LIFE IN DIVERSE NEIGHBOURHOODS

STORIES OF LIVED EXPERIENCE FROM RESIDENTS OF BERLIN, BUDAPEST, SALFORD AND SASSARI

Voicitys

icr
The Institute of Community Reporters

RIGHT BY YOUR SIDE

ABOUT VOICITYS

What does diversity mean to you? VOICITYS aims to improve social integration through reinforcing social dialogue and communication in European urban neighbourhoods characterised by diversity. Specifically, we intend to improve and make sustainable the communication and interaction between different social groups, and to deepen dialogue between policy makers, stakeholders and citizens in order to promote a more efficient management of diversity. Comparing the positive and negative experiences of local citizens with those of local stakeholders, leaders and decision-makers, the project will improve common understandings of diversity at a neighbourhood level. It will also encourage new approaches for existing policies, incentives and tools regarding social integration and sustainable diversity.

Find out more about the VOICITYS project at our website.

INTRODUCTION

Stories, the lived experiences that people choose to share about their own understandings of the world, are of increasing importance in decision-making processes and are instrumental to creating new ideas, ways of doing things and ultimately bringing about social change. They provide useful insights into what is happening people's lives and the communities that they are a part of. In the VOICITYS project, storytelling is being used to support decision-makers at local and national levels to design better policies and services.

Working with communities in Germany, Hungary, Italy and the United Kingdom, the VOICITYS project trained residents in specific neighbourhoods as Community Reporters who have used these skills to tell, understand and share their own stories on topics and issues pertinent to diversity where they live. This report provides an overview of this methodology and its implementation within the project, the findings from the stories gathered, and pan-European reflections on emergent trends across the dataset.

OUR CONCEPTUALISATION OF DIVERSITY

Recent, substantial changes in migration trends in European countries have led to changes in perceptions and understandings of diversity. A brief literature review on the topic highlights three lenses through which diversity can be viewed:

1. Old diversity: A traditional understanding of diversity based on ethnicity (Wessendorf, 2014).

2. Super-diversity: an expansion of the old diversity definition to include the understanding that ethnicity is intrinsically linked to the social, economic, cultural or legal status of a person (Vertovec, 2007).

3. Hyper-diversity: a further widening of the notion of diversity to acknowledge further intersectionality with other aspects of people's world such as their activities, lifestyles and identities that go beyond the realms of ethnicity, social demographic and economic groupings (Tasan Kok et al. 2014).

The notion of hyper-diversity has been adopted by the VOICITYS project as the conceptual framework through which diversity will be investigated. This understanding has largely been derived from the DIVERCITIES project:

> Urban society is growing more diverse every day, not only because the number of new identities is growing but also because identities are becoming more complex and fluid than ever. We need to recognize that people do not have a single identity but belong to diverse categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, and other axes of identity, all of which interact on multiple levels, often simultaneously (A Handbook for Governing Hyper-Diverse Cities, 2017).

In-keeping with this conceptualisation, the stories presented and discussed in this report, have been gathered and curated using Community Reporting methodologies which seek to provide 360-degree understandings of people's worlds and explore the interconnectedness of different aspects of lives and experiences.

OUR APPROACH

Community Reporting is a storytelling movement that uses digital tools to support people to tell and share their own stories in their own ways. This practice advocates achieving positive change for communities by bringing peoples' portrayals of lived experiences together to influence change from the ground up. Central to Community Reporting is the belief that people telling authentic stories about their own lived experience offers a valuable understanding of their lives. Through creating spaces in which people can describe their own realities, Community Reporting provides opportunities in which people can:

1. Find their voice
2. Challenge perceptions
3. Be catalysts of change

Community Reporting insight storytelling techniques and co-curation approaches have been used within the VOICITYS project to enable people from diverse neighbourhoods to tell their own stories, gather stories from their peers and analyse these stories to co-produce a set of findings on what life is like where they live.

INSIGHT TECHNIQUES

Community Reporting for Insight uses people's experiences to provide rich qualitative data to projects. As part of the VOICITYS project, the Community Reporters used the following techniques to gather people's stories:

Snapshot stories: These are short responses to a single, open and broad question that aims to gather initial responses on a specific topic. They
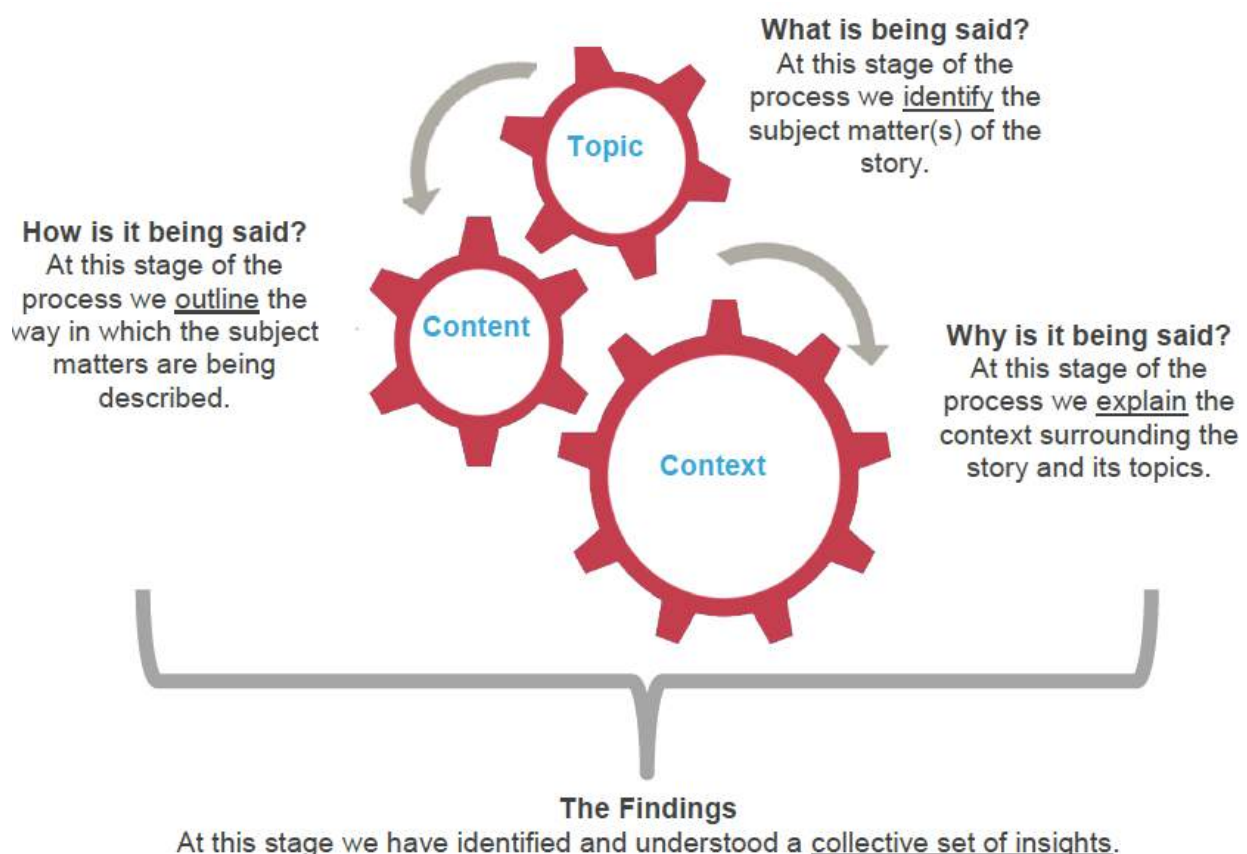
act as a starting point for a deeper conversation by allowing Community Reporters to do a rapid appraisal of a topic and seek some initial understanding of it.

Dialogue interviews: These are unstructured peer-to-peer interviews in which an initial question – or 'conversation starter' – is posed to initiate dialogue between the Community Reporter and storyteller. Following this, the Community Reporter has the agency to facilitate the conversation further by asking additional questions based on what the storyteller says, whilst allowing the storyteller to set the agenda of the overall conversation by talking about what they want to talk about. These provide more nuanced understandings of people's lives than the snapshot technique.

CURATION TECHNIQUES

Community Reporting story curation techniques enable people to analyse the stories they have gathered, produce a set of findings from them and package the findings ready to share them with others. The Institute of Community Reporter's (The ICR) analysis process, as depicted in Diagram 1 below, involves reviewing each story in terms of its Topic (e.g. subject matter), Content (e.g. the ways in which the subject matters are discussed) and Context (e.g. the wider situation in which the story is being told). Once each individual story has been reviewed, the key messages within them are used to create a set of trends and anomalies that form the basis of the overall findings.

