

## 4 | ŽIŽKOV – NOT ONLY WORKING-CLASS DISTRICT



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The name of the current district dates back to 1875, when the original cadastral municipality of Královské Vinohrady was divided into two parts, Královské Vinohrady and Žižkov. Previously, neither the village nor the settlement of the same name existed on the territory of the present-day Žižkov: there were first vineyards, then smaller homesteads (Figure 4.1). Major change came with the second half of the 19th century, when massive construction began. The demolition of the Prague walls and the development of the railway and industry, even in the surrounding districts, also contributed to this transformation. An important personality of this time was Karel Hartig, a builder, businessman and later the first mayor of Žižkov, who enforced the first parcels. In 1881, Žižkov was promoted to a town. At the end of the 19th century, Žižkov experienced technical development, a horse-drawn railway was introduced, a power plant was built and electric lighting was put into operation (Hrůza, 1989). Development continued during the 20th century, and in 1922 Žižkov became part of Greater Prague. The current Žižkov represents the core territory of the Prague 3 district, but it also partially extends into the Prague 8 and Prague 10 districts.



**Figure 4.1:** Žižkov at the time of II. military mapping around 1850.

**Source:** mapy.cz.

Several publications dealing with the development of the whole of Prague are devoted also to Žižkov. One of the most famous is the book written by Jiří Hruža (1989) *The City of Prague*, which deals with the urban development of Prague and its parts. An entire chapter describes Prague's suburbs in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Srb (1902) deals with the same period, and based on census data he discusses the character of the district, population, population density and other topics. A summary of the development of Žižkov can also be found in several publications on the Prague 3 district (eg Sedlák et al., 2008). Other publications focus on Žižkov itself. These include popular science books (Šesták, 2005; 2006; 2008; Sedlák et al., 2008), graduate theses and research studies aimed at, for example, population development, urban development (Mráčková, 2012; Poláčková, 2015) or crime (Jíčovská, Temelová, 2012).

During the division of Královské Vinohrady, Žižkov gained a large area, but one not very suitable for the construction and development of the city. It was separated from Prague by a railway embankment and the terrain was hilly. Therefore, fewer quality houses were built on most of the north-facing slopes and those that were built were intended mainly for workers. The population moved here from surrounding crowded industrial districts (especially from Libeň and Karlín) or from the countryside (Hruža, 1989; Sedlák et al., 2008). At the same time, several buildings were subject to demolition reverse as they were close to the city walls. The reverse meant that in times of war or state of war, the houses would be demolished without any compensation or without needing the consent of their inhabitants (more in Hruža, 1989). A checkerboard structure is typical for a part of Žižkov, which in some parts adapts to the terrain or respects earlier paths between vineyards. Rather irregular development can be seen in the area of the so-called Lower Žižkov (below today's Seifertova Street) or in the southern part leading to Vinohrady. On the contrary, the regular structure is obvious towards Pražáčka, in the area of Na Ohradě and further in the vicinity of Komenského Square. It was the area around Komenského Square that was subdivided during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century according to a design by Karel Hartig, who also enforced the first regulatory plans in the area. Although the area of Komenského Square and its surroundings underwent remediation in the 1970s, the urban structure of the area has been preserved.

The eastern part of Žižkov has a completely different character. Similarly, settlements here until the 19<sup>th</sup> century were only sparse and homesteads predominated. Just before the First World War, the Jarov colony was established next to the Chmelnice area, and it was developed further into the 1920s. In today's Jarov, in the part that belongs to Žižkov, we can find various constructions, apartment houses, individual houses and prefab houses. These form a more significant unit in the very east of the territory. From 1959 to 1962, the first part of the housing estate in the Chmelnice area was built, and from 1962 to 1964 the area around Na Jarově Street was built-up. A little closer to Žižkov, in today's Vápenka area near the Strážní stop, we will find another specific development behind a block of apartment buildings. In the 1920s, the colony "Home" was built here, characterised by original houses, semi-detached houses or three-family houses with a country frame with half-timbering. Many of them are no longer

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preserved in the original style but have been modernised or new houses have been built in their place that do not respect the character of this part (more in Ryska, 2020). Nearby is a relatively large gardening settlement.

