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## **Municipal Solidarity – Care Practice at the Warsaw Insurgents’ Home**

**Solidaryzm miasta – praktyki opiekuńcze  
w Domu Powstańców w Warszawie**

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### **Abstract**

**Aim.** The purpose of this article is to present an effective model of elderly care based on personalised support and close cooperation between staff and volunteers. The article explores the practices of the Warsaw Insurgents’ Home – an institution operated by the municipal unit, Intergenerational Activity Centre, as an example of a successful senior-oriented policy that has a tangible impact on the quality of life, dignity, and sense of agency among older people.

**Methods and materials.** This is our second article based on empirical material from qualitative research conducted through individual in-depth interviews with staff members, volunteers, and the veterans themselves. The analysis also includes secondary data sources (such as websites, articles, and informational brochures) concerning the institution and its practices.

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**Results and conclusion.** The experience of the Warsaw Insurgents' Home highlights the importance of flexibility and adaptability within care institutions in response to the evolving needs of elderly people. The COVID-19 pandemic and the declining health of the beneficiaries necessitated a redefinition of the institution's original socio-cultural functions in favour of care- and health-related services. This shift underscores the need for a dynamic support model in senior policy. In this process, the city authorities play a crucial role, not only funding the institution's activities but also actively participating in identifying needs and creating the conditions for their effective implementation.

**Keywords:** Warsaw Insurgents' Home, senior policy, individualised support, institutional cooperation, care flexibility

### **Abstrakt**

**Cel.** Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie skutecznego modelu opieki nad osobami starszymi, opartego na indywidualizacji wsparcia oraz współpracy pracowników instytucji miejskich, organizacji pozarządowych i wolontariuszy. Artykuł ukazuje praktyki Domu Powstańców Warszawskich – instytucji prowadzonej przez miejską jednostkę Centrum Aktywności Międzypokoleniowej – jako przykład efektywnej polityki pro senioralnej, która realnie wpływa na jakość życia seniorów oraz ich poczucie godności i podmiotowości.

**Metody i materiały.** Jest to drugi z cyklu artykuł, prezentujący materiał empiryczny z jakościowych badań, realizowanych metodą indywidualnych wywiadów pogłębionych z pracownikami i wolontariuszami Domu Powstańców Warszawskich oraz samymi powstańcami. Do analizy włączono także materiały zastane (strony internetowe, artykuły, broszury informacyjne etc.) dotyczące tej instytucji i jej praktyk.

**Wyniki i wnioski.** Doświadczenia Domu Powstańców Warszawskich pokazują, jak istotna jest elastyczność i zdolność instytucji opiekuńczych do dostosowywania się do zmieniających się potrzeb osób starszych. Pandemia COVID-19 oraz pogarszający się stan zdrowia beneficjentów wymusiły przekształcenie pierwotnych funkcji placówki z kulturalno-społecznych na opiekuńczo-zdrowotne, co podkreśla znaczenie dynamicznego modelu wsparcia w polityce prosenioralnej. Kluczową rolę w tym procesie odgrywa miasto, które nie tylko finansuje działania instytucji, ale również aktywnie uczestniczy w diagnozowaniu potrzeb oraz tworzeniu warunków do ich skutecznej realizacji.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Dom Powstańców Warszawskich, polityka senioralna, indywidualizacja wsparcia, współpraca instytucjonalna, elastyczność form opieki

## Introduction

The Warsaw Uprising and its participants have been viewed from many perspectives – from the search for the foundations of national identity (Sawicki, 2023), through the analysis of historical policy (Łuczewski, 2016; Waniek, 2011; Żychlińska, 2009), research in the paradigm of urban sociology (Jałowiecki & Szczepański, 2010), to the feminist trend, focused on gender politics and drawing attention to the masculinisation of the memory of this event (Grzebalska, 2013). Social researchers have also paid particular attention to the analysis of practices related to the genealogy of memory (Kwiatkowski, 2010; Napiórkowski, 2016), as well as the politicisation and subsequent commercialisation of forgetting.

