

– STRUGGLING FOR URBAN SPACE: Examining Social Distinctions between Long-Term Residents and Newcomers in Warsaw's Districts

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Abstract

This article examines the perspectives of long-term residents in response to the influx of newcomers in two neighbourhoods in Warsaw, Poland. It addresses the crucial, yet understudied, impact of spatial changes on the local population and the diverse ways in which residents negotiate this changing urban context. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework and its subsequent reinterpretations in the field of urban studies, the article explores the extent to which the narratives constructed by the long-standing residents refer to categories of social class and correspond to their class position. The central question is whether spatial changes lead them to 'internalize their inferiority' (Savage, 2008: 161), or if they possess resources that can be mobilized to navigate conflicts arising from urban transitions. Through individual and group interviews with residents from two districts in Warsaw, this research sheds light on how the symbolic divisions between 'us' (long-term residents) and 'them' (newcomers) are framed. It demonstrates how nativity is transformed into capital, providing the possibility for symbolic dominance. Consequently, it not only enriches understanding of the social distinctions that are made within evolving cities but also underscores the ongoing relevance of Bourdieu's theoretical framework for the study of urban space.

Introduction

Leaving the centre of Warsaw and heading south, a noticeable shift in the landscape unfolds. The urban fabric gradually gives way to a more suburban milieu characterized by single-family houses nestled amidst greenery and former agricultural lands. The contrast between newly constructed apartment complexes and old farmhouses further accentuates the evolving panorama. It was within such a context that I engaged in a conversation with a working-class resident to explore her views on the advantages and disadvantages of living in the district. The woman quickly expressed her disapproval of the direction of development in the neighbourhood. Her negative remarks were predominantly directed towards new residents. With heartfelt emotion, she pointed towards a nearby housing estate and exclaimed: 'I am sorry to say that, but there used to be beetroot growing there because it was a state farm, but now beetroots [boors] live here!' (retired secretary, mid-70s). While the derogatory and exclusionary nature of this comment is evident, what captivated my attention as an urban sociologist was the emphasis placed on new residents as the underlying source of discontent. The woman's statement alludes to the changing social fabric of the district, and her fears that, as a result of these changes, the neighbourhood will lose its previous character.

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This is not an isolated incident. Scholars studying suburbanization and gentrification processes (e.g. Salamon, 2003; Kajdanek, 2012; Atkinson, 2015; Cartier *et al.*, 2016) have observed that the arrival of a new population often disrupts previously accepted practices and alters the physical, social and cultural landscape of such areas. The relationship between long-standing and newly arrived residents has been frequently described as a division between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ with two opposing communities subject to mutual categorization and stereotyping (Southerton, 2002; Kajdanek, 2012). Various other terms have been used to describe the social divisions within rapidly changing neighbourhoods, including ‘the established and the outsiders’ (Elias and Scotson, 1965) and ‘newcomers and old-timers’ (Salamon, 2003). Each of these binaries highlights the impact of an influx of middle-class residents on an existing population. The well-endowed newcomers hold different expectations for the neighbourhood compared to its working-class long-term residents, who are, in many ways, ‘chained to a place’ (Bourdieu *et al.*, 1999: 127). As the area gradually becomes colonized by a new population, long-term residents may experience a sense of loss or even trauma, in other words, a sense of ‘losing their place’ in both material and symbolic domains (Atkinson, 2015: 373).

However, while much research has focused on describing the social, emotional and physical impacts of neighbourhood change on long-term residents, less attention has been given to how they attempt to negotiate their dominated position. Previous studies, including Elias and Scotson’s (1965) classic work, have primarily explored how established populations assert their right to place within the context of broader social changes, such as the rise of digital technologies, globalization or individualization. Drawing on ethnographic or anthropological perspectives, these studies have predominantly focused on urban or rural communities in Western Europe and Northern America (e.g. Strathern, 1981; Edwards, 2000; Blokland, 2003), leaving the divide between long-term and new residents in cities with distinct historical, cultural and urban trajectories, such as those in Central and Eastern Europe, relatively underexplored. Specifically in Poland, research on this subject has been limited, with existing literature touching on it tangentially, often in broader contexts like suburbanization or migration (e.g. Nowakowski, 1969; Łukasiuk-Grumczyk, 2007; Kajdanek, 2012). Moreover, the social class perspective in these studies, particularly Bourdieu’s framework of capital and habitus, has been seldom adopted, with only a few exceptions (e.g. Bukowska *et al.*, 2013; Lewicki and Drozdowska, 2017).

This article seeks to address this research gap in two ways. First, unlike most studies that have focused on the Western context, this one centres on Poland, a country that underwent a transition from a state-controlled to a market-led economy. It is situated in Warsaw, the Polish capital and one of Europe’s fastest-growing cities with an official population exceeding 1.86 million people. Until 2022, population growth in Warsaw was mainly driven by internal Polish migration from urban areas (MCRR, 2017), with the city featuring a small resident foreign population.¹ As is typical for Central and Eastern Europe (Lux and Sunega, 2014), Warsaw predominantly houses residents in privately owned apartments (68.3%), with a smaller percentage renting in either the public or private market (12.5%) (Czerniak and Jarczewska-Gerc, 2023). By focusing on a region that has received relatively less scholarly attention, where no significant differences in tenure structure or ethnic composition are observed, this study aims to unveil new patterns and social dichotomies that operate around the divisions between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

Second, this article places particular emphasis on the perspective of the long-term residents. The primary theoretical framework is Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of social class, most comprehensively presented in *Distinction* ([1979] 1984). This approach

1 In 2015 foreigners, predominantly originating from similar ethnic backgrounds in Ukraine and Belarus, comprised 1.3% of all registered residents (Dudkiewicz, 2015). While the data may be incomplete (as not all foreigners are registered), it can be assumed that at the time of the research, Warsaw’s ethnic structure was relatively homogeneous.

not only offers a fresh vocabulary for describing urban processes but also enables an understanding of the city as ‘a central ground and prize of historical struggles’ (Wacquant, 2018: 104). It permits the broadening of the analysis of relationships among residents beyond phenomena like globalization or individualization to include power relations and structural inequalities. Importantly, it allows the class dimensions to be uncovered behind narratives that may initially seem neutral or value-driven. The intention is to give voice to those affected by the process of change and to show various ways in which they negotiate their sense of place within this changing context.

