

## 8 | BRANÍK – FROM AN AGRICULTURAL VILLAGE TO A RESIDENTIAL AREA OF PRAGUE

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Braník was one of the municipality districts connected to Prague in 1922. For a long time, like most of the southern parts of Prague, it was separated from the historical centre by the Vyšehrad Rock, until a tunnel in the rock was built at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Until then, Braník was connected to Prague mainly by river transport. The territory of Braník has long been associated with vegetable growing: its advantageous location near the Vltava and fertile land gave the old rural core a predominantly agricultural character. In addition to agriculture, mining and production of limestone also prospered in Braník. Today, a natural landmark called Branické skály serves as a mining relict. It is interesting that during the Second World War, the Nazis built an underground factory to produce electric components inside the rock.

Braník has been associated with Prague for a long time: since the 14<sup>th</sup> century Braník was owned by some Prague monasteries and the Old Town of Prague (Bederníček, 2006). From the period when part of Braník belonged to the Dominican order, comes a local important cultural monument, the long-dilapidated Dominican court. Today, Braník is most often associated with a brewery founded at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, whose production was terminated and moved to the other bank of the Vltava river in 2007. In addition to these sights, Braník is especially important for Prague citizens because of its transport constructions. Král (1946) emphasized the importance of Branické railway station, which for several decades played an important role in the weekend trips of Prague residents for recreation south of Prague to Sázava and Vltava. Jižní spojka (The Southern Link highway), built in the 1980s, has a rather negative effect on the territory of Braník. An important intra-city traffic artery between the western and eastern parts of Prague, the highway not only brought a disproportionate traffic load on the territory of Braník, but also irreparably divided Braník into two parts with limited connectivity.

Interesting information about Braník's history can be drawn from books on the city district of Prague 4 (Augusta, 1996; Augusta, 2005; Broncová, Polák, 2014) or from publications dealing with the history of Prague districts (Bederníček, 2006; Pelzbauerová, 2008). An overview of the former form of the district is given by books with a rich photographic appendix from Zmizelá Praha edition (Bečková, 2003; Fojtík, 2012; Mahel, 2013). The characteristics of the district are described by geographical guides of Charles University's geographers Jiří Král

(1946) and Ctibor Votrubec (1965). Ordinary life in the territory of Braník in earlier times is described in books by Zdenka Landová (2003; 2005).

### Development of the number of inhabitants, houses and apartments

At the time when imperial prints of the Stable Cadastre originated (Figure 8.1), 858 people lived in 124 houses in Braník. The first modern steep increase in population is associated with the emergence of so-called Greater Prague and the connection of Braník to the capital. The original structure of the rural development of the village has been preserved, especially along Branická Street. The remains of vineyards and farmsteads have been preserved to this day in the form of the Zemanka homestead and a Neo-Renaissance building in Na Křížku Street, which served as a picnic restaurant at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The rural development was gradually followed by the construction of apartment buildings, which can be found mainly in the vicinity of Krčská Street, and villa development. The villa development took place both on the slopes and on the plateaus of both hills belonging to the Braník cadastre.



**Figure 8.1:** Imperial prints of the Stable Cadastre from 1843 with a section showing the territory of Braník.

**Source:** ČÚZK (2020).

The expansion of the villa development is evidenced by the main map and the Orientation Plan of the Capital City of Prague and its Surroundings from 1938 (Figure 8.2). At the beginning of the 1930s, there were already around 600 houses on the territory of Braník and less than 7,000 inhabitants (a more detailed settlement structure can be seen in Table 8.1). The housing construction process was most intense from the 1930s to the 1980s. In the 1960s, construction began on the Novodvorská housing estate, which was designed for 3,500 apartments and 11,600 people (Nový, 1971). Furthermore, the construction of residential houses in the street Mezivrší and several other separate residential units in the localities of Ve Studeném, Za Mlýnem, Na Mlejnkú, Na Dobešce or in the Jirásek district took place. Although the construction of apartment buildings dominated in this period, family houses were built inside the villa development.

