

04

USERS OF ROHAN AND LIBEŇ ISLANDS

Field
interviews



04

OBSAH

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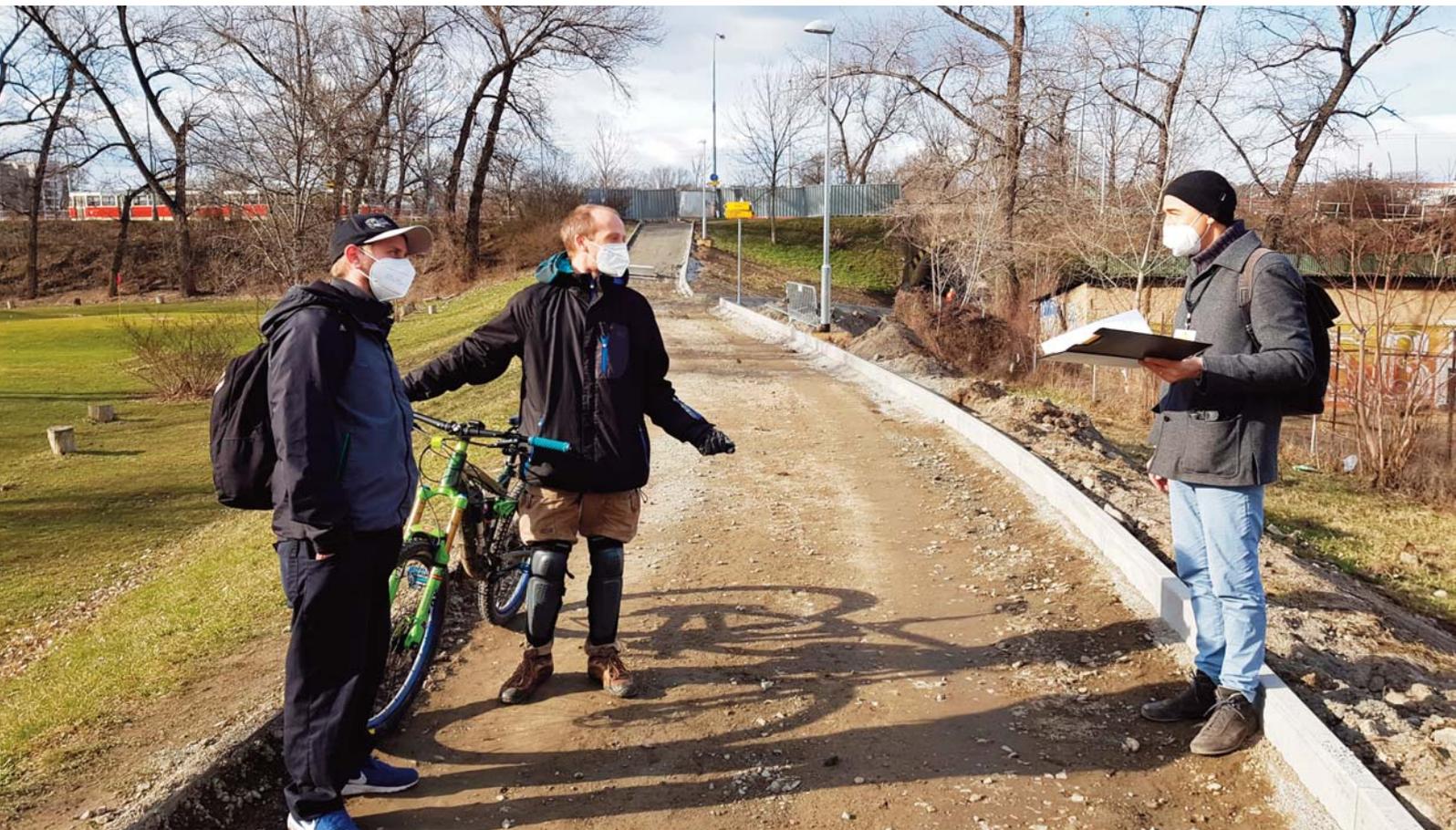
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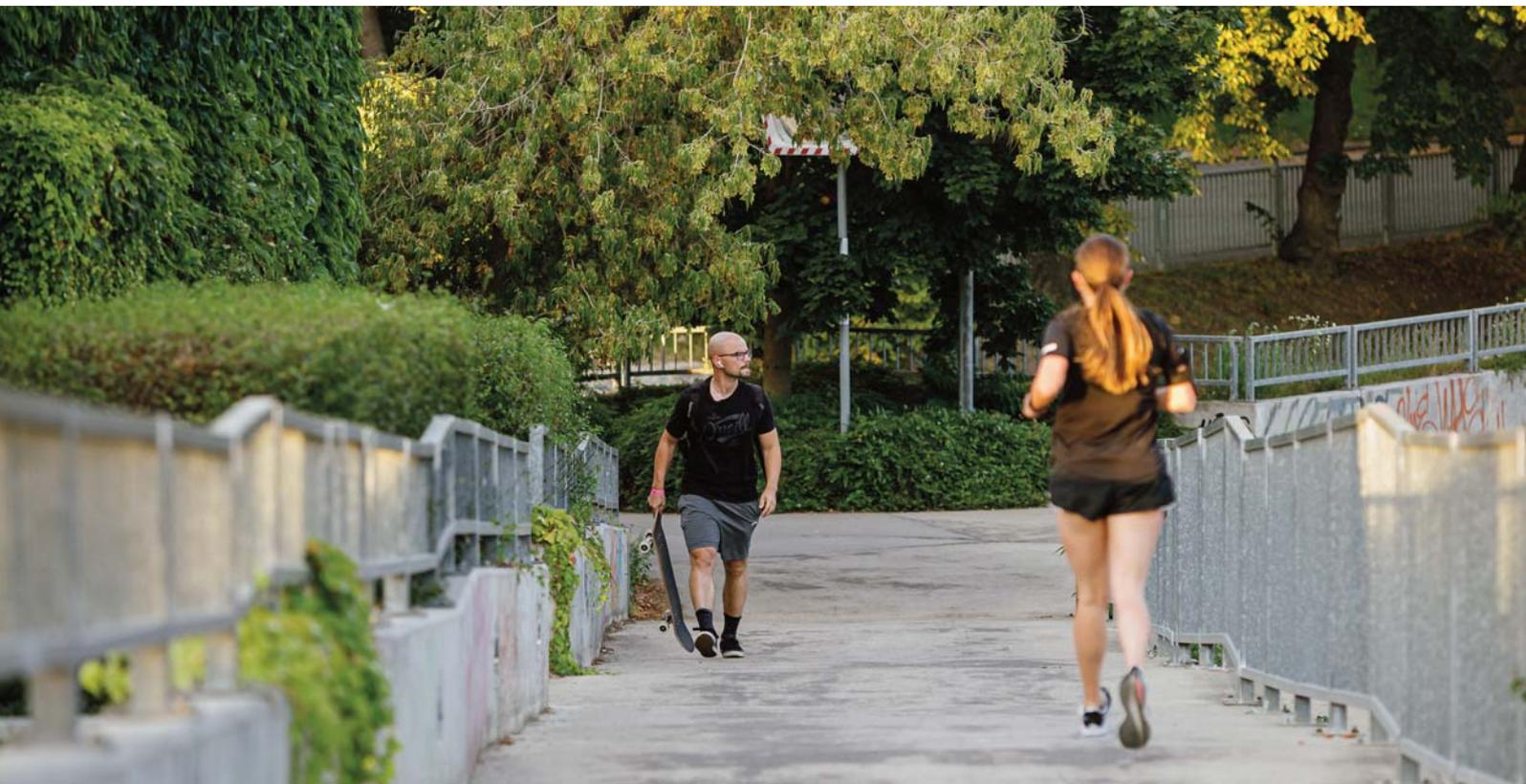
Introduction and method