The main objective of this article, therefore, is to explore the responses of long-term residents to the influx of newcomers in two districts of the Polish capital, Warsaw. Through a series of in-depth interviews, it examines how long-term residents, defined as those with roots or multi-generational ties to the districts, construct the categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’ when referring to newcomers who moved to the districts later in life. While neither group is homogenous, encompassing individuals with different gender identities, ages, marital statuses and other socio-demographic characteristics, this research specifically focuses on one dimension of these differences—social class. By employing two foundational concepts of Bourdieu’s theory—capital and habitus—it aims to investigate the extent to which residents’ narratives refer to categories of social class and correspond to class positions. It asks whether the changes occurring in the districts under examination lead long-term residents to what Bourdieu (1984) refers to as ‘*amor fati*’ or ‘love of one’s fate’, in which social actors come to perceive their dominated position as advantageous. Perhaps, however, as this paper explores, local populations can mobilize and employ certain forms of symbolic capital to navigate these changes successfully.

Bourdieu’s *Distinction* and urban space

References by Pierre Bourdieu to urban sociology can be traced back to his early works on Kabyle Berbers in Algeria and Béarnais peasants in France (see the literature reviews in Savage, 2011 and Wacquant, 2018). However, Bourdieu’s most explicit reflection on space was presented in his conference speech ‘Social Space and the Genesis of Appropriated Physical Space’ (1991, published in 2018), which was also included as a chapter in the book *The Weight of the World* (Bourdieu *et al.*, 1999). Building on this speech, several scholars have argued that Bourdieu’s framework can help to advance the analysis of power relations in the city. The value of his work for urban research has been documented most fully by Wacquant (2018; 2023), Savage (2008) and other authors searching for ‘the lost urban sociology of Pierre Bourdieu’ (Savage, 2011: 1065. See also Butler, 2007; Rosenlund, 2017; Pinçon-Charlot and Pinçon, 2018; Cebula, 2019). These publications show how the concepts of ‘habitus’ and ‘capital’ can be used to analyse contemporary urban space.

At the core of Bourdieu’s concept is the assumption that *physical* space is an expression of *social* structure and power relations among residents. The notion of capital plays a crucial role in comprehending the interplay between these dimensions. According to Bourdieu (1986), social space can be analysed as the distribution of four fundamental types of capital: economic, social, cultural and symbolic.² Depending on the type of capital they possess, members of different classes and class fractions ‘appropriate’ the city by buying or renting real estate, as well as using services and other amenities. Those endowed with capital are more capable of dominating the most highly valued

2 Whereas economic and social capital are, to some degree, self-explanatory and refer respectively to money and ownership and a network of relationships, cultural capital has various meanings. It includes not only educational qualifications and cultural goods but also the ‘long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body’ (Bourdieu, 1986: 17), such as taste and lifestyle. Symbolic capital, in turn, ‘is the form the different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognized as legitimate’ (Bourdieu, 1987: 4).

spaces. Conversely, residents deprived of capital are compelled to reside in less desirable areas, distant from socially valued resources.

Consequently, urban space, when viewed through Bourdieu's lens, emerges as another domain, alongside education or art, in which social inequalities are both revealed and reproduced. Its structure can be seen as an outcome of social struggles over what Bourdieu refers to as 'the profits of space' (2018: 110)—proximity to rare and highly valued goods and services, safety, peace and prestigious addresses. The struggle is not only for already existing physical space, but also unfolds at a symbolic level. As demonstrated by Cebula (2019), a stake may be anything that can be considered capital and how it can be 'appropriated'. The core of the struggle may revolve around the extent to which access to urban space depends on economic capital versus other forms of entitlement, such as origin, social ties and suchlike (*ibid.*: 115–16).

In the struggle for the 'appropriation of space,' residents may also seek to 'discredit the subtypes of capital on which the power of opponents is based (e.g. economic capital), while at the same time enhancing the capital with which they themselves are particularly well endowed' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 99). In the Polish context, this process was described by Lewicki and Drozdowska (2017) in the district of Białołęka in Warsaw and by Bukowska *et al.* (2013) in the village of Białowieża. These researchers have shown how the local populations emphasized the new residents' lack of local roots in contrast to their own deep multigenerational ties to the area, something that can be interpreted as an attempt to overcome the newcomers' economic dominance.

However, how space is shaped does not depend solely on the distribution of capital: the concept of habitus is also crucial. Bourdieu defines habitus as 'a system of dispositions, that is, of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking. Or a system of long-lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action' (2002: 27). Habitus shapes one's attitudes towards urban space, expectations of the neighbourhood, and visions of urban life. The concept assumes that individuals will seek to reside in places where the dispositions of their class habitus will be best met, and where they will experience a sense of comfort and belonging (Butler, 2007). As Savage *et al.* (2005) argue, this often translates into residents well-endowed in capital tending to live among people similar to themselves, while avoiding those whose lifestyles they perceive as disagreeable. The ability to produce spatial divisions and structures has led several researchers to consider spatiality as an essential aspect of the concept of habitus (Butler, 2007; Reed-Danahay, 2020).

The transformations that occur in districts undergoing gentrification and suburbanization may serve as an illustration. Both processes involve new middle- and upper-class residents moving into spaces previously inhabited by the working classes. Research demonstrates that when newcomers settle in working-class neighbourhoods, they may engage in various practices to maintain distance from spatially proximate 'class others' (Watt, 2009: 2877). Atkinson (2006) has described different forms of exclusionary closures resulting from this 'middle-class disaffiliation' based on his studies in the UK. Such closures can manifest as discursive or spatial practices, for example, through gated communities. Conversely, the working-class local populations, experiencing alienation and a sense of loss, construct their identity through a 'nostalgia' narrative (Savage, 2008), which allows them to distinguish themselves from others and preserve their identity as the 'neighbourhood's symbolic owners' (Ocejo, 2011: 306).