Name of settlement	Character of settlement	Number of houses	Population
Braník	Part of city	304	4 524
Na Dobešce	Group of houses	79	777
Jiráskova čtvrť	Group of houses	59	570
Zemanka	Group of houses	54	336
Hladomor	Group of houses	12	193
U Fořtovny	Slum colony, a group of emergency shelters	22	105
Jiráskova čtvrť	Slum colony, a group of emergency shelters	13	63
Na Křížku	Group of houses	4	56
Separate house	Separate house	1	5
Emergency scattered dwellings	Emergency scattered dwellings	29	109
<b>Braník - total</b>	<b>Part of city</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>6 738</b>

**Table 8.1:** Settlements forming the cadastral territory of Braník in the 1930 census.

**Source:** Statistical Lexicon (1934).

In addition to the predominant residential development in the territory of Braník, the 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw the construction of work and service areas. Besides the Braník brewery area, these included the Art Nouveau area of the Braník Iceworks from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the Vršovická waterworks's filling station. At the end of the 1950s, the premises of the Research Institute for Communication Technology of A. S. Popov were built on a green meadow on Novodvorská, followed by high-rise buildings in Roškotova Street or the Subterra House in the immediate vicinity of the old Braník.

Housing development was also associated with a sharp increase in population. The population in the monitored area increased until the 1980s, during which time the population reached less than 23,000. On the contrary, from the 1980s until the beginning of the new millennium there was a decrease in population. Currently the development of the population is constant, and 18,000 people live in Braník. After 1990, the intensity of housing construction also decreased. Only a limited number of apartment buildings were built, for example apartment buildings near Vavřenova Street, Na Dobešce or Pod Vinohradem Street. In recent years, there has been a plan to stop vacant areas suitable for housing construction. Recently, the construction of a new residential complex was started in a long-disused area between the Jižní spojka and Ke Krči Street. The planned construction will bring 137 flats and 15 terraced houses. In the immediate vicinity of the Jižní spojka, there is also second planned construction of another development project with 300 flats. Reconstruction is a new trend within the villa development, where in some places the original family houses are being demolished and replaced with new family houses or apartment houses.

Historical development of the population of Prague and its suburbs in the first half of the 20th century, residential and industrial suburbs



**Figure 8.2:** Orientation Plan of the Capital City of Prague with its Surroundings from 1938 with a section showing the territory of Braník.

**Source:** MLP (2020).

## **Development of the social environment and age structure**

The development of the age structure indicates the gradual aging of the population of Braník. While in the 1930s the share of population under the age of 15 was 20 percent and a similar share was recorded in the 1980 census, in the last 40 years there has been a decrease in the representation of the children. In the last census from 2011, less than 11 percent of the Braník population was children. Current data from 2019 indicate a slight rejuvenation of the district, which is accompanied by a renewed increase in the representation of children to 16 percent, as well as a decrease in the age index (204 in 2019). We are seeing a different development trend for the representation of seniors. While at the time of the founding of Greater Prague (1922) less than 5 percent of the cadastre's population was seniors (residents over the age of 65), currently seniors make up a quarter of the local population. Overall, the development of the age structure is influenced by the gradual aging of residential buildings. Most houses were built in the cadastre before 1989, and after the fall of socialism only a few partial residential projects were built (see above). The prevailing age of development is also related to the recently started generational change of population within larger housing estates. A higher proportion of seniors is also conditioned by the presence of a home for the elderly, which takes the form of a high-rise prefabricated house incorporated into the original buildings of the old Braník.

The development of the social structure of the population is described on the basis of the distribution of the population according to their education and employment status. An interesting indicator is the current representation and distribution of foreigners in the cadastre. Due to the fact that information on the social structure for previously non-Prague areas is less accessible in the older period, we decided to approach the social structure based on the price of land for sale in 1939. The average price of land in Braník was then between CZK 114 / m<sup>2</sup> to 586 CZK / m<sup>2</sup>. The most expensive parcels were located in the historical centre of the cadastre and on the slopes in the area of Na Křížku, Nad Lomem and in the southern part of the Jirásek district. In these cases, it was mainly lucrative land intended for the construction of villas. On the other hand, the lowest selling price was for land in the Kunratický potok valley and in the area where part of the Novodvorská housing estate will be located in the future.

Although in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Braník acquired mainly the character of a residential area, there were also areas in the territory of Braník with slum colonies. The slum colony U Fořtovny was located near today's Vavřenova Street, and the second colony Na Klínku and Na Strži could be found on the border of Braník, Krč and Podolí, near the street Zelený pruh. In the territory of Braník, there were 67 temporary buildings in 1930, and these were often small single-storey houses of the socially weaker groups with a diverse way of life, among which manual workers predominated. Slum colonies often struggled with overcrowding, so in the U Fořtovny colony in the 1930s, an average of 4.8 people lived in a dwelling (Votrúbec, 1959). These colonies were still in place in the late 1950s: in 1958, there were 38 houses in

the slum colony U Fořtovny and in the second colony, Na Klínku and Na Strži, there were 100 houses (Votrubec, 1959). Both colonies disappeared during the 1960s.