The Žižkov area is complemented by large green areas: in the south and in the central part there are Olšany cemeteries, and Parukářka and Židovské pece are in the north of Vítkov. A specific area of interest is the Žižkov Freight Station, which in recent years has been sought after by investors with very different plans for use, from the resumption of operations to cultural or administrative use to luxury housing. In 2017, the IPR was commissioned to prepare a territorial study for the entire territory (IPR, 2017).



**Figure 4.2:** Preserved original style of colony Home and modern reconstruction.

**Photo:** Jana Jířová (2020).

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

A large part of the territory of present-day Žižkov served as vineyards and the only buildings there were wine houses. It was not until the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries that larger homesteads and gardens appeared, of which at least their names have been preserved to this day, such as Parukářka, Pražačka, Ohrada or Bezovka. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a turning point for construction activity. In its first half, suburban summer houses and villas were built, but the number of

inhabitants, houses and flats did not increase by much. Major population change did not come until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the development of then-Prague suburbs started in connection with the demolition of the Prague walls. In the 1860s, construction of typical houses with courtyards balconies began for Žižkov, especially in the surrounding of the then-Vídeňská Street (today's Koněvova). There was the first parcel between Vídeňská Street and Vrch Svatého kříže. Subsequently, construction expanded to the immediate surroundings—today's Prokopova and Seifertova Street—where several squares were created. In 1869, 4,000 inhabitants lived in Žižkov and there were 137 houses; by 1880, the number of houses had risen more than 2,5 times and the population had increased by 17,000, making Žižkov the fastest growing suburb of Prague (Erben, 1895; Hrůza, 1989). This is also evidenced by the high population per 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> of total area. In 1890 there were almost 1,000 inhabitants and ten years later over 1,400 (Srb, 1902). Žižkov was also characterised by a high number of people per house (Srb, 1902). The district's development was further influenced by the construction of Masaryk Railway Station and related industrial buildings, such as the Žižkov gas plant, for which construction began in the second half of the 1860s, and buildings along today's Seifertova Street.

Further development was also marked by a growing number of houses, flats and inhabitants. The relocation of industrial plants to other parts of the city also contributed to this, as a result of which Žižkov became primarily a residential district (Srb, 1902). This is evidenced by statistics on the use of flats from 1890: over 85 percent were used only for housing, 10 percent for housing and trade, and less than 3 percent only for trade (Erben, 1895). In 1880, Žižkov had over 21,000 inhabitants, and ten years later over 41,000 inhabitants. The number of houses doubled in the same period to 729, as did the number of flats to more than 9,000. In the period around the First World War, stabilisation took place; however, development continued in the interwar period. Table 4.1 captures the settlement structure and shows the number of houses and inhabitants in individual parts of Žižkov. The data are based on the 1930 population census. By 1930, the population exceeded 90,000, where it stagnated until the 1960s. In the interwar period, the population increased due to increases to the number of floors in houses, with some houses adding up to three floors. These were mostly small flats, intended primarily for workers and their families. The population density at that time in Žižkov reached 1,200 inhabitants per hectare (Hrůza, 1989), one of the highest densities in Prague apart from the city centre (Moschelesová, 1937). Construction continued mainly in the direction from Olšany Cemeteries to Vinohrady, around Koněvova or Vinohradská streets. An overview of individual settlements forming the interwar Žižkov shows the Table 4.1, based on data from the Statistical lexicon of municipalities after the 1930 census.

