

1 | SMÍCHOV – THE INTERSECTION OF PRAGUE’S MODERN HISTORY

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The first mentions of the settlement in the Smíchov area come from the 13th–14th century, and the origin of the name and its meaning are not unequivocally clarified (Jungmann, 2007; Semotanová et al., 2016). Today, it is the largest area and the most populous cadastral unit in the city district of Prague 5. Smíchov is discussed in a number of publications devoted to Prague as a whole (e. g. Hruža, 1989; Semotanová et al., 2016). Jungmann (2007) or Bečková (2012) deal specifically with Smíchov, as do scientific articles and university theses. Temelová (Temelová, 2005; Temelová, Novák, 2007) thoroughly researched the social, physical and functional changes in the area, Hruška (2013) examined the phenomenon of homelessness using the example of Smíchov, and Rathová (2014) researched the revitalisation of extensive local brownfields.

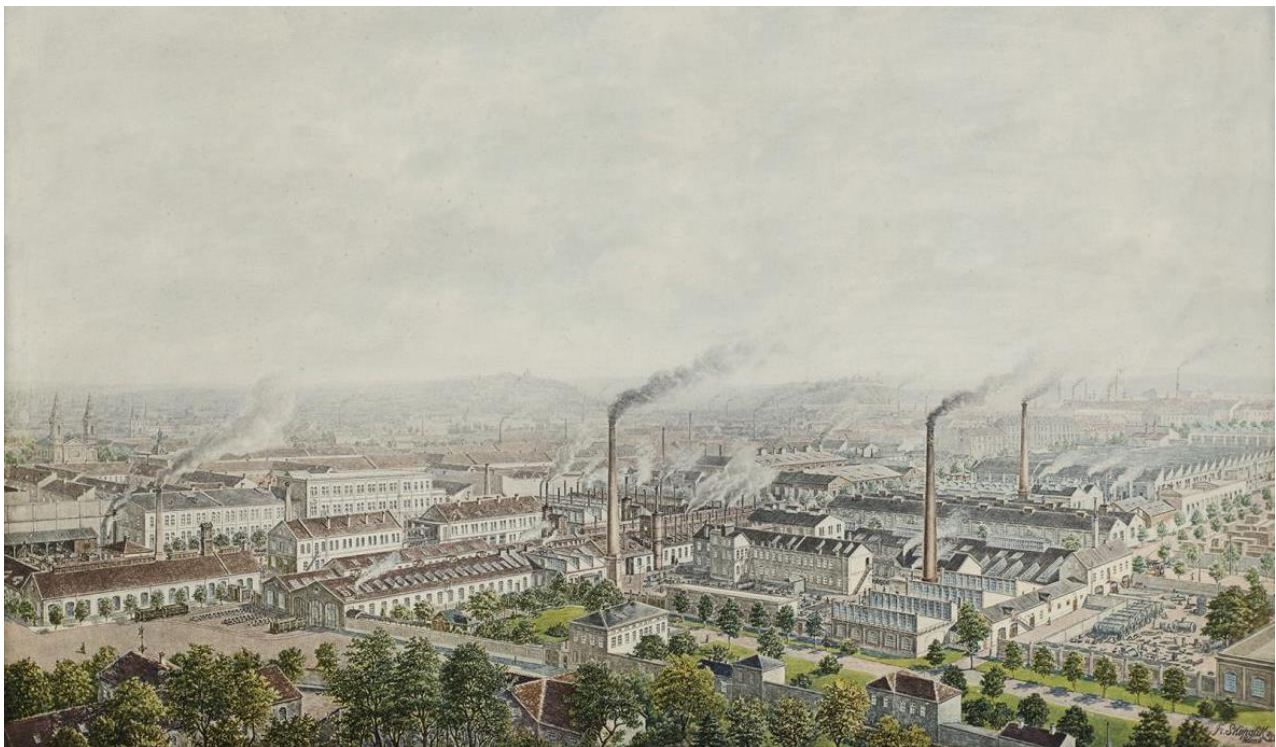


Figure 1.1: Ringhoffer's factories and the industrial Smíchov.

Source: Česká televize (2017).