Diagram 1: ICR Analysis Process

What is being said?
At this stage of the process we identify the subject matter(s) of the story.

How is it being said?
At this stage of the process we outline the way in which the subject matters are being described.

Why is it being said?
At this stage of the process we explain the context surrounding the story and its topics.

Topic

Content

Context

The Findings
At this stage we have identified and understood a collective set of insights.

During the VOICITYS project, the Community Reporting teams in each neighbourhood worked together to make sense of their stories using this approach, and collaboratively, with the ICR, packaged them as short reports and summative videos as detailed in this report.

OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS

The Community Reporting process has seen over 50 Community Reporters trained in neighbourhoods in Berlin (Germany), Budapest (Hungary), Salford (UK) and Sassari (Italy). Together they have gathered more than 120 stories. The specific neighbourhoods that this process focused on are:

- Charlestown and Lower Kersal (CHALK): This is a neighbourhood in Salford, a city and metropolitan borough in the north-west of England, UK.

- Historic Centre: This area is the 'old town' of Sassari, which is the second largest city in Sardinia, Italy.

- Józsefváros: This neighbourhood is the 8th district of Budapest and is one of the most ethnically and socially diverse areas of the capital city.

- Wedding: This neighbourhood is a sub-district of Berlin, just north of the city centre.

With the exception of German Community Reporting team who combined local people and people residing in other countries as part of their team, all of the Community Reporters trained and storytellers engaged with, lived, worked and/or

assets in the neighbourhoods being investigated. The following sections of the report, will highlight the key findings from the stories gathered in each of these individual areas, before concluding by synthesising this learning into a cross-country understanding of diversity and the everyday lives of people living in diverse communities. You can view all the stories gathered as part of this process here.

REFERENCES

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EXPLORING DIVERSITY IN CHARLESTOWN AND LOWER KERSAL

REBUILDING SOCIAL STRUCTURES, REBUILDING A COMMUNITY

Charlestown and Lower Kersal (CHALK) is a neighbourhood in Salford, a city and metropolitan borough in the north-west of England, UK. According to a 2016 report on the area produced by Salford City Council, its population is around 13,000 and residents are predominantly White British. However, despite this, nearly 25% of the residents do identify as BME (Black and Minority Ethnicity) and this is higher than both the city and UK average. The largest group within this 25% is White Other, with other ethnicities such as African and Pakistani groups representing smaller numbers. Within this population, for many residents English is a second language. For example, in 2014, the headteacher of Lower Kersal Primary School stated that "there are 14 languages spoken by children at the school and 22% speak English as an additional language".

The CHALK neighbourhood was one of 39 neighbourhoods selected for the UK Government's New Deal for Communities (NDC) regeneration scheme, which ran from 1998-2011. As the Department for Communities and Local Government outlined, the programme's aim was to "reduce the gaps between some of the poorest neighbourhoods and the rest of the country". As part of the NDC programme new

services were brought to the area as part of the regeneration, including a sports village and local community centres and Healthy Living Centres. The impact of this on the local area has been mixed as the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (1999) has reported, in the sense that there were indicators that crime was reduced in the area but it had very little impact on reducing the number of workless households.

Despite such efforts, Salford City Council identifies the area as being one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the city and also in terms of UK standards. Levels of deprivation in the UK are ascertained by analysing number of factors that include income, employment, education, health, crime, housing and living environment. Looking at the Council's reporting on the area we can begin to see how the neighbourhood faces a number of challenges. For example, many residents in the area have no qualifications (28.6%), which is more than the Salford and UK averages. Furthermore, specific groups in the neighbourhood find accessing employment more difficult than others. Lone parents (who in the area are predominantly female), for example, have a higher rate of unemployment than the city and national standards, and young people too face high levels of unemployment. Furthermore, long term health conditions are an issue in the area, that are exasperated by some behaviours such as high levels of smoking by residents.

With this context in mind, this report will explore how people are experiencing life in the neighbourhood and look at some of the issues they are encountering. It will look at changes in the area in terms of population, housing, employment and support services. Through this exploration of change, it will unearth the transformation in social structures evident in the community and discuss the impact that this has had on the people who live there.

CHANGES IN THE AREA

In the stories, the residents talk about changes within the CHALK neighbourhood and the dominant discourse centres on changes within the social structures of the community. Only one person mentions physical changes and she is a relative newcomer to the area. Speaking about moving from Merseyside to Salford, the lady describes recent road alterations and the creation of a new village with bars that is aimed at young people. The intended impact of this, in her eyes, is to keep people socialising in the area rather than travelling into the neighbouring city of Manchester. On the plus side, these physical changes to the roads have meant that buses can pick people up in the area easier, "but the road leading to the motorway is chaotic" making it difficult to move about by car.

The key part of people's stories of change in the area have focused on the deterioration of the social side of the community. Speaking about these changes, an older lady from the neighbourhood describes how many years agoe, when she got a house in the area, it was the "crème de la crème" and she was so happy to live in a house rather than a maisonette. Now, however, she "hates" the area. In her experience, she feels that "the world has become an awful place, we don't communicate like we used to, I'm frightened of change". She doesn't feel that people connect with each other and feels ignored by younger generations. As she describes, young people don't look at me, "values have changed, it's a very different world than what I grew up in". Offering a similar perspective on social change in the area, a man describes how the community was once "close knit" and that people "left doors open and walked into each other's houses". Nowadays people don't do this as they are more "cautious". Yet rather than link this to society's overall social values changing as the older lady does, this man perceives the change to be more related to the recent influx

of Eastern European people into the area.

This change in the demographics of the area, as the report will later discuss, is also link by the storytellers to changes in housing and employment circumstances that have presented a number of the issue for residents. Related to this is the emergence of food banks in the area. This change is not just related to CHALK or Salford, but has occurred across the UK, partially due to the long-term impact of the economic crisis in the late 2000s. As a man describes, "food banks have had to be brought in because of people's poverty". In his own experience of working at the food bank, the man recalls an encounter with a food bank user who came in "with no shoes or socks on" and that incidents such as this are "quite regular" and "not nice". More so, he details how immigrants both use the service whilst waiting for full status in the UK and also help out by volunteering at the service. What this suggests is not only that the area's residents are facing (largely) economic poverty, but also that it is particularly vulnerable social groups – such as immigrants – are also helping the wider community to try to overcome such issues. Despite this sentiment, there is a feeling in some of the stories that the different demographics in the neighbourhood – namely in terms of differences in ethnicity – as one man states, are "a bit separate". This is sometimes perceived as "foreigners" keeping themselves to themselves.

THE CHALLENGES IN PEOPLE'S LIVES

This context of population and social change has had an impact on people's lives that has resulted in them encountering a number of challenges. For one man, there is a relationship between the social segregation of different groups in the area and housing. He describes how landlords in the area are changing two bedroomed houses into 8

bedroomed houses and it is "not the English that are taking these houses, it's the foreigners". For him, it is not the shortage of housing that is the issue but rather the exploitation of people by Landlords. As suggested, according to this man, grouping large numbers of people who are newcomers to the community in the same dwelling is not helping their integration with the existing residents.

On the topic of housing, a man who moved into a flat in the area after previously living in a detached house describes some issues that he has had with his neighbours. As he recalls, "one woman permanently wants all the communal windows open so she has put grease on the handles so you can't close them" and that there has been a range of other antisocial problems within the residence around fire exits, noise and driving. He explains how he was happier in his house and has found living in a flat difficult. What we can learn from this story, is not that living in flats is always a negative experience and living in houses is always positive one, but is instead that if people are living within close proximity to each and they share communal spaces then a strong sense of community and social responsibility must exist to make such co-habitation pleasant.

Employment is also seen as key issue for local people. As a man states, there seems to be too many people fighting for the same job. Again, this issue is related to population change, with one man stating that the community has been "flooded" with Eastern European people and that there are "30 – 40 people applying for a job". However, he does acknowledge that other factors too are preventing him from securing employment such as age and skills. Whilst he does tend to get interviews, "younger more experienced people will get the job". In terms of support, he doesn't' see formal provision in a positive light – "job centres aren't that good" as all people are given is a five-minute chat and asked to come back next month.What this suggests, as a latter

part of this report will look at, in some instances the support structures in the community aren't always there or they are not addressing the needs of residents in ways that are meaningful to them.

