interior items, including the demolition of walls and connecting the living room with a kitchen. As one of the respondents described it, „We did all... the demolition of the walls (7 tons of debris), reconstruction of the walls of all the rooms, picking flooring, concrete floors (9 tons), all installations, and exploring the bricks in the living room” (R 15).

Analysing why respondents chose to move to the old part of the district provides three main reasons. The new residents emphasized above all the affordability of apartments – 60%, the advantages of the apartment (its plan and space) – 45%, and the green nature of the district – 41%. Other motives that determined the choice of the district were – in equal measure – the district's atmosphere (29%) and good transportation connections with other parts of the city, including the city center (29%). Open answers give us some idea of the area, as seen from their perspective. Here is one such perspective, which can be considered as representative of the rest:

[The old part of Nowa Huta – J.G.] is a being independent from Krakow, time flows differently here, the streets are wide, no traffic jams, you can always find a place to park your car, great public transport network – you can get everywhere, if not by tram then by bus (We can easily commute to work and take the child to kindergarten), the history of the district and its evocativeness.

An important, complementary factor that argues for the potential of gentrification may be the “atmosphere” of the old part of the district. This attribute was pointed out by one third of the respondents participating in the first phase of the study. Indicating the aura of the district, or its specific atmosphere (a result of three elements: architecture and urban structure, social composition of residents, and the area’s history), the pioneers are noticing its potential. They pointed out that the old part of Nowa Huta seems to be “just like [Krakow] Kazimierz used to be a few years ago [unchanged by the gentrification – J.G.]” Or, they mentioned that they recognize “the prospect of increasing of property value in this part of NH”. Others focused on the changing image of the area:

The aspect of the atmosphere of the district, as a place of history and emerging trend of ‘liking’ of Nowa Huta, of course, had some influence on the decision to buy [the flat – J.G.], also. However, the true potential and character of this part of the city is felt after a few (several) months of continuous residence in it.

At the same time, many of them referred to the concept of the ideal city:

The unique character of the place: it supposed to be the perfect city, and, I think, that it’s not missing anything. In Warsaw, one can find the Palace of Culture, Muranów, MDM, but they are kinds of buildings incorporated somehow into the “normal” streets and surrounded by something else and here we have more extensive architectural establishment of the ideal city is, and, good infrastructure of course...

6. The level of satisfaction and the relationships between the old and new residents

Here, I focus only on two important aspects associated with the process of gentrification, i.e. the level of satisfaction of the new residents resulting from the decision to reside in the new place (especially neighbourly relations, the image of this part

of the district, and the changes that occur in it) and their relationship with the “old” residents of Nowa Huta.

More than 54% of the new residents were very satisfied with their choice while another 38% were satisfied. Nearly 48% of them were satisfied with neighborly relations and 48% were also satisfied with the changes taking place in the old part of the district (see Table 1). At the same time, more than half of the respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the current image of the area (see Table 1). Many of them complained about the inadequate cultural infrastructure, which is supposed to be, according to classical principles of the process, one of the most important attributes of the landscape of gentrification. The lack of cafes, clubs, and even meeting places for parents with children was perceived as a serious problem by many respondents.

Table 1. Statements about particular elements of the district

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am happy with the choice of the old part of NH as a place of residence	2 (2,1%)	2 (2,1%)	3 (3,1%)	37 (38,5%)	52 (54,2%)
I am satisfied with the relationship with the neighbors	3 (3,1%)	5 (5,2%)	20 (20,8%)	46 (47,9%)	22 (22,9%)
I am pleased with the cultural life in the old part of NH	9 (9,4%)	22 (22,9%)	22 (22,9%)	34 (35,4%)	9 (9,4%)
I'm happy with the image of the old part of NH	10 (10,4%)	44 (45,8%)	7 (7,3%)	29 (30,2%)	6 (6,3%)
I am happy with the changes taking place in the old part of NH	7 (7,3%)	17 (17,7%)	11 (11,5%)	46 (47,9%)	15 (15,6%)
Total: 96					

An important aspect of gentrification, understood as a socio-spatial process, is to investigate the relationship and networks linking the “new” and “old” residents of the district and the types of activity in which the new residents of the old part of Nowa Huta engage. Seeing gentrification mainly as a process of social change, one comes to the popular/reoccurring conclusion that this change will lead to class antagonisms, or even to resistance. It is an example of the new urban frontier, where, once the conflict erupts, the city is a visible proof of the scale of the changes. But, what if – as I once again emphasize – we are dealing with the process of marginal character? To understand this process in such a phase, one can look at individual perceptions of reality and ways of engagement in it, i.e. relationships

between the old and new residents, and the level of involvement of the new residents in actions related to the district.