Settlement	Character	Number of houses	Population
Žižkov	district	1 695	89 368
Na Krejčárku	colony, cluster of temporary dwellings	154	736
Červená Skála	colony, cluster of temporary dwellings	64	330
Pražáčka	colony, cluster of temporary dwellings	73	286
Vrch svatého Kříže	colony, cluster of temporary dwellings	28	165
Židovské Pece	colony, cluster of temporary dwellings	26	155
dispersed temporary dwellings	dispersed temporary dwellings	15	42
<b>Žižkov</b>	<b>district</b>	<b>2 055</b>	<b>91 082</b>

**Table 4.1:** Settlements forming the cadastral territory of Žižkov (Census 1930).

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

Although the plans for the reconstruction of Žižkov were designed already during the 1920s, they did not take on more realistic outlines until the 1970s, when a building closure was announced in Žižkov. For officially stated hygienic and transport reasons, the plan was for the demolition of a large part of the old Žižkov and the subsequent construction of a panel housing estate. The original inhabitants were first to be moved to housing estates on the outskirts of Prague and, after remediation and new construction, moved back (more in Prague 3, 2020). The result of the plan was the redevelopment of Komenského Square and the surrounding area. Even in the 1980s, it was planned to continue remediation in the area of Rokycanova, Cimburkova, Štítného and Lupáčova street. But in the end, it didn't happen. Even so, there was a significant decline in the number of inhabitants in houses and flats from the 1970s until the new millennium, when it ranged between 50,000 and 55,000. The decline in the construction of prefabricated houses in the eastern part of Žižkov during the 1970s did not change either. In recent years, Žižkov has become more attractive, with reconstructions and new construction taking place, for example near Parukářka or Olšany cemeteries. At the same time, there is a change in the area's functions and the processes of commercialisation and gentrification have taken hold in some parts. In 2019, over 60,000 people lived in Žižkov.



**Figure 4.3:** Sanitation of Žižkov at the end of the 1970s - surroundings of the school on Komenského Square.

**Source:** Kocourek (1986).

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

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Žižkov was characterised by a young age structure with a wide base, i.e. a high share of children. Older age groups were a very low share, due to a lower average life expectancy. Children aged zero to five were the most numerous age group throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but their high mortality rate can be observed in a significantly lower share of the six to 10 age group. Gradually, the base of the population narrowed: while in 1869 children under five made up 13.6 percent of the population in Žižkov, in 1930 it was only 5 percent. In 1921, the child component of the population (zero to 14 years) was about 20 percent and this number was over 30 percent in previous years. The difference was due to the lower number of children born during the First World War. In 1921, the age groups up to 29 years were relatively strongly represented, and the 40 to 49 years age group was 13.5 percent of the population. There was a clear predominance of women in older age groups. Moschelesová (1937) ranks Žižkov among the districts with a weak social index (on a scale of strong - weak

- very weak) together with, for example, Libeň, Nusle or Vršovice. Several dormitories, poorhouses, hospitals and slum colonies existed in the area (Špačková, Nemeškal, 2015a; Votrubec, 1959).

Žižkov has long been perceived as a working-class district. This status is also related to physical-geographical conditions. Due to its separation from the then-Prague and its sloped terrain, it was not suitable for industry. Therefore, since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it has served mainly as a residential area, mostly with low-quality housing, to which the population has moved from neighbouring crowded industrial districts (especially from Libeň and Karlín) or from the countryside (Sedlák et al., 2008). These were mostly manual workers and their families. Manual workers accounted for over 50 percent of workers in 1900 (in some census districts over 65 percent). The second most common occupations were caretakers (13.6 percent), followed by workers in trade and clerks (Census, 1900). Representatives of the latter group lived mostly in the I. district (over 18 percent) and less so in the XI. and XII. census districts (less than 2 percent). Districts with a lower proportion of manual workers show a higher average rent. Manual workers thus live mainly in lower-quality buildings with lower rents.