A key element of many of the stories was people's experiences of mental health and the issues that have arisen in their lives at periods of poor mental health. When people talked about the emergence of mental health problems it usually coincided with big events happening in their life. For example, a middle-aged man had a business that failed which led to him having a heart attack. Not long after, he was diagnosed with depression that he describes as "a perfect storm". Another middle-aged lady describes how an accident that left her in a wheelchair could have had a long-term impact on her mental health if it wasn't for the support of her family. After the accident, her mother would force her out of the house and at one point said "I'm going to the pub to meet some friends, you can come with me or go home". At this point the woman knew that going home involved getting up a steep hill in a wheelchair and that her only real option was to go out and socialise. These interactions with people and not "staying in [her] head" as she describes it, really made a big difference to her overall wellbeing despite the big changes in circumstances she had experienced.

Immediate family as a support network to cope with mental health was also discussed by an elderly woman in the community. Whilst bringing up her children she was "quite low" but instead of accessing a service, she looked to her family for help. Yet some of those who talked about their mental health in their stories couldn't rely on family for support. People also discussed how reaching out to a service and saying that you needed help was very difficult for them. As one man recalls, "I built a wall around me for five years, not speaking to anyone, so then trying to talk to someone was very hard". Echoing this, another

another person stated that "it takes a lot of strength to ask for help". Talking about their experience of mental ill health, a man highlighted that other issues in people's lives were more tangible and easier for people to understand, but mental health was still something people struggled to understand. As they stated, "you don't have a crutch, it's all up there [in your mind] so it's hard for people to appreciate that you actually are ill'. What this suggests, is that there is still social stigma surrounding mental health and that this could be why it is considered such an issue within the community.

When discussing the services that are available to those suffering with mental illness, there were lots of different opportunities out there but as one man describes, "they're hard to find, and if they rely on funding to exist, then they disappear". Similarly, one man discussed that when he really needed some help years ago "there wasn't anything". For others, services in the area such as Working Well, The Orchard and Being Well Salford which are relatively new have provided support. As one person explains, just talking to someone in one of these more community settings rather than medical provision has helped. As he states, "she wasn't like a trained psychiatrist, but she was there to listen and that helped". As the stories have shown, people's experiences of mental ill health have resulted in people getting help locally in a range of ways – from formal support to more informal help.

SUPPORT STRUCTURES IN THE COMMUNITY

Nearly all the people who told their stories as part of this project discussed various forms of or lack of support in the community. A dominant part of this discourse was that there is a great deal of support opportunities available but it is often difficult to navigate and find them. For example, a lone parent discussed that it wasn't until speaking to her nursery that she was made aware that she may be eligible for

tax benefits. More so, as one man describes, he was referred to a local support group and the impact on his life has been that he now "can keep in check with [his] addiction". He also describes how giving back to the organisation through volunteering also helped him – "the volunteering keeps me busy and I like talking to new people". What these stories demonstrate, is the importance of local signposting to support services and that the sharing of knowledge is vital within the CHALK community.

Whilst these examples of direct support groups did come up in the stories, a number of people discussed the benefits of more community-led and informal groups in their lives. A woman who attends a regular Weightwatchers group, talks about how helping other people has really helped her; upon hearing that someone in the group she had supported no longer has diabetes she was "so pleased". More so, this woman is also a carer for her husband with Multiple Sclerosis and groups such as Weightwatchers and a Zumba class she attends, "help [her] live a life as well as caring for [her] husband". The benefit of the social settings and informality of these groups contribute to her overall wellbeing beyond the benefits of enhancing diet and improving physical fitness levels.

Although these informal support groups came up regularly in the stories as assets to the community and key parts of people's lives, not all of the informal groups or the spaces in which they took place exist anymore. One gentleman told a story about going to the pubs in the community and describes how "10 minute walk from my house there were 8 pubs, now there is only 2". He discussed how he would "meet friends, play pool and just have a chat and a laugh". When asked about the community that would go there, he described it as "mostly men" and suggested that the types of men that went to the pub to chat

"aren't going to go to community centres and go on courses". The question then is, where do these people now go to socialise and form peer support bonds?

For other people however, community centres have had a positive impact on their lives. An elderly lady told a story all about how after a "personal tragedy" going to her local community centre and going on courses such as "flower arranging, art [and] computers" really helped her get back into society. She says how the centre "gave [her the] confidence to meet new people" and expresses disappointment that the community centre has since closed. However, she does say that "it gave me the strength to go elsewhere and get involved with other groups". Similarly, a person who have been marginalised from wider society by attending education provision for people with learning disabilities describes how a community centre enabled her to learn new things and enhanced her social interactions with non-disabled people.

EVOLVING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A CHANGING COMMUNITY

What the stories have highlighted is that this is a community that has experienced change in terms of demographics who inhabit it and the buildings, spaces and services that belong to it. Within this change some support structures – whether formal or informal – have emerged that support the residents and are addressing certain needs such as food banks, community centres and informal support groups. In saying this however, more is still needed to support the CHALK community. Some traditional support structures such as social ties built in the pubs or through relationships between neighbours have been dismantled and the newer provision has not addressed all of what residents feel has been lost in the social sphere. Crucially and specifically for middle aged and older men, these informal support networks that were there

and where found in the area's pubs, have gone.

Furthermore, a number of the stories discuss support in other areas that is needed but not currently available in the community. A lone parent describes how filling in applications for benefits claims was "horrific" due to lack of help. Similarly, a lady with learning difficulties discusses how she needed support when she had to go to court for the first time about her benefits claim. At the hearing, she describes how she was "made to feel this big" and this experience has had a negative impact on her. She also described how when she was younger she never got help with her learning difficulties and that she "never learnt anything in school, it was crap". More so, a young girl describes how "there needs to be more youth provision for kids in the community".

Yet as the stories highlight, providing support services is not simply enough. Other barriers exist such as not wanting to ask for help (as the stories of mental health experiences exemplified), and people not knowing how to navigate current provision. To put it simply, more services is not necessarily the answer to some of the issues raised in the stories. From the stories, we can see that it is relationships between people that are key to supporting residents to live their lives to the full and this is often found in informal provision or peer support. In essence, the stories highlight the importance of people making connections, whether they be informal or formal, as it is through lack of connections that people feel isolated, their issues seem more difficult and their mental health can deteriorate. Through enabling residents to be a part of the social rebuilding of their community they will then be in a better place to address some of the other issues they are experiencing in the economic, education and health realms.

You can view a short film that summarises the main findings from the stories here.

EXPLORING DIVERSITY IN HISTORIC CENTRE OF SASSARI

STORIES ABOUT THE PAST, LIFE EXPERIENCES IN THE PRESENT AND FUTURE VISIONS OF THE OLD TOWN

Sassari is the second largest city in Sardinia, Italy with a population of 126,769 inhabitants and a surface area of 547,04 km² (ISTAT, 1ST of January 2018). It is located in North-Western Sardinia and has had a University since 1617. It currently has around 13,000 students (UNISS, 2018) and approximately 3800 foreign inhabitants living in the city (Servizio statistica del Comune di Sassari, 2018). The historic centre of the city is home to approximately 12,000 inhabitants and the population in this neighbourhood is mainly composed of lower middle-class families who have lived there for generations and by an increasingly by migrants to the area (Servizio statistica del Comune di Sassari, 2018).

People's whose origins are from Sassari and migrants from different parts of the world (in particular from East Europe, Africa and Asia) have coexisted in this location for a number of years, but not without problems. On the one hand, the area is characterized by urban decay and socioeconomic issues, such as high rates of unemployment (especially of young people) at around 27.6% (Dati ISTAT 2017). Yet on the other hand, there are some signs of positive change in the area and a revitalisation of this neighbourhood that has been influenced by the activities implemented by schools, associations and commercial

ventures such as bars and cafes that bring a renewed vibrancy to the historic centre's squares.

The stories gathered represent both of these perspectives and the transitions and changes that the city and its historic centre has seen in-line with its population and socioeconomic shifts. Exploring the concept of 'diversity' within the context of Sassari's old town has provided us with an understanding of how this concept is perceived by its residents. There is a tendency in the stories – either advertently or inadvertently – to perceive diversity particularly along ethnic lines. This is represented in the stories that talk about the different types of people that live in the areas such as the resident who comments on seeing children playing with other children "from various ethnic groups" and the person who talks about the people who live around him who include "3 Russian guys, 4 people from Romania, 5 Africans and in front of my house there are Chinese people".