The term “elective belonging”, when applied to gentrification studies, serves as an important factor for explaining the process of gentrification. In this study, I wanted to gain information on how relationships between the two groups – the old and new inhabitants – are established and how strong they are. These relations can be seen as a measuring factor of the distance prevailing between them. It seems to me that the assumptions about the distance of the class known in the literature on gentrification can be translated as part of a social network analysis: the categories of proximity or the power of social networks.

One can observe that even though the pioneers are highly satisfied with living in the neighborhood they do not form particularly deep relationships with the area’s other inhabitants. Although they are happy with neighborly relations and appreciate the neighbors, describing them as very good, these relationships are often quite shallow, based just on a common phrase: “I know them by sight” (45%). 17% of cases are stronger – new residents entrust their keys to their neighbors. Some of the gentrifiers intentionally seek to deepen their contact with neighbors:

After I moved here, well, the first thing that I did was to visit the neighbor next door to be able to safely carry out a major renovation and, well, and on that basis, to actually make some contact, to create a positive relationship. Here, it is not something particularly difficult (WP6).

However, among the interviewees, one can find mostly those who are not looking for special relations with their neighbors:

I do not really keep in social contact with neighbors. I think I have a lot more contact with the grandmothers who trade flowers on the streets or the ladies of the vegetable stall than the neighbors who live in blocks (WP16).

To sum up, the relationship between the new topics and the old residents should be noted that such contacts only confirm the observations of Tim Butler, who argued that, despite the apparent signs of integration, even the so-called “mild” gentrification is still “quite a dangerous game. Appreciates the presence of other... but chooses not to interact with them. They are valued more as a kind of social wallpaper but nothing more than that”²⁰.

²⁰ T. Butler, *Living in the Bubble: Gentrification and Its “Others” in North London*, “Urban Studies” 2003, No. 12, Vo. 40, p. 2484.

It turns out that the subjects' network of relationships is much broader and less locally anchored (Table 2). When asked about good friends (where they live and how they met each other), half of the new residents indicated that they live in Krakow while 1/4 responded that their good friends lived in other places in Poland. The circumstances in which they have met their good friends are also characteristic for cosmopolitans: friends were met mainly at various stages of education or at work. It does not seem that the new residents form meaningful relationships with other residents.

Table 2. Three good friends (where they live and how they met each other)

Where your close friends are living?						
	Outside Cracow	In Cracow	In the district (NH)	In the neighborhood	In the block	Other
Friend 1.	24 (25%)	43 (44,8%)	13 (13,5%)	9 (9,4%)	6 (6,3%)	1 (1%)
Friend 2.	21 (21,9%)	45 (46,9%)	20 (20,8%)	4 (4,2%)	2 (2,1%)	4 (4,2%)
Friend 3.	21 (21,9%)	50 (52,1%)	9 (9,4%)	1 (1%)	10 (10,4%)	5 (5,2%)
How you met them?						
	Through family	At high school or university	At the workplace	In the neighbourhood	Through kids	Other
Friend 1.	4 (4,2%)	56 (58,3%)	20 (20,8%)	4 (4,2%)	4 (4,2%)	8 (8,3%)
Friend 2.	8 (8,3%)	42 (43,8%)	15 (15,6%)	8 (8,3%)	3 (3,1%)	20 (20,8%)
Friend 3.	2 (2,1%)	45 (46,9%)	20 (20,8%)	2 (2,1%)	3 (3,1%)	24 (25%)
Total: 96						

We can say that the new residents seem to be, referring to the classic definition of “natural community” by Robert Ezra Park, a kind of a “community of limited liability”. The network of personal contacts stretches between friends from universities to those from the work and those forms of belonging that can be considered as “elective” ones, i.e. related to a hobby or spending leisure time. Few of the new residents can be considered as “locals”. In most cases, they do not declare to have a relationship with the people from the immediate neighborhood or neighborhoods. Only 10% to 20% of the respondents named one person living in the area as being

on the list of their three good friends. And, the area in this instance was understood as Nowa Huta in the broad sense, not only its old part – the site of the study.

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, these preliminary research findings would indicate that the process of gentrification in the old part of Nowa Huta is a marginal one and rather ambiguous. This type of gentrification cannot be described the same way in which researchers deal with highly advanced forms of this process, such as super-gentrification or touristy types. I tried to look at the gentrification of this part of the district as a kind of emancipatory social practice in a similar vein as Jon Caulfield – as a kind of alternative reaction to the dominant patterns of living. Indeed, the decisions of the marginal gentrifiers are risky; they decided to move to a district that is still commonly perceived as being devalued or even dangerous and strong negative feelings about the new housing estates located on the outskirts of the city remain. They invest their sweat equity into the renovation of flats and in trying to convince their friends that the area is a really good place to live, even the “ideal city” realised. On the other hand, despite their declarations and idyllic vision, their actions are not as clear: the relationship with old inhabitants are rather shallow and they face different conditions than those met in the stereotypical gentrified area, such as cheaper night-time entertainment or coffee shops.

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