The Smíchov area was originally a rural landscape with a number of vineyards, gardens and orchards, whose only de facto industry was several brickyards. Due to its picturesque and proximity to Prague, it was a popular destination for the recreation of the nobility and the bourgeoisie in the 18th century (Jungmann, 2007; Semotanová et al., 2016). A great number of farmsteads used to be scattered in the territory of Smíchov, whose names have been so well-known that they are still used in local toponymy – and in some cases even survived the physical existence of these buildings. Among those still standing are, for example, Bertramka, Hřebenka, Klamovka or Santoška, from the already defunct Mrázovka or Kesnerka. However, the arrival of the industrial revolution in the first half of the 19th century changed the character of Smíchov fundamentally (Votrubec, 1965; Semotanová et al., 2016). The advantageous location by the river and the flat terrain provided an ideal space for building industry and its infrastructure. The first manufacturers and factories were engaged in textile production, but machinery and food industries prevailed alongside the advancing industrialisation. The most recognized representatives of the mentioned branches from this period are certainly Porges' printworks and Ringhoffer's factories (later Tatra or ČKD; Figure 1.1) and Smíchov Brewery (Jungmann, 2007; Semotanová et al., 2016). The connection of Smíchov to the railway during the last third of the 19th century and getting one of the first functioning Prague electric tracks had played an important role for this development (Bečková, 2012).

Accommodation capacities in the form of apartment buildings for their employees also began to rise rapidly around industrial areas. In the adjacent slopes and on the hills away from the industrial bustle, villa residential quarters of wealthier inhabitants had gradually grown and encircled older farmsteads (Figure 1.2). Thus, within a few decades, Smíchov developed from the airy green outskirts of Prague into an important industrial residential suburb (Votrubec, 1965). It was considered a Prague suburb for a relatively long time before it became part of Greater Prague (alongside many districts of today's inner city) in 1922 or even a city in 1903 (Boháč, 1923; Semotanová et al., 2016). Král (1946) described Smíchov as the oldest suburb of Prague. In the interwar period, the residential significance of the district continued to grow, and efforts were made to improve social conditions and living standards, which resulted in the construction or reconstruction of a number of apartment buildings, but also, for example, the „Ženské domovy“ [*Women's Homes*] project.



Figure 1.2: Villa quarter Kesnerka.

Photo: Adam Klsák (2019).

Shortly after the Second World War, probably the last biggest change in the delimitation of Smíchov took place – the cadastral unit lost a relatively large part of the territory at the expense of Radlice from the west, but expanded to a part of the territory until then belonging to Hlubočepy. Under socialism, Smíchov stagnated in general. The regime's priority was the construction of housing estates, and working-class neighbourhoods such as Smíchov or Žižkov were considered an undesirable symbol of the previous capitalist era. On the other hand, an important milestone for future development was the construction of the metro line B.

A completely new chapter in the history of Smíchov was later opened by the Velvet Revolution, which, in the conditions of a renewed free market economy and political and social freedom, enabled an extensive transformation of the gradually deindustrialised quarter. The area around the Anděl metro station underwent the most distinct transition, when a new commercial and administrative heart of a district with city-wide significance grew there (Temelová, Novák, 2007). Votrubec (1965) mentioned the Anděl intersection as one of the busiest in the city and nowadays this is even more true. In the near future, the development of the locality will be followed by the construction of a brand new “Smíchov city” complex (Figure 1.3), which will be the most significant imprint of the postmodern era so far.

Historical development of the population of Prague and its suburbs in the 19th century, the growth of the oldest suburbs



Figure 1.3: Brand new face of Smíchov – Smíchov city complex.

Source: Sekyra group (2020).

Development of the number of inhabitants, houses and apartments

Data on the increase in population and houses correspond to the above-mentioned findings on the rapid development of Smíchov since the middle of the 19th century, which peaked at the turn of the century and then stabilised during the interwar period (population development chart). While in 1844 less than 2,500 people lived in Smíchov, in 1900 it was almost 50,000. Smíchov reached its population maximum in the 1960s, and since then its population has decreased by almost half. In recent decades, the population has stabilised at around 35,000.

It is evident from the age structure graph and the main map that most of the compact block-character "lower" Smíchov was built by the beginning of the First World War, while further development was already slower. During the First Republic (interwar) era, the existing structures had been completed and individual construction on the Smíchov hillsides and hills continued. Under socialism, Smíchov was built rather non-compactly and mostly individually, or in the form of smaller housing estates like at Kesnerka or Malvazinky, with regard to the above-mentioned priorities. We can consider the Podbělohorská housing estate to be the only larger housing estate site from the period of socialism. The number of houses has been approximately the same since the 1950s, but the number of flats in them has decreased since the 1980s, as in most other districts of the inner city. This is probably a manifestation of higher demands on the quality of housing, but also partly a result of the transformation of some

residential structures into commercial ones. Distinct physical changes in Smíchov are evidenced by the large number of defunct structures (main map), which gave way to the newly defined functions of these spaces. In the case of Smíchov, the decline of industry mainly gave way to residential, commercial and administrative functions. But as already mentioned, in some localities, the residential function has also receded.