There are however, a number of stories that seek (actively or not) to negate the differences between the people inhabiting the old town. For example, a man from South America who has been living in Sassari for years, compares diversity it to a mask that each one wears but which masks a reality wherein no actual difference subsists between people. As he states, "It's like a mask that each one puts on but in reality, there is no difference between us, we are all the same. We should look beyond the sex of a person, the political ideas, the clothes he/she is wearing, the position...doctor, engineer, lawyer, astronaut, housewife...the essence of every one of us is unique and we are all human beings." Similarly, another man explains, "diversity is a mental matter. There are no differences between us, unless you are talking about diversity from a physical point of view, but neither this is considered as diversity". Again, this sentiment, is echoed by another

another person who suggests, "we are all children of the earth and we all live under the same sky". Yet even within stories that follow this ideological stance, there is still the acknowledgement that diversity is viewed along ethnic lines. For example, one person states that "diversity does not exist if foreigners do their best to contribute in the evolution of the host society" and another person argues that there "is not a lot of diversity in the end, because the different ethnic groups that live in the old town coexist".

What this somewhat contradictory discourse of diversity represents is on one hand an acknowledgement of the population shift that the historic centre has experienced, whilst on the other the wanting to create or retain a collective sense of identity for the area by its residents. The latter component of the discourse is rooted in the area's strong sense of cultural identity embodied by customs and traditions from the past that are still present in contemporary society and consolidated by people's nostalgia for the city centre that once was. As this report will detail, the interplay of past and present customs and culture is not only important to understanding the lives of people living in the area but is something that can also can play a vital role in addressing some of the issues that the neighbourhood now faces.

FROM VIBRANCY TO DECAY, AND BACK AGAIN? CHANGES IN THE HISTORIC CENTRE

The historic centre has changed considerably over time and this is a common topic within the discourse of the stories. The stories gathered paint a picture of residents' understandings of how and why the old town has changed and how people have experienced these changes. Nostalgia for memories of the past about the historic centre are common. For example, a local small shop owner in the historic centre

recalls a more vibrant and populated space than it is now. As she says, "in the past, the historical center was more populated than now. You could listen to the voices of the children who played outdoor traditional games. This made you feel happy…and also the good smell of traditional dishes, such as pasta and beans…now it's not so usual…". Recollections such as this one that reminisce about traditions from the past are often detailed by the storytellers with a sense of melancholy that things are not so vibrant nowadays.

There is a sense in the stories that residents have seen the old town dilapidate over the years from what it once was. As a man states, "the historical center is in a state of degrade since many years. It has been abandoned for decades and now it is very complicated to bring it back to the original beauty." A young man who has lived in the historic centre since he was young, details how his own café is one of the most important parts of the square it is situated in as it is a space to bring people together. Yet even he sees how the area has lost its original energy over the years – "the historical centre is somewhat emptied, both at the level of ideas and commercial activities, and at the people's own level. The community is missing. We are all with our phones because we want to be more "social", but then of the concept of "social" remains very little… especially in the historical centre." In this respect, we can see that the stories not only reflect the decay of the buildings over time but also a deterioration in the sense of community that there once was in the historic centre. In essence, the physical decline is mirrored by a social deterioration in the area.

After so many years of neglect, people feel it is difficult to make the old town pulsate again as it once did. Within this timeframe the city has also seen a change in demographic of the people living within the historic centre. As one storyteller states, "before it was inhabited only by

people from Sassari, then people from other parts arrived, especially from Senegal, and the historical center was repopulated, undergoing a remarkable anthropological transformation." For some people, aspects this transformation have been positive and for others, it has contributed to the negative image of the historical centre. For some, the large numbers of immigrants who arrived in Sassari and settled in the historic centre are seen to live without any system or rule, creating a kind of "ghetto"; as one business owner states, there is "little control from the police. I have a commercial activity and today I can say that the rate of dangerous people is increased, there should be more control."

Yet, this is only one side of the picture. The historic centre has seen a re-valorisation of many historic squares and streets due to the scheduling of events and the opening of new cafés and restaurants. Furthermore, the multicultural community now seen in the old town is perceived by some as bringing about a new form of vibrancy, in some ways akin to the old nostalgic reminiscences but at the same time being different. As a woman states, "the children who live now do not look at nationality anymore, but they are a bit mixed up. So, there are children from Sassari playing with children from various ethnic groups who have moved here in the city. So, you can see a lot of cultural exchanges, various games and every child can teach others a different game from the various countries they come from." In some ways, this echoes some of the older stories of children playing games in the streets and the neighbourhood's bygone energy.

TRADITIONS: PAST AND PRESENT

What is evident in the stories is the importance of tradition in the psyche of the people who have resided in Sassari for generations. Many of the stories shed light onto the role that these traditions play in

people's lives and sense of identity, with many of them still being very popular and considered to be important events within the historic centre. One tradition that was very prevalent in the past is Li Gobburi. As a teacher from Sassari details, this tradition is "were some young people who went around the city as storytellers. They told stories in rhymes about the history of our city and local people participated in this event adding some extracts of stories always in rhymes. They often had a small wagon and people could give them some money". This tradition doesn't exist anymore.

Two traditions that still exist, however, are the Cavalcata Sarda and the Candelieri, also called Festha Manna. A young tourist guide from the city details how the Cavalcata Sarda "started more than 1 century ago and it's still an annual occurrence, in May. It's a folk procession of traditional dresses from all over Sardinia. It was born to welcome the members of the royal families. It's a very nice and colorful parade and thanks to this, we remember our traditions, habits and customs of Sassari and its history." The Candelieri too holds an important place in the minds of people from the area. As the young tourist guide explains, "it's a religious tradition" and involves small processions through the historic centre from June until the main celebration in August with preparations being made throughout the year. Whilst this event is a local tradition it also attracts tourists. It's significance locally, is in its ability to teach children typical songs and dances from the area and its capacity to gather people from throughout Sassari together in the historic centre. All of these traditions, both past and present incarnations, highlight the importance of activities that bring people together for a joint celebration and to share local knowledge and insights from the past. Events such as these enable communities to remember their roots whilst also celebrating these customs with people who are newcomers to their community or those who are momentarily residing there.

FUTURE VISIONS FROM THE HISTORIC CENTRE: CREATING CONNECTIONS, CULTIVATING A COMMUNITY

Within the stories, people explored what they thought the future held for the historic centre. The vast majority of these visions were positive, with residents holding out hope for a better future of their neighbourhood. In her story, a singer from the oldest choir in Sardinia, says that she can already see some positive changes, particularly in terms of integration between the original population of Sassari and newcomers to the area. She describes how the San Donato school "is a very important institution in the historical centre, where children and second generation's children meet and create the new community of tomorrow of Sassari". It is through spaces and projects such as these where people can meet and interact that she believes that "that Sassari will be a multicultural and open city, with a renovated historical centre". In a similar way to which the old traditions worked and their modern-day events operate, schools and other sites of (or projects that foster) interaction are valuable spaces in which people can meet each other.

The stories suggest that collaboration among the different people who live in the neighbourhood is key to bringing about a better future for the historic centre. A young yoga teacher from the area details how she hopes that Sassari may grow culturally as part of demographic changes in the area. As she describes, "I have a very positive vision of the future of the historical centre. I hope that people from Sassari may grow culturally in the hospitality of migrants and that migrants, at the same time, could be more in contact with local people...I hope there will be a better integration because, for the moment, there is only tolerance but not a 'living together'." What this story suggests is that more spaces and initiatives are needed to bring people together so that they can build a sense of community and not just a co-habitation of the same geographical territory.

The revitalisation of the historic centre that is imagined in these stories is already gradually underway in some respects. As one storyteller details, "at a slow pace, the historic centre of Sassari is improving thanks to many cultural events and local events and thanks also to youngsters that moved from peripheral areas to the historical centre. The town city is taking a breath again." Yet as the stories have alluded to, this change cannot just be brought about by just local government and decision-makers, but also most come from the residents who have a vital role to play in building a more connected community within the old town. As a young man suggests, "it depends on us, it is not only about the intervention of political authorities, but it depends on us, the young people especially...we must regain these spaces which belonged to our grandparents, that are abandoned today but still beautiful." In addressing some of the issues that the historic centre has encountered – such as the changes in the traditional social structures and the make-up pf the community – people themselves must take responsibility for the social rebuilding of the neighbourhood in which they live.

BACK TO THE FUTURE: USING THE PAST TO INSPIRE TOMORROW

In numerous stories, the negative evolution of the historic centre is highlighted and the feeling of loss – whether it be for traditions of the past or the beauty in the architecture of the now dilapidating buildings – can be felt. This downfall of the area is tied symbiotically to a process of depopulation in which many of the original residents of the city moved to others areas, which in turn led to the neighbourhood being repopulated by migrants from other parts of the world. Yet within this context, positive aspects of the previous social structures and customs have remained, and new possibilities have been introduced or could emerge. The importance of tradition is strong in the stories and the continued success of events such as the Candelieri and the Cavalcata

Sarda are testament to the importance of these in the cultural psyche of the people. Rather than customs such as these being buried in the past, they are still alive today and are key elements of the community's collective calendar. More so, things from the past such as children playing together in the streets are still evident nowadays. Perhaps, as detailed in the stories, the games that the children play and the demographics of the children have changed – but the sentiment of togetherness still remains.