The theoretical framework proposed by Bourdieu introduces a new set of concepts (habitus, capital, social space) that can be employed to analyse the contemporary city (Wacquant, 2018: 104). Furthermore, it demonstrates that 'the city and its institutions are a derivative of a complex and hidden game of interests' (Cebula, 2019: 116), encompassing not only material resources but also symbolic narratives. This article contributes to the literature by adopting a conflict-oriented approach to the analysis of urban space. Capital stands as a central concept in this study,

serving not only as the framework for defining social classes but also as a tool to reveal how residents leverage resources in the struggle to 'appropriate space'. Habitus, on the other hand, plays a vital role in explaining residents' expectations of neighbourhoods, allowing the class dimensions to be uncovered behind seemingly neutral narratives. Following Watt's (2009: 2877) assertion that any spatialization of capital and habitus 'needs to explore the moral judgments vis-a-vis class as well as racialized "others" that underpin residential space, place images, and attachments', this article explores narratives of neighbourly relations in two developing districts of Warsaw. It focuses on the perspective of long-term residents, seeking to discover whether spatial changes lead them to 'internalize their inferiority' (Savage, 2008: 161), or whether there are certain forms of capital that can be mobilized by the local population during such a conflict.

To achieve this objective, this article posits that Bourdieu's model of social class and urban space may be relevant in the contemporary Polish context. Drawing upon a Polish reinterpretation of Bourdieu by Gdula and Sadura (2012) as well as Bourdieu-inspired class analyses in Western Europe (e.g. Dubois, 2020, France; Savage *et al.*, 2005, UK; Boterman and Gent, 2023, the Netherlands), it defines social class based on a multidimensional perspective of capital. Within this framework, the mutual relations between economic, cultural, and social capital are examined, 'rooted in labour market relations and educational resources, as well as in consumption practices that are associated with specific forms of symbolic capital' (Boterman and Gent, 2023: 22). For the purposes of this study, economic capital is conceptualized as pertaining to the type of occupation, distinguishing between manual and intellectual work, and whether one manages, or is managed by, other workers. Cultural capital consists of formal education, while social capital denotes the network of social relations a person maintains.³

Individuals engaged in intellectual work at managerial level, holding higher education and/or scientific degrees (e.g. professors or PhDs) belong to the upper class. In Poland, as shown by Gdula and Sadura (2012), this class encompasses individuals in positions of power (business owners, executives, entrepreneurs), professionals (lawyers, medical doctors, university teachers), and artists, aligning with Bourdieu's division into dominant, intermediate, and dominated fractions. The middle class, characterized by intermediate volumes of economic and social capital, and a lifestyle oriented towards imitation or, in Bourdieu's words, 'cultural goodwill' (1984: 318), predominantly includes individuals with degrees from higher education. These are made up of artisans and small businesspeople in declining positions, officials, clerks and small-scale entrepreneurs holding executive roles, and workers in the creative sector (e.g. marketing, advertising and public relations employees) constituting a rising fraction. The working class, marked by a subaltern position in the division of labour, low economic capital, elementary or secondary education, and a lifestyle distant from the socially prestigious one (Dubois, 2020), would, within the Polish context, consist of skilled and specialized workers in dominant positions, unskilled workers in intermediate roles and small farmers in a dominated fraction (Gdula and Sadura, 2012).

Methodological concerns

This article is an extension of a larger research project that focused on the responses of the inhabitants of the Polish capital, Warsaw, to limited access to public services, such as primary schools and healthcare centres.⁴ The study aimed to explore the experiences of residents from the working and middle classes who reside in two neighbourhoods in Warsaw that differ in terms of spatial development and social

3 During the research process, information on the 'embodied' form of cultural capital and the 'social relations' of the interviewees was also gathered. These aspects were observed in the speech patterns, language nuances and gestures displayed by the interviewees.

4 For details, see Orchowska, 2022.

structure. It also examined the impact of spatial transformations on the habitus of middle and working classes and their ‘sense of place’ (Bourdieu, 1984: 465).

– The setting

Wawer and Wilanów are two districts in Warsaw that were selected for the analysis in an attempt to represent the rapidly developing, yet different, formations in the city (see Figure 1). Wilanów is an example of a district that began to develop after Poland’s transition to a market economy. Initially characterized by vast agricultural and arable lands, Wilanów, known for the Royal Summer Residence, emerged as an attractive location with considerable economic potential. It quickly gained a reputation as a prestigious district, attracting diplomats and professionals who had prospered during the transition, such as entrepreneurs and bankers. In the 1990s the urbanization of Wilanów, as with other peripheral districts of Warsaw (Kusiak, 2017), primarily involved parcelling arable land into smaller plots, with local farmers selling portions of these plots while retaining ownership of the remaining land (see Figure 2). Consequently, much of Wilanów’s land area is occupied by single-family houses, where newcomers live alongside long-term residents.

In the 2000s, the urban development known as ‘Miasteczko Wilanów’, one of the largest in Poland post-1989, was constructed. This master-planned development was established on a vast area of land, previously used for vegetable farming and separated from the existing urban area. Miasteczko Wilanów sparked controversy due to its private character, as it contained no public land dedicated solely to services or amenities. Media debates portrayed it as a residential area primarily for middle-class newcomers to Warsaw with a liberal worldview, who financed their homes through mortgages (Orchowska, 2022). This development led to a significant increase in the population of Wilanów, with the number of residents doubling from 12,000 to over 27,000 between 2002 and 2014 (Szpanowski, 2015). By 2020 the population had grown to 43,400 people (Statistical Office in Warsaw, 2021), making Wilanów one of the fastest-growing areas in



FIGURE 1 Wilanów and Wawer on the map of Warsaw (source: map by Zuzanna Kunert, 2021, reproduced with permission)



FIGURE 2 Landscape of the riverside part of Wilanów—a new estate neighbouring farmland (photo by the author, September 2020)

the capital. This growth is attributed to a high rate of natural increase and both internal and international migration (MCRR, 2017). The social structure of Wilanów, as analysed by Lewicki and Drozdowska (2017) based on Bourdieu's theory, primarily consists of the middle class, which is typical of 'new' districts (Southerton, 2002: 173). The breakdown of social classes in Wilanów is as follows: 20.70% upper class, 72.70% middle class, and 6.60% working class.