The socio-economic status map for 1970 indicates the share of people with completed secondary and tertiary education and the share of people by employment status. At the beginning of the 1970s, 36 percent of the adult population in the Braník area achieved secondary and tertiary education (SLDB, 1970), and the cadastres of Vinohrady or Břevnov, for example, reached similarly high values. The share of workers in the same year was less than 40 percent of the economically active population. In this indicator, Braník is more similar to neighbouring Krč, whereas in Vinohrady and Břevnov the share of workers reaches slightly lower values (between 37 and 38 percent). We can thus state that at the beginning of the 1970s, the Braník cadastre was among the Prague localities with a higher social status (Prague averages were 30.5 percent population share with secondary or tertiary education and 42.6 of population share consisting of workers). Within Braník, the predominantly villa development and Novodvorská housing estate had significantly younger populations and greater shares of higher educated people.

In describing the current educational structure, we again use the share of the population with higher education in individual urban districts. In 2011, this share in Braník was 62 percent (SLDB, 2011). Only the small urban districts of Velký Háj, Krčské údolí, Braník-pobřeží and Braník-jih had a share of persons with higher education of less than 50 percent. There are several industrial areas in the territory of these districts and we assume that mainly dormitories with low social status are located there. The highest representation of persons with higher education in Braník is in the predominantly residential districts of Nad lomem, Na křížku, Jiráskova čtvrť (66 percent and more). The lowest representation of people with secondary and university education is in the Novodvorská I housing estate and the old Braník centre (less than 58 percent). Worse educational conditions in the housing estate compared to other parts may be due to the older age structure of the housing estate, which in many cases determines a lower level of education (a similar relationship may apply to the Braník-střed district where the already mentioned retirement home is located), as well as a slightly lower level of social status. In a total of six urban districts in Braník, a higher share of the population with a higher level of education was achieved than in the whole of Prague. The territorial concentration of the population with completed secondary and tertiary education is thus slightly higher in the territory of Braník than in the whole of Prague.

Less than two thousand foreigners now live in Braník: 11 percent of the population (ŘSCP, 2020), which is, for example, half the share in comparison with Vinohrady. The largest share of persons with foreign citizenship can be found in the urban districts with small population sizes and in industrial areas. In other areas, the share of foreigners ranges from six (Jiráskova čtvrť) to 14 percent (Braník-střed). The Braník-střed urban district is located on the territory of the original historical core. On the contrary, in the district with the smallest share of

foreigners, family houses predominate, supplemented by smaller apartment and pre-fab houses. One third of all foreigners in Braník are Ukrainians, followed by Slovaks, Vietnamese and Russians. Citizens of the European Union, but also Filipinos, for example, are also numerous. The representation of individual groups of foreigners differs slightly between the districts only in ranking, but in all territories the first five places are dominated by representatives of Central and Eastern Europe together with Vietnamese. These groups are followed by people from countries of Western Europe.



**Figure 8.2:** Contemporary Braník

**Photo:** Nina Dvořáková (2020).

At present, we can describe Braník as an attractive residential area with a diverse range of residential buildings consisting of the old Braník core, residential areas, apartment and panel houses. The physical structure, apart from residential buildings, is dominated by a large number of green areas (Velký Háj, the Branická třešňovka, the Kunratický potok valley or the Vltava bank). Close to the natural areas there are a number of sports and recreational areas (Hamr complex, Kobra winter stadium, sports ground of the Athletic Braník Club founded at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). As Braník changed from a rural, predominantly agricultural village to a residential area during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the functions of some originally industrial areas also changed. For example, the water station of the Vršovická waterworks was transformed into a children's leisure area, Braník brewery was decommissioned and the part of research area was turned into the Novodvorská Plaza shopping centre. Today's mostly peaceful atmosphere of the residential area is disturbed mainly by traffic congestion. Disproportionate noise and air pollution are brought to the territory of Braník by Jižní spojka highway, which has one of the busiest places in the Czech Republic, the Barrandov Bridge. Although it is unbelievable for many contemporaries, the very popular river spa Na mlýnku stood on the pillars of this bridge up until the 1970s.



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