It is through using lessons of the past – the importance of sharing traditions and in creating spaces in which people can interact such as vibrant squares or social events – that Sassari's old town can revision itself. The newcomers to the area have a big role to play in this, as they too will bring their own customs and heritage to share and add to the vibrancy of the neighbourhood. As one resident explains, "diversity is an opportunity" and through it you can grow and "enrich oneself". This sharing and learning from one another, is echoed by another resident, who identifies that true integration involves overcoming perceived barriers to engaging with people who are different that you. As they state, "getting along with those who think like you is the easiest thing in the world. The beauty is to get along with those who DON'T think like you, with those who have different opinions from yours, with those who have different habits from yours. That is integration, we call it "collective growth". In essence, it is through collective exchanges that people can really get to know each other, create strong social ties and a sense of togetherness that results in them valuing of one another, their cultures and the spaces in which they live. This lesson is evident in the past traditions of the old town and is one that must not be forgotten in the present as it could be the catalyst for a renewed vibrancy in the neighbourhood.

You can view a short film that summarises the main findings from the stories here.

EXPLORING DIVERSITY IN JÓZSEFVÁROS

HOW PRIVILEGE AND SOCIAL POSITION IMPACTS ON PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Józsefváros or the 8th district of Budapest as it is also known, is a diverse area within this capital city in terms of the ethnic and social background of its inhabitants (ITS Report, 2015) despite it being a relatively small territory. It is part of the historical inner city area that was mainly formed during the late 19th century urban boom. It saw a mild population during the 1990s and has since gained in population in the last decade as part of city-wide gentrification processes (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2015). The area has a unique mix of vibrancy, nostalgia and deep-rooted social issues such as poverty and a reputation for crime (Gentrification and Rescaling Urban Governance in Budapest-Józsefváros: Czirfusz et al, 2015). The Népszínház street, for example, was a famous street of handicrafts as one storyteller recalls – "We know Józsefváros very well. It has some dark sides and bright sides. This used to be a very nice street of merchants and craftsmen." Similarly, another resident highlights Józsefváros mix of vibrancy and decline by stating, "It is a very colourful district. There are days or moments when it is not so comfortable to live here. But by now I have already accepted its advantages and disadvantages. It is loud, vivid and restless, even at night, which I love."

Within the Józsefváros there are 11 neighborhoods split between 3 sections: Inner-Józsefváros (Palace Quarter), Middle-Józsefváros and Outer-Józsefváros. Within Inner-Józsefváros there are high quality

residential buildings and some national institutions such as the National Museum. Contrastingly, in Middle-Józsefváros the housing is more run-down and has typical pre-fab housing estates. Residents of the area tend to be the lower classes and it is this area – the central – that has garnered a negative reputation based on increasing social issues over recent decades. As such, it has been the focus of a number of regeneration programmes. In the outer area of Józsefváros the landscape changes again and is much more brown-field and industrial sites, with a mixture of elegant low-rise residential areas not seen in the other sections.

Given the differences between these areas – in terms of look, housing, residents and social features – and the overall ethnic diversity of Józsefváros it is unsurprising that the stories gathered contained a range of perspectives through which the 8th district is viewed. The stories of the area are subjective to each storyteller and are influenced from the viewpoint in which they occupy. For example, the way the storytellers perceive social problems mainly depends on their level of education and professional experience; some interpret social processes and the context in a complex way, while others see the surface and symptoms of social problems. This report will outline the various understandings of life in the area from these different perspectives, unpicking how differing positions of privilege and social standing can impact on how diversity is viewed. Through this it will explore firstly the effect of changes to the physical landscape in the area on people's lives and perceptions of the areas, before progressing onto highlight some of the ways in which the underpinning social issues are being and could be addressed. It will conclude by suggesting that it is the position of privilege or social position that a person occupies that determines how they perceive and experience a diverse community, the changes within it and the its issues. Through this, the report highlights the importance of a relational understanding between people and their spaces when

regenerating diverse neighborhoods.

LENSES OF DIVERSITY

From the stories, we can see that it is young intellectuals in particular who admire diversity and welcome the range of ethnic and social groups present in Józsefváros. They think of diversity as a value in the sense that it is intensive and inspiring for them, with one person stating that "What also elevates my personal comfort level is that the population is very diverse here. It makes me feel like living in a real European city". More so, the beauty in the architecture of the buildings, particularly in the Palace Quarter, is also mentioned by many. Whilst these perceptions of the area are quite common in the stories, they tend to be from people who live in other areas of Budapest. Whilst these 'outsiders' of which many young intellectuals fall into, describe Józsefváros as a place of constant happenings and excitement - which they love, at the same time, they prefer themselves to live somewhere more quiet.

Inhabitants of the area see their neighborhood more realistically. As the stories demonstrate, their experiences of the area paints a differing picture of Józsefváros that is influenced by more day-to-day encounters with its residents, its spaces and its services. These 'insiders' like this "familiarity", but also describe some of the daily difficulties that they encounter there such as lack of cleanliness, the state of the buildings and some public areas, and issues of crime. Speaking about this, one resident states, "Basically it is the same people who live around here. I know almost everyone. Probably they got older and their behaviours have changed. I don't know but it is much more quiet. But there are some streets where I would never move". Congruently, another person highlights how where they live they feel relative safety but not in some

other parts of the district – "By now I go used to this district. I got to like it. There are good and worse areas here, too. Where I live now is not the area, let's say maybe it is medium category". Despite some these negative features, the inhabitants feel safe living in Józsefváros, but understand that aspects of the area could invoke fear in others, especially those who live somewhere else. Those who live in the area are aware of and tend to avoid dangerous places and situations, as one of them says, "You have to get used to it. It is a matter of getting used to. Because you will get to know everyone around here." As the resident implies, knowing others provides people in the 8th district with the feeling of security despite the crime levels in the area.

Yet despite this sense of security there are mixed feelings when storytellers talk about bringing up their children in Józsefváros, especially regarding crime, traffic and providing children with the autonomy to go out on their own. As one parent explains: "What is still a bit difficult that sometimes this "nyolcker" (eight district) feeling is still here: in our house there are drug addicts and prostitutes, and there are things I would not like to show to my kid. Now she does not detect it, but it happens that I have to pick up needles." This story highlights how the criminal activities in the area have impacted on people's understanding of their own safety in the area and the safety of those who they are responsible for.

This sense of fear is also reflected in some stories in which people talk about the more marginalised, vulnerable or newcomers to the area. As one resident explains, "How to put it, Arabic, Turkish and other Asian people have moved here, it wasn't like this before. It was much better, for the shop and everything. Mostly musician Roma lived here." In this sense, some of the stories suggest that diversity is connected to the unknown, which can be something to be afraid of. Demographics such

as different ethnic groups and the homeless are being perceived as 'the other', and this otherness is articulated by the storytellers as a seen a source of potential danger even if storytellers themselves haven't experienced anything directly.

In this respect, some (but not all) of the storytellers are welcoming of a more intense police presence on the streets and in such instances people feel this is helping the area overcome its challenges. As one storyteller explains, "Népszínház Street has changed a little bit. Right now you don't see as many people on the streets as before. Actually it became quieter. Sometimes I can see these domestic disputes among people that have decreased. And when I go home there are not so many people staying there overnight there, as it was". Whilst opinions vary regarding the recent, more intense presence of the police in the neighborhood, they do tend to agree that there is a strong correlation in between police presence and quieter, less troubled public spaces.

CHANGING SPACES

In general, the storytellers welcomed the visible changes brought about by urban development projects such as nicer public spaces, playgrounds and parks. A grandmother points out how these regeneration programmes have changed her usage of public spaces – "As it has improved a lot, when my grandchildren come we can come down, and in this nice environment the kids can play" – and another resident highlights how their place where they live has changed by stating, "The square where I live evolved a lot, because they like renovating squares, as it was renovated more than once, and it is very picturesque." From this perspective, we can see that urban changes on a surface level to the environment are seen largely as positive enhancements to the area and result in orderliness, regularity and a sense of security.