In this section of the report, we will describe the most common user roles or typical behaviors and uses of the territory. To develop our Concept, it is essential to know how people actually carry out their favorite activities here. It also helps to understand what works well and what hinders specific activities in the territory, as well as the relationships between specific roles and other users, including potential for future improvement. **Through observation and questioning**, we found that the following roles were particularly important: **walking and running, parent-child** outings, and **cycling / wheeled sports**. When designing our research, we assumed that users come to the territory with a certain approach, and this characteristic attitude gives them the opportunity to experience the area in their own way. We also assumed that the roles are clear enough to be more or less consciously identified by the users themselves. And that in contrast to their own role, users will react or identify themselves in relation to others. This assumption was only partially confirmed. In nearly **forty in-depth interviews**, it became clear that a large proportion of users use the territory for a combination of multiple roles on an alternating basis. In other words, there is a high degree of **role permeability**. To explain, people who cycle here also know what it feels like to be walking there. People just walking in the area have previously been there with a child and consider this experience, etc. Based on this experience, we consider the roles to be largely analytical categories to help to represent and explain user functions in the territory.

For a deeper understanding, we asked users for a visual record of the typical route that they take in their role in the territory. This resulted in maps of walking routes, running routes and cycling routes. We have examined the resulting paths and recorded their typical characteristics in a separate statement on path routes.

Walkers and runners



Positive aspects. An overall positive evaluation prevails and people enjoy walking here (“walkway in Karlín”). An open space without cars, the trees, nature and the river are all welcome, especially while accessible from the city center. It is a convenient link between two destinations for many residents, usually home and work. People mostly walk along the cycle path, which is well connected, some also walk by the river, around and across the large meadow. The emptiness is seen by people as comforting.

Negative aspects and conflicts. There is only one road, which is not enough in the respondents’ viewpoints: “people only generally use the middle part of the area and that’s a pity”. This gives some interviewees the feeling there are too many people here. They don’t like how certain places are neglected, nor the litter. There is a problem with mud on and next to the trail and a lack of lighting (note this survey was carried out in the winter and spring of 2021). Collisions between pedestrians and cyclists do occur, but are infrequent. Parts of the walk are not viewed positively by some (under the bridge). Freight traffic around the Libeň spit is quite the burden. Some members of the public feel annoyed or afraid of the homeless. The area behind the golf course is for some a forbidden area (“hic sunt leones”), people are afraid to go there – perhaps because homeless people leave their dogs off the leash. Homeless people make people insecure as to their behavior and so the respondents tend to avoid them (“I prefer to avoid going into the wilderness”).

Suggestions and ideas. The welcome changes that were heard included modifications to the wild spots (“make it less of a jungle, make the space more usable”), but at the same time people strongly require this natural character. Pedestrians and cyclists could be separated in some places, the trail widened, and path networks for walking and running could generally be added to: “fix the paths along the water, I’d like that” or “more trees and a wild nature path with better access to the water”. In terms of conditions for runners, some say it is possible to take inspiration from nearby Stromovka. Add lighting for safety, seating along the paths or create new nooks and seating areas to complement the walks (“pensioners have nowhere to sit here”), play or sports features, toilets and refreshments – these are all recurring ideas. Pedestrians would also welcome access to the spits, this accessibility could be supported by a bridge to Povltavská Street.

The meaning of journeys. We asked about the nature of people's journeys. What journeys are they? What is the nature of these journeys? Why do people make them? Based on the testimonies, the nature of people's walking journeys can be determined as follows: 1) intentional walks for the purpose of relaxation and release, being in nature, walking the dog, 2) natural connections from one place to another (work, school), 3) sports walking and running, 4) going for a beer or other interest in the area, 5) fishing, and 6) local residence – homelessness.