Wawer is a district that neighbours Wilanów to the west, separated from it by the Vistula River. Wawer stands out on the city map due to its significant share of green and undeveloped areas. It is the largest district in terms of area and is inhabited by 79,100 people, making up approximately 4% of Warsaw's total population (Statistical Office in Warsaw, 2021). Unlike Wilanów, Wawer did not undergo extensive urbanization during the 1990s and has vast undeveloped areas remaining to the present day. In Wawer, a considerable portion of the existing buildings are single-family houses constructed during the interwar period or shortly after World War II. These houses are predominantly clustered near the railway line, which dates back to the late nineteenth century. The proximity to the railway, along with the greenery, made it a convenient location for constructing spacious villas, primarily attracting the upper-middle and upper classes (see Figure 3). Conversely, areas farther from the railway retained their rural character until the late twentieth century. In the 1990s many plots were still owned by farmers and used for agriculture. This enduring rural character was a result, in part, of the lack of essential infrastructure in these areas, including municipal sewage and water supply systems.

However, since 2010, there has been a gradual increase in real estate developers' interest in Wawer. Recent constructions increasingly take the form of separate housing estates, including low-rise apartment buildings and terraced and semi-detached houses



FIGURE 3 A new, fenced single-family house in the residential part of Wawer (photo by the author, September 2020)

(see Figure 4). Property prices in Wawer are also more affordable than in Wilanów, making it an appealing choice for the middle class without substantial economic capital. New residents are relocating to Wawer from neighbouring suburban areas and southeastern parts of Poland (MCRR, 2017). Consequently, the district's social structure is more heterogenous than that of Wilanów, with figures showing 6.30% upper class, 68.40% middle class, and 25.30% working class (Lewicki and Drozdowska, 2017: 117).

– Research methods

This article relies on material from in-depth interviews carried out with residents of Wawer and Wilanów between September 2017 and December 2018.⁵ The majority of the interviews were conducted one-to-one (63); four were conducted as joint interviews, and one was a group interview involving three participants. In total 74 individuals participated in the study. For the most part, the sampling of the interviewees was purposeful, with purposeful sampling being a commonly used technique in qualitative research (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). The interviewees were recruited through various channels, including social media announcements, nongovernmental organizations, and municipal institutions such as cultural centres. Snowball sampling was also employed at a later stage of the study. The study targeted two sets of interviewees: some from the working class (17) and some from the middle class (50). As

⁵ In the analyses, I also include 13 interviews with residents of Wilanów, conducted by students during a research workshop led by Mikołaj Lewicki and the author at the Faculty of Sociology at the University of Warsaw during the academic year 2017–18. These interviews serve a supporting role in the analyses. They were based on different scenarios, yet were thematically related to the subject of this study. Quotations from these interviews are marked with the interviewers' initials.



FIGURE 4 A gated community in the riverside part of Wawer (photo by the author, September 2020)

submissions for the research were partly voluntary, it also included seven representatives of the upper class. The interviewees were diverse in terms of gender and age, but all participants were native Polish speakers and homogeneous in their cultural backgrounds.

The interviews were loosely structured and lasted for one hour on average. The study design was based on the comprehensive interview approach developed by Kaufmann (1996), which emphasizes active listening, encouraging interviewees to introduce their own issues and asking in-depth questions. The interview scenario encompassed three main themes: neighbourhood (advantages and disadvantages, choice of place of residence), social relationships (social trust, community involvement, neighbourly and family relations), and public services (school choice, healthcare, transportation habits). The data collected from the interviews were entered into the qualitative data analysis programme and coded. The primary categories used for coding were thematic areas specified in the scenario. However, during the analysis, the codebook was modified, expanded, and corrected. The coding process, consequently, had a predominantly open character and remained closely tied to the data (a process referred to as *data-driven coding*). In this way, analytical conclusions were gradually developed.

During the process of analysis, a division between ‘long-term residents’ and ‘newcomers’ was revealed. The group referred to as ‘long-term residents’ consisted of individuals who were either raised in the district in question or had immediate family living there. These interviewees predominantly belonged to the ‘declining’ fractions of the middle class (e.g. small craftsmen and sellers, teachers) or the working class (e.g. workers, pensioners, farmers), and had secondary or higher education in fields such as education, nursing or a technical domain. The second group of interviewees comprised ‘newcomers’ who had moved to the districts later in life. These individuals were

TABLE 1 Number of interviewees who belong to the group of ‘long-term residents’ and ‘newcomers’ by district and by social class

	Long-term residents				Newcomers				Total (overall)
	Working class	Middle class	Upper class	Total	Working class	Middle class	Upper class	Total	
Wawer	5	12	1	18	4	13	0	17	35
Wilanów	7	2	2	11	1	23	4	28	39
	12	14	3	29	5	36	4	45	74

SOURCE: Author’s research.

primarily representatives of the ‘rising’ middle class (Bourdieu, 1984), well-endowed with economic and cultural capital: marketing specialists, government officials and professionals in creative fields. They had attained higher education, often in multiple fields or through postgraduate courses, specializing in PR, UX design, or real estate management. Out of the total of 74 interviewees, 28 belonged to the long-term residents group, while 46 were newcomers. Table 1 shows the distribution of these groups based on districts and social classes.

Empirical results

Both in Wawer and Wilanów, when talking about the local population, interviewees frequently referred to the division between long-term and new residents. The narratives of long-standing residents exhibit certain universals evident in the ‘established-outsider’ configuration (Elias and Scotson, 1965; Salamon, 2003; Kajdanek, 2012). In two locations, when the question ‘Do you maintain contact with your neighbours or people who live here?’ was posed, it triggered lively responses and served as a starting point for a discussion about the differences between the two groups. Similarly, when the topic of neighbourhood organizations was raised, the interviewees highlighted the pronounced social contrasts between long-term and newly arrived residents. Their accounts were marked by a series of oppositions, between themselves as local patriots contrasted with the newcomers who ‘gaze’ at the city centre, between the real Varsovians and those new to the city, and between those rooted in the area and people living there ‘for a while’.