Marcin Napiórkowski (2016) notes that the events of 1944 are being commodified by the use of emblems associated with the Warsaw Uprising as a kind of *brand*. The symbols of the uprising and the image of the insurgents became elements of commercial products, they appear on T-shirts, mugs, and even bed linen (Żychlińska, 2016). Illustrations depicting the Fighting Poland emblem, portraits of insurgents and images of destroyed Warsaw have been popular motifs on the capitalist market for nearly two decades. These perspectives may have selectively influenced the current perception of Warsaw insurgents in public discourse, reducing their roles exclusively to categories such as *heroes*, *veterans*, *ambassadors of memory*, *defenders of patriotic values*, or even *national symbols*. At the same time, their family backgrounds, post-war life paths, and contemporary experiences related to their old age are overlooked.

In the year of the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising, memories of those who are no longer with us are revived, and appeals are made for the need to establish contact with those who are close to passing away. However, these activities mainly focus on the need to preserve the stories of the *witnesses* and heroes of these events, which could reveal further layers of the palimpsestic architecture of memory or postmemory (Hirsch, 2008) related to the year 1944, or on using the participants of the uprising as *national symbols* to sanctify official ceremonies.

Currently, the insurgents are mainly elderly, sick, often lonely people living in various living conditions. Recognising this fact and the insufficient representation of literature<sup>1</sup> discussing issues related to the needs of insurgents and institutional instruments of support for this social group was the impetus for this text. In other words, the article will attempt to reconstruct the available forms of assistance for insurgents in terms of improving their financial situation, protecting their physical and mental health, and spending their free time, using the example of the activities of the local govern-

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that Anglo-Saxon literature contains references to the practices of organisations working on behalf of veterans of World War II, the Vietnam War, *etc.*

ment branch of the Intergenerational Activity Centre *Nowolipie* – Warsaw Insurgents’ Home and its institutional support. What seems particularly interesting is understanding the perspective and experiences of people involved in working with insurgents on a daily basis and describing their practices in order to provide comprehensive and individualised support to insurgents as elderly people.

## Methodological Note

In this article, the analysed empirical material comes from two parallel research projects conducted in cooperation with the Intergenerational Activity Centre *Nowolipie* – Warsaw Insurgents’ Home. The first project is *Wounds of Memory – Memories of World War II in the urban space of Warsaw in the stories of witnesses to history*, implemented on the initiative of the Office of the Capital City Conservator of Monuments of the Capital City of Warsaw. As part of this project, nine narrative interviews were conducted with Warsaw insurgents on their memories of the Warsaw Uprising, appropriate ways of preserving traces of World War II, and reflections on the contemporary development of Warsaw.

The idea for the second study came from listening to the insurgents’ stories, which often referred, through anecdotes or digressions, to the idea of the functioning of the Insurgents’ Home, its importance in their everyday life, and the quality of cooperation with CAM staff and volunteers. As part of the case study, four individual in-depth interviews were conducted with people working<sup>2</sup> or undertaking volunteer work at the Insurgents’ Home. Also, existing materials (articles, information brochures, and references) were analysed, both those indicated by the management of the institution and those available in the virtual space on the official portals of the City of Warsaw or other partners cooperating with the institution. During interviews with volunteers and employees of the Warsaw Insurgents’ Home attempts were made to identify various aspects of their involvement and experiences. They were asked about their motivation to act and about their personal experiences related to the beginning of their involvement in work for the insurgents. They were interested in the various forms of support offered at the institution, inter-institutional cooperation, contact with the insurgents’ families, and their daily functioning in this space.

This article will focus mainly on the threads concerning the needs of insurgents and the available support instruments in the operation of a day care centre dedicated to this specific group of the elderly. An analysis of other threads is planned in subsequent articles.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that all the staff interviewed were originally volunteers at Insurgent Home.

<sup>3</sup> This is the second article summarising the research discussed above.

## **From the Third Place to the First Place – a Few Words About the History of the Warsaw Insurgents' Home and its Function Changes**

### ***The Warsaw Insurgents' Home as a Meeting Place***

In 2018, the Warsaw Insurgents' Home was founded on the initiative of the Monopol Warszawski Association. The main idea behind its creation was to create a meeting place for insurgents. As one respondent comments:

The home was conceived as a meeting place, a place for people who are still strong enough, in good enough shape, to come here, meet their colleagues and get to know new people [...]. It was a matter of building new community ties. (P1)

The Warsaw Insurgents' Home was intended to fulfil the function of a third place<sup>4</sup>, to be a meeting place for the elderly with the experience of the uprising. The space itself was designed to reinforce this bonding character of the place. The centrally located foyer has been designed as a multifunctional space, conducive to organising meetings (especially of an intergenerational nature), participation in cultural events, backstage conversations and individual relaxation for regular visitors. Initially, the Insurgents' Home was a kind of cultural centre because of its opportunities for joint entertainment—“participation in artistic events, trips to Warsaw and its surroundings, playing bridge, or various integration workshops” (Monopol Warszawski, n.d., p. 2).