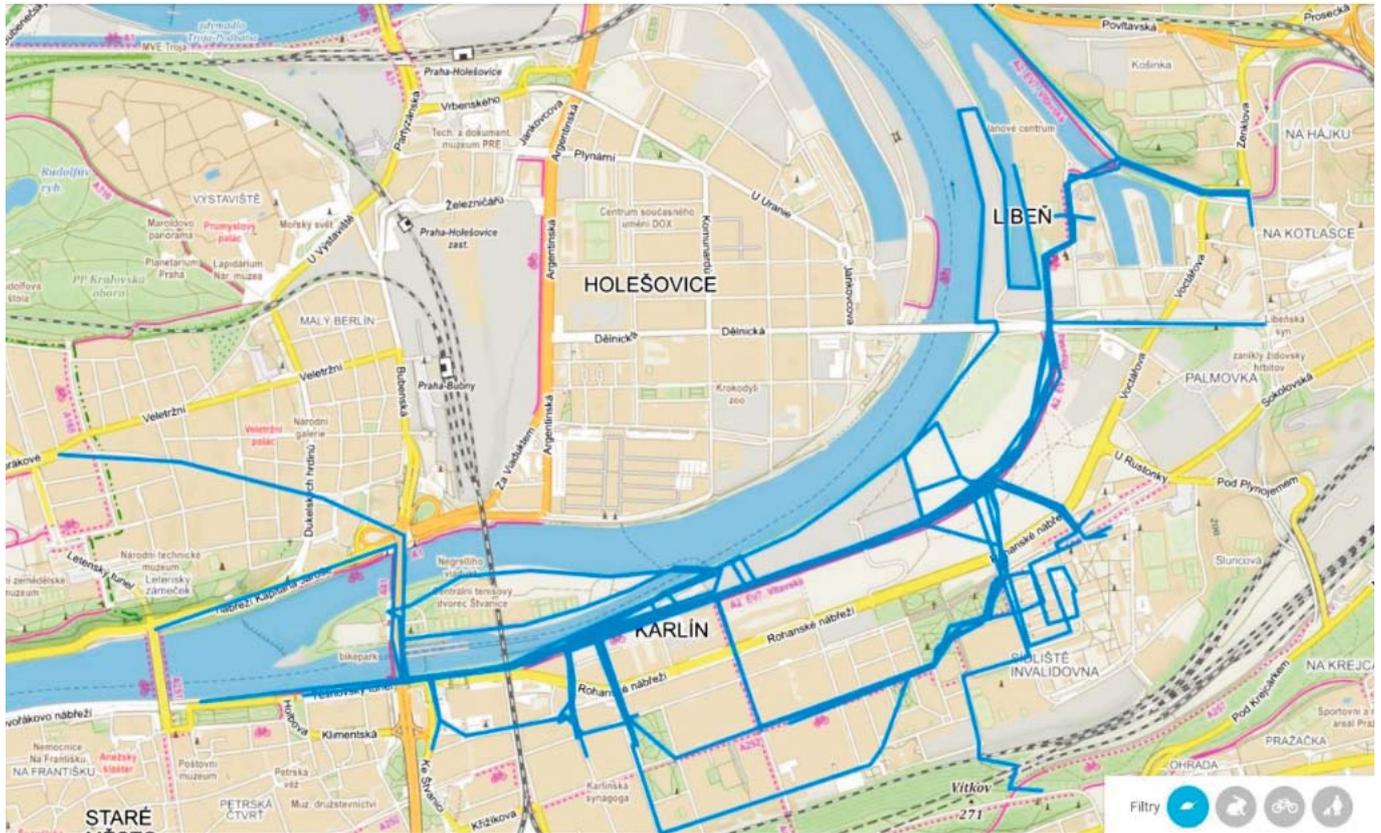


Image: map of walking routes

Routes people walk down. Most pedestrian paths run along the A2 cycle path. The western part of the area, between the Negrelli viadukt and the HolKa ferry is the most congested. The main sources of these journeys are Karlín, Invalidovna and Libeň. The starting points in Karlín lead through parks in Karlín Square and Kaizl Gardens. The boarding points from Prague 7 are Hlávka Most and the HolKa ferry. Some of the paths have a connection to Štvanice Island.



Image: map of running routes

Parents with children



Positive aspects. Adults spending time with their children in the area most value the quiet, a natural spot in the city, having a car-free environment in the city center and its undeveloped nature. They see the island as an accessible, interesting place and use the cycle path in combination with other spaces: “the plain is key for us” or “natural areas are rare to me, the plain is fascinating”. Some respondents use the area very frequently (“nonstop during lockdown”) and the island operates year-round for these groups, although naturally even more in the summer. Adults who experienced their childhood here recall the adrenaline-filled, fun environment full of adventure and after-dark scavenger hunts. The cycle path itself is good for getting around with kids (state of clay surfaces before 5/2021).

Negative aspects and conflicts. Lack of lighting and fear of vagrants / homeless people give the impression of a threat (“we avoid going into the wilderness”). Sharing the cycle path with fast and slow users (especially cyclists vs. children) is dangerous. In winter there is no ferry connection to Holešovice. Lack of children’s playgrounds.

Suggestions and ideas. A safe cycle path, benches, elements and routes for children along the water and water channels – these are the most common ideas from parents, grandparents and educators. A happy solution would be to make it so the different user groups aren’t always together (“people with children look at things differently – for example, the speed of cyclists”). A number of families from Karlín and Libeň complain about the lack of playgrounds in these areas. Building a playground, including a play area for older children, seems like an excellent idea. Let’s finish with the concern “don’t make it a playground for snobs”.