– Narrative of nostalgia—local patriotism and community

The long-term residents in both Wawer and Wilanów emphasized the changing social relations resulting from the rapid development of these districts. They portrayed newcomers as indifferent, individualistic and resistant to integration. The interviewees drew a significant distinction between ‘local patriots’ and the new population who ‘treat the district as a place to sleep’ (Wawer, woman, pensioner, early 80s). The initial impression is that the long-term resident is someone with attachments to the local area, while the newcomer embodies the negative aspects of modern urban life: an absence of local patriotism and a preference for anonymity. In the long-term residents’ accounts, newcomers display a greater interest in being active in the city centre than in establishing local contacts: all they do is ‘stare at Warsaw’ (Wawer, woman, secretary, mid-30s).

An elderly woman from Wawer illustrates this narrative. Around 80 years old, she has spent the majority of her life as a farmer in this district. She described her own life as enduring ‘very difficult conditions’, marked by relentless work and minimal economic capital. Neighbourly relations were the factor that contributed to her well-being—the woman considered herself to be sociable, and she claimed to have a network of friends in the area and to know local institutions. She portrayed the new residents as follows:

People who move here are very difficult to get to know. They have urban habits, where everyone lives separately. Therefore, the estates are, I don't know how to say it, closed ... That is to say, you have to call the intercom. They treat the locals as a lower form of society. And it hurts us a lot because we are trying to establish contact. I know the history of every place here, every trench, every tank that sat here. I would like to tell these people about it so that they grow into this area and love it. And they only love their home, their prosperity.

The woman's aversion to 'big city habits' seems to reflect three values that are characteristic of the working class: 'localism, familialism, and direct sociability' (Barbichon, quoted in Retière, 2003: 122–3). As Gdula and Sadura (2012) argue, the working class in Poland places significant value on close interpersonal relationships, especially within the family and immediate community, including among neighbours. This disposition towards 'familiarity' includes a concern for others and a willingness to offer care and support. The interviewee's statement highlights a similar pattern, interpreting the lack of effort to establish contacts by the newcomers as snobbery and treating long-term residents as 'inferior'.

Generally, the long-term residents associated the influx of new inhabitants with the decline of the traditional community. They expressed nostalgia for the closeness among neighbours. While the working-class interviewees most often referred to the loss of personal relations and a feeling of being looked down upon, those who could be classified as middle class tended to describe these changes more abstractly, mentioning the impact of digital communications or an increase in individualism. The following testimony of a woman from Wilanów in her mid-fifties, who has a higher education and works as lower-rank government official, reveals the way the old residents describe the new neighbourly relationships: 'I remember the times when we all used to know each other. And now everyone is anonymous here. Simply put, there used to be a different culture of living here.' References to 'cultural' shifts may be linked to the interviewee's greater cultural capital, allowing her to articulate concerns in a more abstract manner. However, these references also demonstrate that the concerns of the middle class extend beyond mere 'necessity,' a contrast to the working class, for whom close relationships provide a 'sense of their place' in the world (Bourdieu, 1984: 240).

While the perspectives of long-term residents on the origins of changes in neighbourhood relations vary based on their habitus and cultural capital, almost all interviewees expressed a sense of 'a very concrete process dispossessing them of the residential space' (Cartier *et al.*, 2016: 142). When discussing their place of residence, long-term residents frequently underscored the changes it was continually undergoing. It was especially interesting to see how class differences were incorporated into a narrative of community change and spatial transformations. The most significant was a connection between material wealth, the fencing of houses and a reluctance to establish neighbourly relations. Consider the statement of an octogenarian woman in Wawer. After graduating from high school, she worked as a medical assistant in a local hospital. She had lived in the same house, originally built by her parents and later inherited by her, since her infancy. She stated:

I remember when we were kids, we played on the street and everyone knew each other, parents also knew each other, they borrowed onions and peppers from each other and so on. There was such a bond between the people here. They worked on state jobs, they'd come home, and the kids were with them. I remember having fun together, jumping in puddles, climbing trees. But now it has changed completely. Now I feel sad, you know. Very wealthy people come here, for sure, this area is becoming very exclusive. These are no longer houses, they are palaces. There are barriers, there are walls, there are dogs, there are

alarms. Alarms are needed, but walls to isolate yourself from the world? This man is already a stranger to me then, he is not a neighbour anymore.

Similar sentiments were expressed by a French language teacher in her mid-sixties from Wilanów who has been residing in the single-house neighbourhood. She noted:

People know each other here. It is not like downtown. There is no anonymity here. Here, even in this store. I go to this store. This store has probably always existed here. At least for 30 years. And I know that there, that saleswoman, she knows everyone, every customer, so ... People know each other here. But some have recently moved in and those people, we completely [do not know them] ... because there are several such villas here, [those people are] very rich.

The references to the newcomers as 'rich' and living in 'villas' or 'palaces' make an implicit contrast between this group and the less affluent long-term residents who occupy modest housing and possess less economic capital. However, it is not solely the higher cost of housing that has led the local population to assert that the new residents are resistant to integration. The reference to spatial divisions was employed by the long-term inhabitants to clarify the distinctions between 'us' and 'them'. Most of the new properties are enclosed by fences and equipped with burglar alarms and entry phones, which reinforce physical separation and perpetuate social divisions. This phenomenon aligns with what Bourdieu (2018: 107) termed 'an objectification of social divisions in physical space'. The new inhabitants from the middle and upper classes are viewed as those who 'pad the bunker' (Davis, quoted in Atkinson, 2006: 822) and distance themselves from the rest of the population.

The accounts of 'how one's place has moved symbolically and culturally away from the values and forms of social interaction prized by residents in earlier times' (Savage *et al.*, 2010: 117) reflect one of the main narratives of belonging to place, as designated by Savage (2008), and described by Ocejó (2011). As Savage *et al.* (2010) remark, they are consistent with a prevalent way of thinking about the breakdown of local communities and the loss of social cohesiveness. However, as the research by both Savage and Ocejó suggests, this kind of nostalgia not only expresses regret for eroded values but also serves to create and maintain social boundaries. This narrative defines a group of 'insiders' consisting of those who remember the old reality, positioned against the 'outsiders' who lack such recollections (Savage, 2008: 153). Consequently, this narrative enables 'the relatively under-privileged to counter the moral claims of the newly arrived' (Savage, 2008: 153). It also reflects efforts to transform longstanding ties to the area into a form of symbolic capital, which could be termed, following Retière, the 'capital of autochthony' (2003: 121). Although the reference to the past seems to be devoid of clear class interests and refers to abstract values, in fact, it appears to be a distinction strategy aimed at newcomers better endowed with economic capital.