At the same time however, when we listen to other stories there are questions about how much these types of changes are supporting the most marginalised groups. For example, as a storyteller explains, the newly renovated Teleki Square Park (that is located at the end of Népszínház Street), is a nice place for her to spend time with her grandchildren. Yet in some ways this space is an artificial community place where guards decide on who can enter the park. As the storyteller explains, "there aren't any drunk and homeless people here inside. They are outside, gatekeepers would not let them in." The idea that certain groups are being excluded from community assets (physical or otherwise) is echoed in another resident's reflections – "those in extreme poverty do not make it to Én-idő (My-time) or to Rákóczi Breakfast in the market (community programs). Special attention or program would be needed for reaching those who are even poorer and have less information." These stories highlight how gentrification processes that are driven by the local government can exclude the most vulnerable social groups.

Whilst a safer neighborhood is welcomed by everyone, there are local worries about who is being included and excluded from the area. Within this thinking, there is a concern about what will happen to local families; will regeneration come at their expense? As one resident states, "the local government has been accomplishing a social rehabilitation program for a more livable neighborhood. But it always raises the question to whom it might be more livable and how it is going to be achieved, at what price." The question about who the regeneration is for – people who currently live in the area or others who may want to move into the area once it begins to prosper – is one that is prevalent in the stories gathered. The discourse of the stories displays the tension between who should benefit from the enhancements in the area and who should be publicly visible and included within the

8th district. Almost all of the storytellers mention extreme poverty as part of Józsefváros and that this has deteriorated the mental and physical state of certain groups, especially the Roma community, and people living on the streets and in homeless shelters in the neighborhood. Whilst some storytellers are empathic to people's situations, some would prefer it if these groups left public spaces.

Among the recommendations made by local storytellers to enhance the area were simple practical solutions to issues such as police supervised zebra crossings that would enable children to cross roads safely. There were also more complex understandings of the area's needs that presented ideas such as trying to improve people's behavior to their environment and each other by creating a sense of social responsibility across local government, schools, and residents. For example, cleanliness of the neighborhood is high on people's agendas. In many stories, cleanliness of public spaces is expected from the local government, yet as this quote demonstrates, some storytellers draw attention to local people's responsibility towards their environment – "I hope that people will be aware that we are all responsible for the environment we live in".

There seems to be a difference of approach between the generations as to how this social responsibility can be achieved. Some of the older storytellers believe in direct and nonviolent communication as a tool needed to influence people's attitude. As one resident explains, "I have always tried it. Everything can be told, but in a kind manner, in a nice tone, not in a raised voice. Kids also have to understand that this cannot be done. And even if they are rude they have to be told that this is not the way to answer." Offering a differing perspective, younger respondents believe in the power of setting an example rather than direct communication. As one person states, "Go for cleanliness, love and peace. (...) Good examples have to be shown, and earlier or later

those who have had different upbringing will somehow change."
Perhaps a mixture of both stances is what is required.

Community related activities such as the Rákóczi breakfast organized by
Mindspace (an NGO active in the field of community development), are
mentioned by a few local storytellers, as good practices. These storytellers
feel interventions such as this will have a positive effect in the long term,
but others – such as social workers - acknowledged their limited impact.
As one person stated, "middle class people are much more addressed by
these activates than locals in extreme poverty who are very much
isolated." People in this line of thinking instead call for special attention
or special programs in order to motivate and involve those with more
enhanced difficulties.

Among the most vulnerable groups they mention are the homeless and
Roma people, and as such shed light upon the shortcomings of the
social welfare system. One person suggests that "I have an impression
that you don't have housing for poor people, or supported houses, where
you have some guidance. Because I would say from my background as a
nurse and soon to be a psychologist, that many of the people who live
on the street can't manage to live on their own." As this story suggests,
people with complex needs may require more than the current physical
regeneration of the area to support them to lead lives that are more
included in the 8th district's renewal. Furthermore, engaging with these
groups can activate those who are marginalised into becoming more
productive members of the community. As one resident suggests,
moving away from renovating building into supporting the development
of places for people to shine could enable "a very gritty and conscious
Roma community that would lift the whole city up."

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEOPLE AND PLACE IN THE REGENERATION OF DIVERSE NEIGHBOURHOODS

As the stories have demonstrated, the way that people perceive the social problems and diversity in Józsefváros is influenced by their social position or position of privilege that is determined by factors such as level of education, profession, lifestyle and so on. Those who live outside the area view the 8th district's diversity through a somewhat rose-tinted lens – from their privileged position seeing only the vibrancy of the area. They do not have to live day-to-day with the very real social issues and fractures that residents of the district experience.

It is because of these issues that the area has seen a number of local government projects and interventions aimed at revitalizing the neighbourhood, and these are perceived in both positive and negative lights. Some people welcome the changes as their area has been renovated and spaces otherwise not accessible or available to them have become usable. Yet despite this, others perceive this as negative gentrification in the sense that the most vulnerable social groups in Józsefváros are becoming excluded from the area and its services. Intellectuals, locals with enhanced social awareness (usually brought about by profession or education) and young people who have made an active choice to live there because of the neighborhood's "realness", particularly express these thoughts on recent changes in the neighborhood. In many of their stories they highlight the contradictions between the developments and the lack of support for the social groups who really needed it. Outside of these groupings, even those who express gratitude towards the new renovations such as older people, are too calling for raising awareness in the community for local responsibilities, and for supporting each other.

What this suggests, is that the physical renovation of the neighbourhood alone cannot not address the deeper issues that affect its society. Regeneration processes (when done in this vein) only move a social issue or socially disadvantaged group elsewhere rather than tackle the root cause. In this respect, more intricate processes based on enhancing relations between the residents of the area and in how they interact with their environment are needed in order to enable the people of Józsefváros to address and heal their own social issues in more sustainable and systemic ways.

You can view a short film that summarises the main findings from the stories here.

EXPLORING DIVERSITY IN WEDDING

CULTIVATING A COMMUNITY OF DIFFERENCE, COMBATING EXTERNAL THREATS

Wedding is a sub-district of Berlin, just north of the city centre. According to statistics from the Office Capital Portal, in 2016 the area had a little more than 84,000 inhabitants. It is traditionally a working-class area and before World War Two it was an industrial centre in the city. However, post-war, the area experienced a period of decline. In 1961, Wedding was surrounded by two sides of the Berlin Wall and due to this, the industry and its workers left the neighbourhood and the once industrial epicentre. What followed was a wave of 'guest workers' from Turkey and Yugoslavia, arriving in the area attracted by the low rents and huge number of social dwellings (Source: weddingweisser.de). Ultimately this led to the neighbourhood being furtherly associated with poverty, and also with migration. Describing this social-make up, one storyteller accounts for how the "neighbourhood was originally a working-class area with a large Turkish community and other European communities". Yet despite it not being a "rich neighbourhood", this person depicts the area as now being "very vivid" with "a strong exchange between its different communities".

This vividness followed the fall of the Berlin Wall which led to the area becoming a central part of Berlin once again. More so, in recent years, more migration into the area has occurred. Demographics such as African people, Asian people and other people from around Europe have moved in the area and begun to opens cafes, shops and small businesses. As documented in the online press, at the same time more

and more students, artists and 'creative businesses' have established themselves in Wedding, adding to the kaleidoscope of diversity. However, as a consequence of this, the area is threatened by gentrification and despite the positivity felt by people towards the new spaces that have opened up, some old businesses have closed and long-term residents have had to move out of the area. This process and the fear of negative social change is reflected in many stories.

Despite such concerns, as this report will outline, the stories gathered have found not only optimism but positivity around the concept of diversity amongst the people of Wedding. This is largely based on the progressive interactions between the different people who live there and the different cultures to which they belong. This is not to say that the symphony of diversity in the neighbourhood does not encounter problems or that people from minority groups do not experience issues that other non-minority groups do not, but rather to suggest that Wedding provides (for now) a section of Berlin where people belong to different groups (whether than be race, religion, sexuality and so on) can build their lives together. What threatens this living environment, it seems, are external factors that are not specific to the Wedding neighbourhood. It also worth noting at this point, that the German storytellers often expressed that they felt bad about the situation of the migrants and are more sceptical if Germans are ready to live in diversity than migrants storytellers were.

DEFINITIONS OF DIVERSITY: THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT WEDDING

Within the stories, people reflect on their personal understandings of what diversity means to them. A lot of the residents refer to diversity as "Multi-Kulti", and this coming together of people from different cultures was seen as a cohesive co-existence. For example, one person details

how for them, "diversity means that all kind of people from different nations, races and backgrounds living together in peace, love and harmony". Similarly, another person outlines how, "diversity means that there are a lot of people creating something together". In reference to Wedding in particular, this sense of togetherness appears to be the reality rather than the ideal. As one resident outlines, "people here behave peacefully and with no violence cause they all got the idea since they came that our diversity builds stronger community". Furthermore, another person describes how "People are very kind, very friendly...It's a beautiful place to be". What such comments suggest is that the positive notions of diversity within the stories gathered are being drawn from the connections between people living in the neighbourhood.