Cyclists



Positive aspects. The area works as a great connection from one place to another, it's the shortest and nicest route without cars ("the cycle path is great"). People can avoid the main roads and are off them for a long stretch. Residents cycle this way between their homes, workplaces, and other locations, enjoying the surroundings and appreciating the excellent non-urban atmosphere, the convenient trails, and the river. So most of them don't have it as their destination. They see it as a path through a beautiful area, moreover linked to Karlín and other city districts and spots along the Vltava River, which are easy to ride through for Prague. Some mention other cyclists they see repeatedly on their rides and say hello to each other ("I like sporty people, it's a nice atmosphere"). As for the surface, opinions vary and even some cyclists appreciated the original gravel surface. A good spot for cyclists is the Koleto refreshments, where they can meet other cyclists and friends.

Negative aspects and conflicts: The second, almost equally large group of cyclists believes that designated lanes should be used to separate cyclists and pedestrians and to widen the congested path. Add more traffic streams, possibly alternate different types. If there were two paths, you could choose. The same applies to passing pedestrians with dogs on the cycle path. Collisions with cars are rare (near the new construction). Cyclists complain about pass-through restrictions due to construction and (temporary) construction decks. In the winter, the maintenance of the cycle path is unsatisfactory (note that this Prague winter was exceptionally snowy).

Suggestions and ideas: Suggestions for the future included better marking of paths for cyclists, components for adults, amenities – a stall, a café on the cycle path, "something on the cycle path", a bike repair shop. It would be good to properly mark the trail, gently influence inconsiderate users, use sound (bicycle bell) and encourage tolerance.

Routes of bicycle journeys. Unlike walks and the routes taken by parents and children, cyclists' routes almost always lead beyond the defined area of Rohan Island. They arrive from further away or travel further. Surprisingly, the main transit point in our sample was not the A2 cycle path, but Kaizl Gardens, probably due to the fact that most of our respondents were local residents (from Karlín). Longer roads lead this way, from north to south and from east to west.



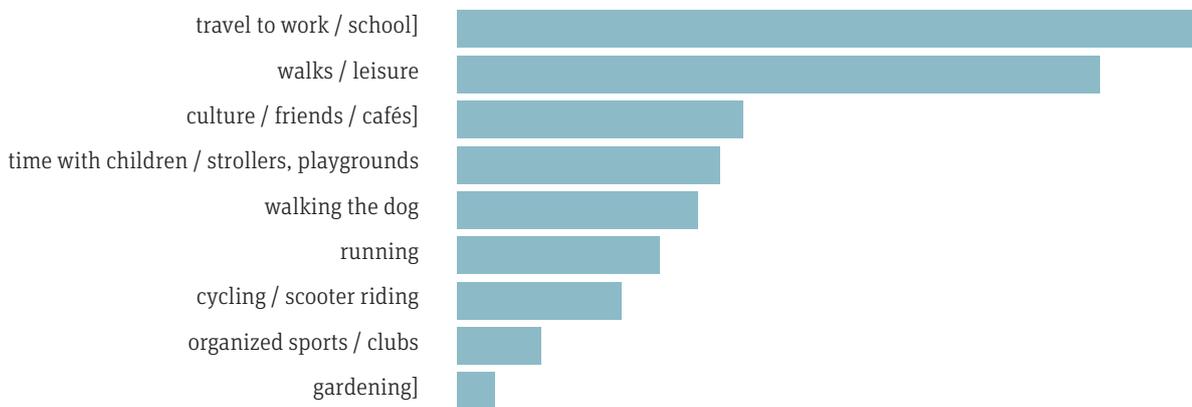
Image: Bicycle route map

Comparison with questionnaire data

The question about the type of activity and the frequency of repetition was also included in the implemented electronic questionnaire. We assigned roughly corresponding numerical values (daily, several times a week, monthly, etc.) and multiplied by the number of responses. As a result, the following graph shows the proportion of individual activities in the area. **Journeys to work or school therefore rank first, due to their frequent repetition and strong first place representation.** Surprisingly, however, recreational walks occupy a similarly strong position, likely related to the high number of respondents residing in the vicinity of the study area. The low score for cyclists is based on the fact that most of their answers fall into the frequency of once or more a week and once or more a month.