– Narrative of rural-urban migration—civic duties and life 'on your own'

A further distinction made by long-term residents in Wawer and Wilanów was between city dwellers and those migrating from the countryside. The following statement by a woman from Wawer, referring to the new housing estates, was fairly typical: 'Many cars still have licence plates from other towns ... Ninety per cent of the inhabitants are newcomers. These are people from outside Warsaw' (retired government official, early 70s). The narrative surrounding the new population often relied on the stereotypical figures of the 'real Varsovian' and the 'newcomer from a small town or village', which are prevalent in the Polish public sphere (Nowakowski, 1969; Łukasiuk-Gmurczyk, 2007; Kusiak, 2017). The long-term residents attributed stereotypical characteristics to the

new inhabitants, such as a 'desire for social advancement, determination to put down roots in the big city, being lost, entangled in solving every day, mundane problems, small-town reflexes, and so on' (Lewicki and Drozdowska 2017: 94).

The distinction between 'long-term residents' and 'newcomers' to the city was much discussed in Wilanów. Here, the statements referring to the new inhabitants often involved strong rhetoric, and the arguments made against them were especially harsh. Much of the criticism was directed at Miasteczko Wilanów—an estate that gained widespread recognition as a residential area for a fraction of the middle class that Bourdieu characterized as 'rising': individuals who have recently moved to Warsaw, acquired homes through mortgages and hold liberal worldviews. The most emotional statements revolved around the supposed uncivilized nature and rural origins of newcomers, further illustrated in the quote in the opening paragraph. A lower-ranking government official and lifelong resident of Wilanów, quoted in the previous section, described the new inhabitants as follows:

They are loud, they are noisy, and they act so strangely. Sometimes I go to the grocery store and watch these people as I did yesterday. My God, the mother is calling for a child all over the store, the child is screaming, he is walking on the shelves, I don't know. Egalitarianism is, here, such a wise word: the boor got into the salons. Actually, because there used to be clear divisions, yes. A peasant was a peasant, a gentleman was a master. It was clear who was supposed to work for whom and how much was to be paid. These people ... For them it is a cultural shock because these people, from small villages somewhere, from small agglomerations suddenly come to a big city ...

References to 'farms', 'peasants' and 'beetroots' were used in a derogatory way to describe attributes associated with newcomers. In making these assessments, the women defined the new residents as inferior to urban dwellers in terms of their lifestyle and behaviour. Especially interesting was the remark about the erosion of social hierarchies, including those within the family. This distinction, articulated by a representative of the declining fraction of the middle class, can be interpreted as reflecting the struggle for symbolic dominance rather than an explicit socioeconomic distinction. Anti-egalitarian attitudes seem to channel feelings of insecurity and the fear of losing one's own position, embodying 'frustrated middle-class aspirations' (Cartier *et al.*, 2016: 181). They also resonate with the narrative prevalent in right-wing media at that time, according to which residents of Miasteczko Wilanów consistently supported the liberal political parties.

The Wilanów interviews reveal another well-entrenched belief about newcomers to the city, namely, the 'new' origin of their money. Like the residents of Bowland Road in Yate described by Southerton (2002), the interviewees used this term to describe 'the dangers of social mobility' to which new residents of the capital would succumb, such as 'the betrayal of economy for extravagance; an excessive concern with social status; and, failed attempts at emulation and social distancing through money' (Southerton, 2002: 178–9). A manual worker with vocational education provides an example of this belief while talking about the local school:

My daughter is a bit pissed off that some of them ... drive to school, have things such as cars, and money, they spend the money. These kids show off terribly. Here, there are two kinds of people. Well, we are not that wealthy. But we have no mortgage loans, we live on our own [resources]. Some people live on credit and show it all, cars, not cars, stuff like that [...] [some people can] drive a car worth 500,000 PLN to the very entrance to the school.

In this quote, socioeconomic and moral evaluative criteria intertwine. On the one hand, the worker expresses contempt for the newcomers' ostentatious display of status and suspects that their purchases are made to impress others rather than out of genuine necessity. This perspective aligns with the habitus disposition of the working class, namely, a reluctance to incur debt and the value of self-reliance (Łuczaj, 2018). On the other hand, he associates the newcomers' superficiality and snobbery with a lack of respect for others. The hostile attitude towards the newcomers serves to conceal an underlying sense of humiliation associated with lower material status and fears for the child's well-being.

While socioeconomic dichotomies resonated more strongly in Wilanów, the narrative of rural-to-urban migration as a determinant of community involvement remained significant in both districts. Newcomers were often accused of 'a weak commitment to public and local affairs' (Lewicki and Drozdowska, 2017: 113), exemplified by their alleged failure to fulfil tax obligations to Warsaw. A common complaint was that newcomers do not contribute to the municipal budget, yet benefit from social services such as public education, healthcare and welfare in the area. An elderly woman, who had worked at a managerial level in an industrial company and had married a resident of Wawer in the 1960s and had been living with him since, commented on new people moving into the district: 'To tell the truth, it annoys us. Why? Because these people pay taxes [in the areas] where they are from. And then finally, here they use everything'.

Accounts depicting the new residents often revolved around the burden they impose on those taxpayers who dutifully fulfil their tax obligations, namely, on the long-term residents. An example from a corporate employee with higher education from Wawer illustrates this narrative:

There are relatively few children registered in the area ... At the beginning of the school year children who are not registered in the area come to school. They are registered in Rzeszów, Lublin, Szczecin, and elsewhere, while their parents live here, but for some reason, they have not registered here. So, the school does not know how to prepare places for children who are not on the list. This causes very big problems because the educational subsidy depends on registered children. It's the same with healthcare. Therefore, unfortunately, this complicates things. And most of our neighbours are newcomers, judging by the car plates (woman, mid-40s).