In the area, diversity manifests itself in a multitude of ways that engage different senses. One person, for example, outlines how diversity is found in culinary experiences and talks about their love for the flavours and tastes of Wedding. Another storyteller, outlines this in a visual way, describing how "next to this Muslim place, I see some Arabic people, they are some kind of their traditional smoking. And I always find that fun, very diverse, that you see all this in a short walk". Similarly, the shops too represent the diversity of the area - "It's funny to see the shops are in Turkish not in German but that's part of Berlin, people become part of this district now". This sense of people being part of the district is a key contributor to why people feel warmly towards diversity in Wedding and the cohesion of its different inhabitants, both newcomers and the 'Urgesteine' (people who have lived there all their lives).

This integration, as observed in the stories, is connected to language. People suggest that they tend to connect easier with others and integrate successfully if they can speak German. However, this can also

have its own issues. As one person acknowledges, "[s]ometimes when I speak English, I have faced comments that I have to speak German, for native German people it is very important for them to also learn German language". Whilst commonality in language plays a key role in non-German people's integration into the area, the expectation of this – as this storyteller alludes to – can make newcomers feel excluded if their lack of German language skills is frowned upon by the society they are entering. In this sense, a balance must be struck and a dominance and usage of a single language should support interactions between people not erect additional, social barriers. As one person states, diversity is about "interactions with another culture" and describes how all cultures in Germany try to integrate with each other to redefine and construct a 'Berlin culture'. What this suggests, is that total assimilation is not what makes the diversity present in Wedding as positive as the stories suggest it is, but rather in the interactions and forming of new, joint cultural understandings.

There is a sentiment in the stories, that people's positive notions of diversity are specifically formed by living or working in Wedding. For example, the people often use the phrase or similar phrases – "at least here" – in reference to the cohesion between people spoken about in the stories. As one storyteller outlines, "[h]ere is very tolerant especially in Wedding and therefore I only see benefits. You get to know many other cultures. And I hardly see any disadvantages. Not in Wedding." More so, a Turkish storyteller said that in Neukölln (another Berlin district), the Turkish are less willing to contribute to the neighbourhood and therefore integration isn't the same as it is in Wedding. Building on this further, some people brought up the fact that they have never experienced racism in Wedding, but had experience it or feared experiencing it in other areas of Germany. What this is suggesting is that the understanding of diversity, particularly in terms of its positive reception and allusion to cohesion between people from different

backgrounds, is quite specific to Wedding. In this respect, Wedding is not a 'typical' German neighbourhood and the stories highlight the importance of preserving the diversity as it is in the area.

Whilst the dominant discourse within these reflections is positive, there are subtle nuances between how people speak about the concept. In essence, this represents a feeling of the 'diversity of diversities' that is apparent in Wedding and perhaps in some aspects of wider Berlin culture and mind-set. As one storyteller details, "[i]n Berlin, I think is very well accepted everything, your sexuality and your religion, I think in the whole Germany it might be different, so Berlin, I think is a good start for living diversity and accepting it". What is key to this quote is the acknowledgement of difference. For them, diversity is not about the suppression of differences into one homogenous culture or form, but instead the acceptance and harmonious co-existent of difference. The understanding of diversity is thus leaving behind the idea of diversity determined 'just' by ethnicity and coming closer to the ideas of hyper-diversity as elaborated by the VOICITYS project.

A COMMUNITY OF DIVERSITY

People's notions of diversity, as represented in these stories, are wrapped in an understanding of the atmosphere of the neighbourhood and how this relates and constitutes to the sense of community in Wedding and the wider Berlin culture. Speaking about this, one person describes how "in Berlin people with different backgrounds can live together relatively good". This sentiment is echoed in a number of other stories, with one person describing Berlin as "colourful", stating that there "is no real difference in the city between people from Germany or other countries, so for me Berlin is a place of diversity with various people". More so, when speaking about "typical Berlin culture", one person suggests that if "there is typical Berlin culture, it is very mixed"

and because of the different groups present, he "feels at home". What such stories suggest is that with residents and workers in Wedding there is a sense of belonging to a society or community in which both differences and comparatives are contributing factors.

So how then, is this sense of mixing of cultures and harmonious living of different groups of people created? One individual thinks that this can be found in spaces that enable people from different backgrounds to connect. As they describe, "this mostly happens at universities" within Berlin and Wedding, and such opportunities are key to Germany being able to accommodate diversity within its population. Spaces such as kindergartens also bring people together. As one person outlines, "The children don't see any more ethnicity. For them it doesn't matter if one in German, Turkish or Polish, they just play. The problem are rather the parents, who do not mix. Education would be a key to bring them together." Furthermore, the new spaces that have emerged in Wedding also contribute to this. As one person explains, "if you walk down the street, you can see many Arabic and Turkish stores and restaurants. There are a lot of opportunities to interact with other people and learn from other cultures and see how other cultures are". Such spaces, allow for interactions between people that can foster betting understanding between different groups and individuals. This in turn can result in, as one woman describes, people respecting different practices than their own to happen in shared spaces. Talking about other people's treatment of her religious practices, she states, "people let me practice my religion and respect me when I am praying".

CHALLENGES OF DIVERSITY: TENSIONS BETWEEN WEDDING AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD

The positivity about Wedding and people's enthusiasm towards life in the neighbourhood is over-shadowed by some deep-rooted concerns.

Many of these problems appear to be 'imported' from outside of the neighbourhood. A key threat at the moment for the area appears to be gentrification. As one storyteller suggests, "people that have the money are buying the places [in Wedding], renting it to some other people and these communities that cannot afford anything". The result of this, as they state, is that existing communities are being pushed out and that they'd prefer Wedding to stay as it is. What this suggests is a tension between what people value about the area (i.e. its vibrancy, cultured atmosphere and spaces, and the new bars, shops and restaurants that have emerged) and the ability of these things to attract various, namely property, investors into the area that inevitably brings about the rent rises, tourists and building on the last free spaces available in the neighbourhood. This leads to the disappearance of places in which people can encounter diversity. The stories indicate that people want those places to be preserved or new ones to be established.

Whilst diversity appears to be celebrated by the residents of Wedding there is a sense in some of the stories that newcomers to Germany from other countries do experience forms of social and institutional racism. As one person describes, they feel that their Arabic and Turkish friends are treated differently to them by the police – "The police always stop them and want to see their IDs. That's something never happens to me. So, I think it's not equal". Furthermore, the German administration is seen to be creating hurdles for people to overcome in terms of completing the necessary paperwork to start a new life in a new country. Speaking about people's difficulties in navigating the German system, one person talks about how language can be a barrier but it is also that refugees "are not used to it" and that frustration with bureaucracy is making them feel "discriminated" against and thus making it hard "to integrate and get used to the local culture". These perceptions and experiences that people are describing as acts of

discrimination by people and organisations in positions of authority do pose a significant threat to newcomers from outside Germany settling into German society. Such issues, if left unaddressed, could destabilise the integration and community strength evident in Wedding.

MAKING (AND KEEPING) SPACES FOR DIALOGUE

The stories paint a relatively positive picture of diversity in Berlin and even more specifically in Wedding. A lot of the stories convey the idea that diversity makes a cohesive society and that Wedding could be a role model for this case, despite some of the fractions or issues that people discussed such as the external threats of gentrification and systemic racism. As a person states, "Wedding is changing perceptions on tolerance. Especially people from Saxonian Villages, they should come and live here to see what diversity is". This sentiment is expanded on further with storytellers suggesting that rather than focusing on negative elements associated with diversity, instead policies should focus on its positive. Yet as the stories have also told, Wedding is also changing itself and with this change problems have begun to emerge. The findings from the stories suggest that people in Wedding are not too concerned about perceived problems of diversity or conflict between the cultures present in the area, but rather their dominant apprehension is about social segregation. The storytellers fear the disappearance of long present places and the changing image of the district. They are afraid that the quarter might lose its diverse character and might be turned into another white, middleclass, sterile neighbourhood, where the bars and social spaces serve mostly tourists.

 With this and the stories in mind, there are two key learnings about what has contributed to Wedding's current identity as a diverse, yet cohesive neighbourhood. Firstly, there must be spaces were people who live in an area to come together and interact. As one person

explains, "when there are different communities it is not always easy, and it can only work if there is one or several spaces where people with different origins can meet". It is specifically important, in light of the concerns raised in the stories around gentrification, that these spaces do not just become inhabited by people with social privilege, but also by people who may be seen as being more marginalised or excluded. The kindergartens, for example, were a place where children could get to know other children from different cultures than their own. Underpinning, these interactions is the second learning of the role of language in supporting cohesion, that the kindergartens too support. The stories highlight a need for more support for adults to learn German and the need for more structures for the growing number of bilingual people in the area. Therefore, in providing physical locations in which people can meet one another and by having a commonality of language to support communication, dialogue can emerge in which the positivity, assets and value of Wedding can be preserved and developed.