Development of the social environment and age structure

Historically, it was possible to find relatively significant differences in the territory of Smíchov in terms of the socio-economic status of the population, and to some extent they persist to this day. Smíchov was traditionally considered an industrial and workers' district, but Moschelesová (1937), in sharp contrast to the neighbouring Košíře or Radlice, classified it as a socially strong area. Apart from factories, technical infrastructure and mostly block construction of workers' apartment buildings on the riverbank plain by Vltava, Smíchov also includes extensive surrounding residential areas in the Strahov slopes (Hřebenky, Klamovka) or at Malvazinky and Kesnerka. This led to kind of a dualistic perception of Smíchov (see e. g. Král, 1947). In practice, however, it was a more complex mosaic of social and physical forms.

In 1900, there was a relatively balanced mix of occupations in "lower Smíchov" (in addition to the working class, clerks and small entrepreneurs were widely represented) and the price of rent there was higher than in other parts. However, this was mainly due to the fact that other parts were still relatively underdeveloped at that time. The situation in 1970 already corresponded more to the mentioned duality, because there was a higher than average education level and a smaller share of workers in villa areas. The neighbourhood of Arbesovo náměstí clearly stands out from industrial Smíchov with a higher socio-economic status. If we evaluate the current state of education-based population differentiation, this pattern more or less has not change (state 2011). Today, the concentration of secondary school and university educated persons (measured by LQ) is highest in localities of intensive new residential construction (like districts of Kotlářka or Na Skalce).

Historically, the Mrázovka colony was considered to be a model of dignified workers' housing (despite efforts to save it, it was demolished at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s), Bud'ánka retained its rural character, and the emergency colony in Malvazinky was an example of housing for the poorest classes (Jungmann, 2007; Bahno Prahy, 2020). Today, many old parts of Smíchov are giving way to new development projects, and hand-in-hand with this process, its population is also changing. We are witnessing the gentrification that is characteristic for most parts of the inner city of Prague (Temelová, Novák, 2007). One of its manifestations is the increasing number of foreign nationals among the population (Czech Foreign Police, 2019) or the displacement of the socially weaker population.

The most numerous group of foreigners in Smíchov is Ukrainians, followed by Slovaks and Russians, which corresponds to national trends. While Russians tend to concentrate to

a greater extent in areas of new residential construction (e. g. district U motolské nemocnice), Ukrainians concentrate in areas with lower quality housing stock and lower socio-economic status (e. g. district U malostranského hřbitova around Plzeňská street). Citizens of the EU-15 countries (especially France, Germany, Italy and United Kingdom) and the United States are also represented to an above-standard scale. Those in Czechia usually work as highly qualified experts ("expats") and their presence thus confirms the traditional attractiveness of some parts of Smíchov for people with high socio-economic status – clear examples are the districts of Arbesovo náměstí, Kesnerka or Na Hřebenkách. On the other hand, the Vietnamese, the fourth largest Prague alien community (Czech Foreign Police, 2019), are represented below average in Smíchov in general.

An important indicator of the characteristics of the population is the age structure and its development over time. In the years 1869 and 1900, the age structure graph of Smíchov was closest to a pyramid-shape, from which only people at a younger productive age apparently emerged with higher values. From the words of Boháč (1923, p. 65), we can easily infer that these were mainly workers of local factories: "In regions with numerous immigrations, especially in large cities and industrial centres, many inhabitants are in the age of full physical strength, so most of them are usually individuals between 20 and 30." With regard to the inertia of Smíchov's development in the interwar period, this situation did not change much. However, the period of socialism had a significant effect on the shape of the district's population, paradoxically by prioritising the development of other areas (Temelová, Novák, 2007). Especially young families with children (moreover preferred by the communist regime) decided to change the declining industrial Smíchov for newly built housing estates corresponding to modern housing standards, while the less mobile households stayed – the elderly and the socially weak in particular (Musil, 1987; Špačková, Pospíšilová, Ouředníček, 2016). This process of selective eviction also affected other districts of the inner city and is eloquently documented by the state of the population structure on the chart for 1991, where we can see the unusually high proportions of the population in the post-productive age at first glance. At present (graph for 2019), the population has stabilised again, corresponding to similar districts of the inner city and more or less copying the national average.

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