The above quote illustrates how the figure of the 'new resident' is employed to explain the deficiencies in infrastructure in the district. This statement also highlights another disposition of the Polish middle class, specifically, self-control and orderliness (Gdula and Sadura, 2012). In the context of Wawer and Wilanów, this would imply a uniform standard and equal participation in the municipal budget for all residents.⁶

As demonstrated in the previous section, strong values centred around community responsibility, close neighbourly ties and local patriotism were fundamental to the narratives of long-term residents. The extracts above show how the dichotomies marking off newcomers from outside of Warsaw intersected with those marking off urban dwellers who display a reluctance to integrate. In long-term residents' accounts, newcomers were presented as those 'who rent ... come and leave for the weekend, only,

6 According to telemetry data analysis, in 2018, the 'nighttime population' was 14% higher for Wilanów and 17% higher for Wawer compared to official figures (Śleszyński *et al.*, 2019). Similar discrepancies were observed in other Warsaw districts, including those without substantial population growth. Hence, while some new residents may choose not to register in Warsaw, the majority of them pay taxes there. It is also important to note that in Poland there is no obligation to update vehicle registration to reflect current place of residence. Also, during school enrolment, residential registration is not mandatory; there is a requirement to submit a declaration of place of residence instead.

and that's it, yeah' (man, manual worker, early 40s). At first glance, this narrative can be interpreted as moral, in the understanding of Lamont (1992), as it is related to a civic duty to contribute taxes. However, the use of this narrative can also be understood in terms of struggles over space, whereby newcomers are confronted with the symbolic and spatial delineations imposed by long-term residents (Lewicki and Drozdowska, 2017: 109). Emphasizing the 'small-town' behaviour of newcomers and suspecting that their wealth is for display purposes only may be tools that allow long-term residents to cope with their own dominated position, simultaneously reinforcing the symbolic significance of 'autochthony'.

– Making distinctions work—nativity as symbolic capital

Information on how the dichotomies delineated by the long-term residents manifest themselves in action can be gleaned from the perspectives of the new residents of Wawer and Wilanów. Endowed with a self-conscious perception of their status as 'newcomers', these interviewees reported feeling marginalized in the districts. They stressed that the 'newcomer' label is permanent, irrespective of whether someone moved to the district during the Polish People's Republic, in the 1990s or within the last decade. To be considered a 'true' resident, an individual needs to have family ties with the area or to have been born and raised in the neighbourhood. The characteristic statement is that of an owner of a small chain of grocery stores from Wawer. Having lived in the district for 30 years, he said: 'There are the so-called rights of newcomers and the so-called rights of natives—those whose ancestors have been here since the eighteenth century'.

Group affiliations are determined by long-term residents through interactions and everyday encounters in public spaces. The testimony of a woman in her early forties, who had resided in Wilanów for two decades, reveals how long-term residents categorize newcomers. She has a degree in sociology but is unemployed due to illness, and spends her time engaging in the life of the local parish. She mentioned that during a local mid-summer barbecue, a man who had lived in the district for 30 years was accused of not being familiar with the area. Although it was said as a joke, the woman felt that the man—and therefore she herself—was not considered part of the community. She said: 'It is difficult to assimilate if there is a barrier because you are new and you are entering the space here. It's as if I built a house in the middle of the forest and the animals came and said: this one is new here, she's disturbed our order'. The categorization process was also revealed during interviews with people who have lived in the districts since childhood. The interviewees often talked about 'new' neighbours, referring to estates and houses built back in the early 1990s, that is, almost 30 years ago.

The feeling of being denied the possibility of 'being from Wawer' or 'being from Wilanów' was particularly prevalent among those newcomers who live in the separate housing estates and who aspire to become recognized residents of the district. For example, a creative consultant living in Miasteczko Wilanów, who completed a double major and postgraduate studies in the field of marketing, said:

[We] call ourselves the inhabitants of Wilanów, since we moved here from different parts of the city and, for us, Miasteczko Wilanów and Wilanów are the same thing. However, people from other parts of the district say *that they* are from Wilanów and that we are from Miasteczko Wilanów, as if they don't consider us to be Wilanovians. But that's normal. We are immigrants for them, who simply came here. We are not people who have lived here for generations. I have only known these people for 10 years, let's say, and they have known each other forever, their parents knew each other, they have known the teachers who teach at school for three generations. They built this school 30 years ago, and their local identity is different. But here in Miasteczko Wilanów, we always tell ourselves that we live in Wilanów. (Woman, early 40s, AW).

This account reveals how newcomers, by calling each other Wilanovians, attempt to redefine the concept of 'true' residents and extend it to all the people living within the current administrative borders of the district. Paradoxically, this endeavour does not question the symbolic divisions set by long-term residents but rather demonstrates that belonging remains a significant and desired resource.

Even when newcomers challenge the standing of long-term residents, their accounts affirm the significance of the label 'true' resident. A marketing specialist from Wilanów, holding degrees in engineering and social sciences, along with postgraduate studies in PR, expressed this sentiment, stating: 'This is the problem with those old residents who came here in the 1980s and [feel] as if they appropriated Wilanów for themselves and suddenly there were other, new people who had expectations'. The interviewee questions the authority of long-term residents to designate the status of a 'true' resident, by suggesting that they have lived in the district for no more than 50 years. However, she does not negate the essence of the divisions, acknowledging the value of being a 'real' Wilanovian and reinforcing the significance of one's origin in the district as symbolic capital.

For the interviewees better equipped with cultural capital, differences in tastes and lifestyles were seen to explain the divisions between long-term residents and newcomers. The local population were described as having 'a different attitude, a different kind of thinking, a different perspective' (Wilanów, woman, business coach, late-40s, MCh), and 'speaking a completely different language' (Wilanów, woman, marketing specialist, mid-40s). The business coach from Wilanów, PhD in psychology, depicted the long-standing residents in the following way:

Many of these people cultivate traditions and strongly emphasize the fact, and I think it is a good thing ... there are costumes, a dance group that dances Polish and regional dances here. They also have their own customs such as trampling on cabbage, they organize Christmas Eve ... There is also a band (woman, MCh).