The high share of workers was evident even in the 1950s and the situation persisted into the 1970s. During this period, their share was higher than the share of employees, and there was a noticeable decrease in the share of women workers (Špačková, Nemeškal, 2015b). On the contrary, in the 1990s, the share of workers was already significantly lower, which is related to the societal change in the structure of employment. The educational structure corresponds to the employment structure. In the 1970s, the share of the population with secondary and tertiary education was less than 25 percent (Census, 1970). In 2011, the share of the population with at least a school-leaving certificate was more than double that (Census, 2011). This group does not vary too much across Žižkov's urban districts. The inhabitants of this education level are more concentrated (localisation quotient more than 1.0) in the districts Vrch svatého Kříže, Vackov and Olšanské hřbitovy (but only 115 inhabitants were registered here).

The population in Žižkov is gradually aging and life expectancy is increasing. In 1980, Žižkov was one of the cadastral areas with the highest share of persons aged 65 and over (22.4 percent) (Pospíšilová, Nemeškal, 2015). This is also related to its urban structure and the absence of larger housing estates, where families with children more often went (Musil, 1985). At the beginning of the 1990s, the age structure was relatively homogeneous, and the population base shifted to age groups between 35 and 50 years. The previously strongly represented category of children diminished (children under 14 years less than 16 percent), due to a lower birth rate, which is typical for contemporary Czechia in general. At the same time, there was a clear aging process. People aged 65 and over made up over 20 percent of the population, two thirds of whom were women.

The district's working-class history has influenced the structure of the housing stock up to today. Žižkov, like other former working-class districts (Nusle, Holešovice), is one of the districts with a high proportion of small dwellings; according to the Census 2011, dwellings with one to two rooms accounted for 45 percent of the housing stock (Ouředníček et al., 2015). Another typical characteristic is the high share of rental flats, which was evident in the interwar period (Špačková, Nemeškal, 2015a), but also today. According to the Census 2011, they make up 53.5 percent of inhabited houses (Census, 2011).

In recent decades, there has been a significant social transformation in Žižkov. The age structure is changing, which is due to shifts in age groups, but also changes in the intensity of births or migration. In 2019, the dominance of the productive component of the population was even more pronounced, especially in the age groups 30 to 44, i.e. generations born in the second half of the 1970s to the end of the 1980s. At the same time, the number of children under five and their share in the population increased (however, the share of the children's component decreased to almost 14 percent compared to 1991). Also compared to 1991, the share of seniors aged 65 and over decreased. Overall, we can talk about a certain rejuvenation of Žižkov, and the district is also changing in terms of nationality. According to statistics by the Ministry of Interior, more than 10,500 people with foreign citizenship lived in Žižkov in 2011. Seven years later this number reached 12,700, which represents more than a fifth of the total population (ŘSCP, 2020). Almost a quarter of them come from Ukraine, then from Slovakia and Russia (14 percent each). In all urban districts with more than 50 inhabitants, these three nationalities represent the largest groups. Nationalities with population shares greater than 2 percent include people from Asia (Vietnam, Kazakhstan, China, Uzbekistan), Europe (Great Britain, Germany, Romania, Italy, Belarus and Poland) and from the United States (larger groups, especially in districts U Olšan, Škroupovo náměstí and Sladkovského náměstí).

The housing stock is also changing. Many houses are undergoing reconstruction, but we can also find extensive new housing construction. After an initial decline in the intensity of housing construction in the early 1990s, when obstacles were mainly property relations, functional use of land or spatial planning tools, one of the first post-revolutionary new buildings was built in Žižkov (Zelendová, 2006). IPB Real built it near Parukářka from 1995 to 1999 and further construction in the area followed. Although, according to some research, Žižkov is still considered a less attractive housing location (Zelendová, 2006), prices here are some of the highest in Prague (Němec, 2017). This is evidenced by one of the latest projects, Žižkovské pavlače (courtyards balconies), which has a combination of historical and modern architecture. The average price for an apartment of 35 m<sup>2</sup> is approximately CZK 4.8 million (MS-Invest, 2020). "Courtyards balconies," which used to be a symbol of a rather lower quality of living, now represents the opposite.

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**Figure 4.4:** Visualisation of the project Žižkovské pavlače.  
**Source:** MS-Invest (2020).

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