Certain local policies and initiatives are in-line with this way of thinking. For example, the Social City programme seeks to involve local residents in deprived neighbourhoods in decision-making processes. This takes the form of Neighbourhood Councils in which residents decide how funds should be used to support local regeneration projects. Such opportunities that bring people together to create or work on something as a collective, provide meaningful opportunities for people with potentially differing perspectives to meet, discuss and contribute to a better future for their area. More so, the concerns over the gentrification of the area in terms of people no longer be able to afford to live there are being addressed by initiatives such as Sozialräumliche Orientierung and the issuing of Milieuschutzverordnungens that seek to make neighbourhoods socially balanced, culturally diverse and cosmopolitan, and provide social housing and tenant protection,

espectively. With such strategic support, combined with the assets that diversity has brought to Wedding, the neighbourhood is in a strong position in order to overcome current challenges, and not only protect, but also possibly build on, their very own symphony of diversity in the centre of Berlin.

You can view a short film that summarises the main findings from the stories here.

FROM PERCEPTIONS TO LIVED EXPERIENCES

Across the stories gathered in Berlin, Budapest, Salford and Sassari a number of perceptions of diversity have emerged. On a surface level when discussing the concept of diversity, people generally spoke about ethnicity. For example, when talking about diversity and changes in Józsefváros, Budapest one resident stated that "Arabic, Turkish and other Asian people have moved here, it wasn't like this before. It was much better, for the shop and everything. Mostly musician Roma lived here." Where this perhaps was slightly different, was in the stories from Wedding, Berlin in which people spoke about other aspects of diversity such as religion and sexuality.

The Wedding stories valued difference and saw it as a strength. As one resident outlines, "people here behave peacefully and with no violence because they all got the idea since they came that our diversity builds a stronger community". In the Old Town of Sassari, people too generally saw diversity as a good thing – "diversity is an opportunity" and through it you can grow and "enrich oneself", one resident explains. Yet within these stories, there seemed to be a discourse that denied (whether intentionally or not) the differences that diversity presents. This could be problematic in diverse neighbourhoods if integration becomes too close to assimilation.

Essentially, the recognition of difference should not be seen as a negative.

When people spoke about their lives in the neighbourhoods, people's perceptions of diversity were more varied than when they were not talking about it directly. For example, when just talking about their experiences the residents of CHALK, Salford acknowledged other parts of the diversity beyond ethnicity. From such discussions understandings of health issues emerged, particularly in terms of mental health. As one resident states, "I built a wall around me for five years, not speaking to anyone, so then trying to talk to someone was very hard". More so, societal issues that transcend ethnicity were addressed such as poverty and unemployment. Such understandings demonstrate the importance of the adoption of the concept of 'hyper-diversity' within this project. Through approaching diversity through a multifaceted lens, we aimed not to reduce discussions around ethnicity but seek more interconnected and nuanced understandings of the lives of people living in diverse neighbourhoods

OVERARCHING CHALLENGES

Within the stories a number of challenges to the neighbourhoods and the people who live there have emerged. Some of these issues were related directly or indirectly to notions of diversity, and others not seemingly so. What perhaps could be said based on the stories gathered, is that diverse neighbourhoods experience quite high levels of change across a range of areas and seem to be home to some of the more marginalised groups within society. This in turn could make them more susceptible to arising social issues.

Looking across the individual summative reports, three overarching challenges to the

neighbourhoods can be identified. They are:

• Demographic shifts: The neighbourhoods' stories all referenced changes in the demographics evident in the population of the area. In the case of Józsefváros and Wedding, the threat of gentrification may displace current inhabitants. In the case of CHALK and the historic centre of Sassari, newcomers from outside of the country who have moved into these areas are often greeted by poor quality built environments or housing conditions. Neither of which are supportive of making a new setting a home.

• Fear of newcomers: • With population changes has come a fear of the people who are new to the area – essentially a fear of 'otherness'. This is evident in statements like the Sassari business man's description of the historic area as a "ghetto" and in the lack of trust for Eastern European people spoken about in a story from Salford. Such fears contribute to the breaking down of a sense of community and disable the cultivation of strong social ties across groups.

• Wider contexts: The neighbourhoods also do not exist in a vacuum from the wider world and inevitably external factors also influence them. For example, stories from CHALK and the old town of Sassari highlight how changing social attitudes have led to people becoming less connected. More so, in Wedding, although the neighbourhood is seen as being a good example of a diverse community, people in it are still impacted on by systemic issues such as institutionalised racism within the police service. It is hard for individual neighbourhoods to be resilient to or have the capacity to combat such issues.

GOING BEYOND

What has become apparent from the stories

gathered is that in order for the diverse neighbourhoods we have worked in to address the challenges that they face, 'beyond' thinking and approaches are needed. Beyond thinking and approaches go further than seeking to solve the symptom of an issue and delve into looking at more multifaceted, complex solutions to an issue's root cause. This is not to say that some manifestations of more linear and symptom addressing approaches are not needed, but rather to state that in order to fully tackle a social issue then new ways of thinking and doing things must be cultivated. In turn, this can lead to real change, or growth, that goes beyond surface-level interventions. Looking across the stories, three distinct notions of beyond thinking and approaches have emerged, as detailed below.

1. Beyond physical regeneration and into creating environments of interactions

There are many examples within the stories about different types of physical regeneration that has occurred in the neighbourhoods this study has looked look at. These include new bars opening in the squares of Sassari Old Town, facades of buildings being renovated in Józsefváros and the legacy of the NDC Regeneration Scheme in CHALK embodied in community centres. Yet what seems to be valued about such spaces is not just the visual-appeal of buildings but in the ways in which the spaces allow for interactions between people. As one person details in regards to Wedding, "there is one or several spaces where people with different origins can meet". When such spaces are no longer there, such as the closed pubs in Salford, it is not only the service they offered the community that disappears but also the opportunity for people to socialise. More so, when certain spaces are renovated it can also lead to the exclusion of people, as is the case with the gatekeeping of the regenerated parks in the

8th district of Budapest. Therefore, when creating or renovating physical spaces it is important to think about how they can help facilitate social interactions, in particularly for those in the community who may be the most excluded.

2. Beyond services and into creating meaningful connections

Whilst many of the stories highlight how services and formal support provision have helped people in their neighbourhood it is important to remember that services alone are not the answer. In Józsefváros, for example, people outlined how they didn't feel that the people who really needed the new services that have emerged were accessing them and in CHALK, people spoke about difficulty navigating services and finding out information. Furthermore, in the stories from Wedding it is highlighted that although there is a system in place to support newcomers to settle into Germany, the bureaucracy of the system presents a barrier to people in it. In the examples where services are working for the people who need them, it is when people have either been signposted by other local people to them or when the services enable them to connect on a human level with other people. As the carer who attends a Zumba class in CHALK states, the group helps her "live a life as well as caring for [her] husband". What we can learn from stories like this, is that connecting local knowledge regarding services and connecting people at services to one another, are key contributors to services reaching their intended recipients.

3. Beyond top-down strategic interventions and into bottom-up action

The stories and their contexts demonstrate that top-down strategic interventions should be combined with real engagement of local people.

In Wedding, they are using the Social City programme to include local people in decision-making processes and thus attempting to bridge this divide. In CHALK, despite some of the divides between newcomers to the area and people who have lived there for generations, both sets of people work together at the local food bank to help address the bigger issue of poverty in the area. In essence, people who the stories suggest might otherwise not interact with one another, have connected due to a common purpose and need. This demonstrates the power of people taking responsibility for creating the neighbourhood that they want to live in. As one resident in Józsefváros states, in the future they hope that people go beyond looking to local government for the answers and realise that "we are all responsible for the environment we live in".

Whilst some of the wider societal issues and systemic problems are difficult to overcome, particularly in these diverse neighbourhoods that are the recipients of change more than other areas are, what is evident is that by strengthening connections within communities, people can overcome the challenges they face. These connections are social (i.e. between people and people), environmental (i.e. between people and the place they live) and internal (i.e. between people and their sense of social responsibility). Through activating these connections, diverse communities are better placed to build (both physically and metaphysically) the neighbourhoods and lives they would like to have

To draw your own conclusions from these stories, you can view all the stories gathered as part of this process here.

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