Well-endowed with a 'sense of one's own's place' (Bourdieu 1984: 466), an interviewee expressed understanding for the long-term residents. However, it can be assumed that this declaration was largely discursive and would not necessarily translate into common practice. As in Elwood *et al.*'s (2015) study of new middle-class residents in Seattle, USA, the culture of the local population is desirable, yet it is framed as an amenity to be enjoyed. Within this framework, the roles of newcomer and long-term resident remain distinct, and the divisions between 'us' and 'them' continue to resonate strongly.

A different picture of the local population emerged from interviews with individuals living in single-family houses in close proximity to long-term residents. The terms used by these interviewees to describe the locals were often not neutral and carried negative connotations in Polish. Long-term residents were referred to as 'indigenous people' (Wilanów, woman, lecturer, 50s) or even 'aborigines' (Wilanów, man, owner of a corporation, mid-40s). The most explicit antipathies were expressed by two residents of Wilanów, who could be classified as upper class. Their aversion primarily targeted the 'irrational' practices of long-term residents, expressed in the unreasonable sale of land that gained significant value with the district's development. An illustrative example involves a university lecturer with a Ph.D. in natural sciences. She occupies a house built on land initially designated for agricultural use. Following the deagrarianization process, the woman and her partner constructed a home, seeking a more spacious living environment. She said:

A friend knew these indigenous people. He told us how one of them had sold divided plots of land and given the money to the children, then another one crashed an expensive car and died on the spot, and another one got drunk.

A more straightforward statement comes from the owner of a big consulting company. Living in a grand villa, he voiced a preference for a dwelling that provides peace and tranquillity. At the beginning of the interview, he openly stated that he moved to Wilanów for the 'different provenance of the residents', underscoring its reputation as a prestigious area.

When the aborigine or local owner sells a piece of land, he spends all the money immediately. So, he knows that he is his own worst enemy. He knows that he can't sell it right away. So, he sells a small piece every three years, buys a new car, and the family goes on vacation. Every three years, he sells a little bit, and that means that there is permanent housing construction nearby ... And this is what bothers me the most, that there is a house, a field, a farmer drives, ploughs, and he is spreading shit. It stinks.

These statements simultaneously express upper-class privilege and exemplify a process of moralization of the local population (Elwood *et al.*, 2015). The long-term residents are portrayed as irrational, acting impulsively. The opposite is rational planning which, it is implied, is what the newcomers do. As Bourdieu (1984: 56) argued, 'each taste feels itself to be natural—and so it almost is, being a habitus—which amounts to rejecting others as unnatural and, therefore, vicious'. Similarly, interviewees take the naturalness of calculative thinking, characteristic of their own lifestyles, for granted. They do not take into account that the so-called 'morality of saving' or rationality is characteristic of the middle and upper classes equipped with capital (Łuczaj, 2018).

The above statements show how the new population strive to overcome their position as outsiders and impose their middle- or upper-class norms and values. The newcomers' desire to be acknowledged as 'true' residents reaffirms the symbolic dominance of the long-term residents. This is manifested in the recognition that 'being a Wilanovian' or 'being a Wawerian' constitutes symbolic capital, while simultaneously engaging in debates about the criteria for belonging to these groups. However, there are limits to this recognition. As per a study by Elwood *et al.* (2015: 134), when new residents observe behaviours that contradict their middle- or upper-class dispositions, they frame them as irrational, 'disruptive, threatening, excessive and troubling'. Both of these reactions, although contradictory, show how the division into 'us' and 'them' is perpetuated and sustained.

Conclusions

This article provides a comprehensive exploration of the responses of long-term residents to the arrival of newcomers in two districts of Warsaw, Poland. Grounded in the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu, it underscores the significance of social class as a critical analytical category for understanding the complex processes that take place in urban space. Examining the narratives put out by long-term residents demonstrates that socio-economic dichotomies and class-based constraints, as elucidated in Bourdieu's work, continue to play a crucial role in the processes of social identification.

This study contributes to existing research by examining how long-term residents in a Central and Eastern European city assert their right to place. Warsaw, with its unique characteristics—a high homeownership rate and an ethnically homogeneous population—differs notably from its Western counterparts. The research uncovers not only a struggle between the working and middle classes but also an intraclass conflict, specifically between the 'old' and 'rising' fractions of the urban middle class, emblematic of post-economic-transition divisions (Pluciński, 2020). It also underscores the role of urban space in shaping resident relations. After the 1990s, housing estates

in Warsaw were often developed on privatized land, with master-planned Miasteczko Wilanów serving as an example. The findings suggest that creating extensive housing without adequate amenities and public services can lead to significant social tensions, as described in the context of tax-related conflicts between long-term residents and newcomers.

Despite regional differences, a common thread emerges—the experience of dispossession from place. Undoubtedly, the arrival of newcomers in Wawer and Wilanów posed challenges for the local population. Equipped with different forms of capital and habitus, the newcomers started to change the space in line with their expectations, effectively ‘colonizing’ the districts over time. Faced with uncertainty about their position, long-term residents transformed their multigenerational ties to the districts into symbolic capital, which, following Retière (2003), might be called the ‘capital of autochthony’. In Lanester, France, this capital granted long-term residents access to various spheres of sociability, including participation in public rituals and municipal institutions; it acted as ‘a key to networks of sociability where popular style can flourish without being disdained’ (*ibid.*: 132). In Warsaw, Poland, it serves not only as a means of protection against domination but also yields symbolic benefits. This capital enables the setting of boundaries of belonging to a group of ‘real’ inhabitants of the districts. Thus, it allows long-term residents to preserve their identity, safeguard their autonomy and assert symbolic dominance over the space.

In conclusion, this study deepens understanding of how social divisions and power dynamics manifest in changing urban landscapes. By focusing on a city in Central and Eastern Europe—a region that has received limited attention in contemporary research on this topic—it offers fresh insight into the dynamics of long-term and new resident relations. The article sheds light on the narratives constructed by local populations to justify and maintain the divisions between ‘us’ and ‘them’, revealing how they transform their multi-generational ties to an area into symbolic capital. Unlike Bourdieu’s primary forms of capital, it appears that the ‘capital of autochthony’ observed in the Polish context cannot be accumulated or converted from other forms of capital, remaining tied to birthright rather than duration of residence. In essence, these findings confirm the continued relevance of Bourdieu’s theoretical framework of capital and habitus for the study of urban space.

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