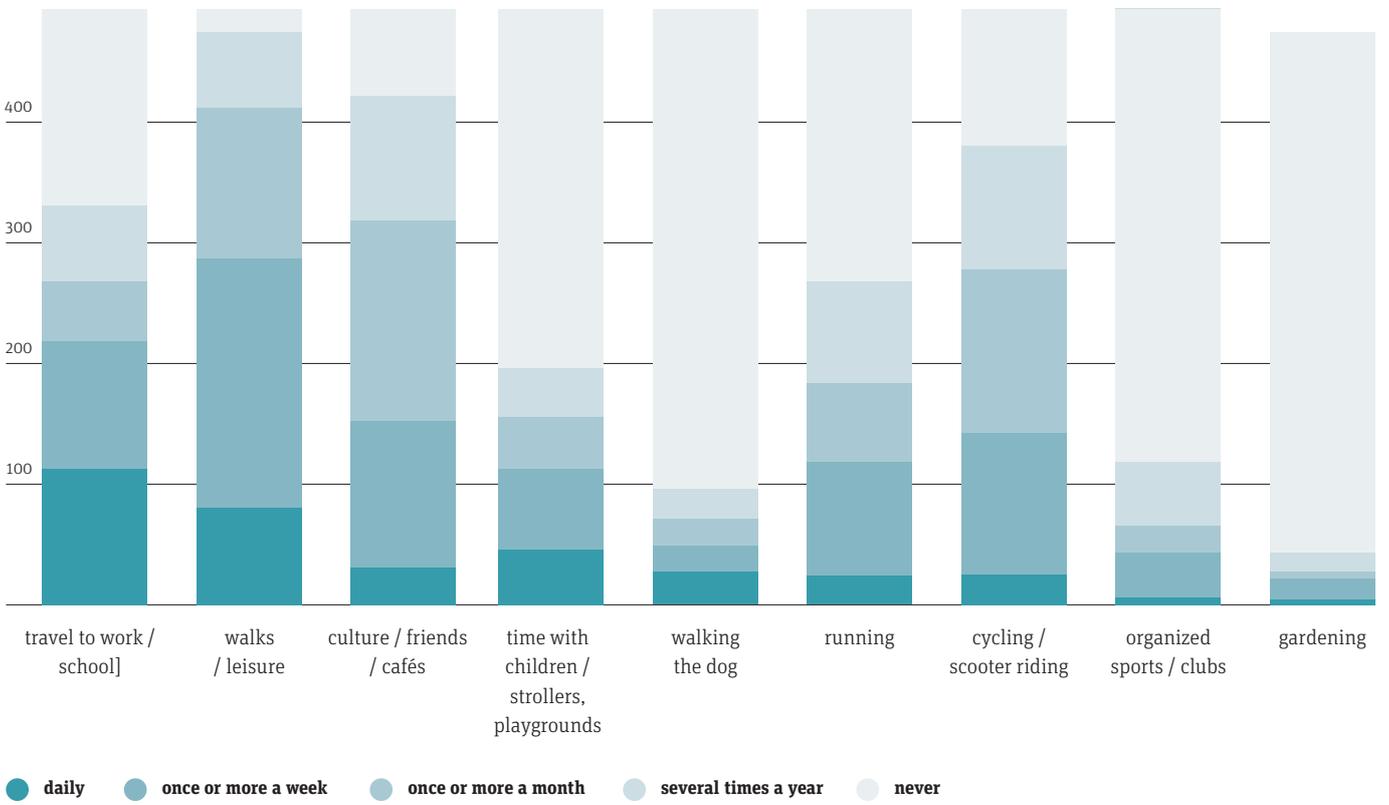
Activities in the territory: level of representation

(electronic questionnaire, spring 2021, 491 responses)



Activities in the territory of Rohan Island

the chart shows the total figures unbiased by conversion to values (electronic questionnaire, spring 2021, 491 responses)



Summary

For pedestrians and runners, the park's long linear profile works perfectly along the waterfront. Everything here is appropriate for these activities. You can really stretch your legs or break into a run and this feeling will last for some time. Unfortunately, this only works on the single paved (cycle) path running the entire length and therefore everyone encounters each other there. There are almost no other paths, movement elsewhere is hindered by overgrown areas, mud and fear. Adults with children appreciate the locality's tranquility, expansiveness (plains), the trail and the more adventurous feel to the area than is offered by traditional urban playgrounds. Their most negative appreciation is that it's difficult to get outside the trail area, let alone to the water. Of course, there is a risk of collisions between children and pedestrians (slow) and cyclists or skaters (fast) on the cycle path. The addition of different types of less conventional playgrounds for different age groups would be welcome. Cyclists love the place. It is used by people who regularly travel around the city, as well as recreational users. Some prefer the current paved surface, others remember the previous clay surface as a welcome change in the context of Prague. Among the suggestions for improvement, there were several useful ideas from experienced users, concerning safety, wideness, lanes, etc.

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