Aside to the concern to keep the memory of the events of 1944 alive and to create a space for *living* history, the originators also had a mission to create a meeting place for the participants of these events. Thanks to this space, the insurgents found their friends from years ago and also built new relationships and bonds. It is noteworthy that forming friendships by elders has a significant impact on their increased life satisfaction and reducing feelings of stress and loneliness (Czekanowski, 2012)<sup>5</sup>. For this group, the commonality of experience proved to be more important than generational solidarity (Bee, 2004). By intensifying daily contacts, creating opportunities for frequent reminiscence and discussion, and distancing themselves from the present, the space

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<sup>4</sup> The American sociologist Ray Oldenburg described third places as important spaces of social life, functioning alongside the two main places of individual activity, which are home (first place) and work (second place). “Third place” in his understanding is the space where people spontaneously meet, exchange ideas, relax, and build social ties outside the home and workplace.

<sup>5</sup> As a digression – one of the rules regarding the relationship between the insurgents in the Home space is that it is forbidden to talk about politics and religion, as topics with a high risk of polarisation, which can spark conflicts between the participants in the discussion.

was created for recalling past experiences and sharing them both within the peer group<sup>6</sup> and intergenerational transmission. For as the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1969, p. 159) notes:

How, in view of this, are older people not to be passionate about their past, the common treasure they have been appointed to preserve, not to apply themselves with full consciousness to a function which, at this period of their lives, brings them the only possible form of reverence?

It is in this possibility, not only of publicly but also of privately recalling memories, that one of the key missions of the creation of the Warsaw Insurgents' Home can be seen, and in the accompanying events (lectures, concerts, *etc.*), important stimulators of the exercise of their memory and the possibility of socialisation. The Warsaw Insurgents' Home is also an example of an attempt to *re-root* the group in traditional ties (Olcoń-Kubicka 2009), as a new form of social integration, a response to the widespread process of individualisation in the postmodern world (see Bauman 2008; Elias 2008; Giddens 2001).

As Jan Assmann (2019, p. 55) argues:

Any group that wants to consolidate itself as such seeks to create and secure places that would provide not only a stage for interaction, but also symbols of identity and anchor points for memory. Memory needs places and becomes spatialized.

And the Warsaw Insurgents' Home seems to fulfil this condition fully – being both a place full of memory of the uprising and a space for its formation and expression.

### ***The Warsaw Insurgents' Home as a House***

During the pandemic due to the associated isolation and the inevitable ageing of the participants of the Warsaw Insurgents' Home, it became necessary to redefine the profile of the institution. As a result, its core functions were also reorgan-

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<sup>6</sup> The term *peer group* is usually used in the context of children and adolescents, emphasising that its members play an important role in the socialisation process as significant others (Berger & Luhmann, 1983). In contrast, as Piotr Czekanowski (2012, p. 204) points out: "The great importance of being able to interact with people who are in a similar situation, thus often in a group of peers" was also pointed out by Synak (1987). Referring to the observations of Harris, this author explained that for the theoretical interpretation of the above-described behaviour of old people, sociologists began to use peer group theory, previously taken into account in the study of children and adolescents. This theory assumes that the life experiences of different age groups are so different that the result is the formation of culturally different lifestyles in each successive generation.

ised and changed. The ageing of the insurgents and the regression of their physical, mental and cognitive faculties during and after the pandemic posed many challenges for the Warsaw Insurgents' Home in terms of assistance, care, and support. The original functions—cultural and social—although still carried out today, are no longer the most important. Today the priority of the institution's functioning has become care and health services, including rehabilitation, and the provision of warm meals to insurgents. Faced with new challenges in 2021, the institution was incorporated into the *Nowolipie* Centre for Intergenerational Activity and came under the management of the City of Warsaw. Thus, the Insurgents' Home has gained opportunities for better contacts with other institutions of the city while retaining its autonomy and continuing its cooperation with the Monopol Warszawski Association within the framework of the *Socio-cultural animation programme for Warsaw veterans – participants in the Warsaw Uprising*. A good illustration of these changes can be found in the statement of one of the employees of the Home, who has contributed to the institution since its inception:

It has changed [functions] over these six years. My function has changed here too, yes? And so it happened, and at the beginning of my work, I knew almost everything about these people, in terms of the uprising, where they fought, what grouping, what pseudonym. Just everything. But when the pandemic came and our work profile changed a little bit, all of that went by the wayside and now I work with people. With people who need to be helped, and because these people are deserving for our country, I have more tools to help them and to support them[...]. Now these are people who just need support and care. Back then they were completely independent people. You didn't have to provide medication; you didn't have to buy nappies. (P3)

The insurgents' empowerment practices, which will be discussed later in this article, are yet another of the institution's key missions. Although its status is officially described as a day support home, the institution attempts to transform this space into a place of unique character. The aim is to create a sense of rooting and to give the space a socialising character that "[...] can be defined identity-wise, relationally and historically" (Augé, 2011, p. 53). As one respondent notes:

I feel that they treat it a bit like home. [...] as the kind of place where they can come, sit, read the newspaper, feel at home. That this is just a special place for these people. How often they say that here is their second home, because here there are people, and at their home there are no people, because they are very often alone. And if they are not alone, well they have a lot of different difficulties at home, problems like a sick wife or a sick husband, or a million different things. And this is such a place where they can rest and I think that's what home is all about. Because at home, we relax, we feel

comfortable. Well just like at home sometimes we'll have a fight here, sometimes we'll cry, sometimes we'll beat something up. That's just how we are with each other. When we are tired, we go for a nap just like at home. When we're at home we have dinner. We can listen to music, we spend holidays, we receive guests, we celebrate birthdays, and if we want to, name days. [...] It's also ok when they sit here alone, in the sense of sitting, reading the newspaper, nothing happens. The silence is also ok, because they are not really alone. They have this feeling that they are among people. (P3)

What emerges from the above statement is the image of the Warsaw Insurgents' Home as a place that goes beyond the classical definition of a third place, thanks to its exclusivity<sup>7</sup> and its practices of *domestication* and *taming*. The Warsaw Insurgents' Home becomes a first place—a home—a space of safety, comfort and peace.

The institution currently supports around 190 insurgents<sup>8</sup>. Among them, 20 people are regulars at the Home, 70 people benefit from home rehabilitation, and a similar number receive fruit and vegetable parcels every Thursday, to which a weekly bulletin of events at Nowolipie is attached. It is worth noting that some of the insurgents are reluctant to engage in the Home activities because they associate such places with a nursing home. They express the belief that their time has not yet come to benefit from such comprehensive assistance on a daily basis. However, most of them appreciate the home services coordinated by the Insurgents' Home, such as rehabilitation, food support, and the help of volunteers who assist during medical appointments or simply offer their time and conversation, becoming important people in their daily lives.

## City Solidarity – About the Offer of Assistance to Warsaw Insurgents

The City of Warsaw offers numerous forms of support for Warsaw insurgents. One of the key elements of this assistance is free care services granted to those in need of assistance in daily activities (*e.g.*, help around the house, cleaning, shopping). These services are provided in the private homes of insurgents, which allows them to maintain their independence and comfort of living. By a decision of the Warsaw City Council, participants in the Warsaw Uprising are also exempt from paying for their stay in Social Care Homes in Warsaw, which constitutes significant financial and administrative sup-

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<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that the Warsaw Insurgents' Home is only open to Warsaw insurgents who are in the IPN database. The institution does not support other war veterans or veterans.

<sup>8</sup> According to an employee of the Warsaw Insurgents' Home, as of July, 8 2024, there are currently about 450 Warsaw insurgents living in the world, of whom nearly 340 live in Warsaw and about 90 live outside Poland. Due to the advanced age of the insurgents these numbers are decreasing every month.



port for this group of senior citizens. The city also runs a programme providing specialist healthcare for veterans, including participants of the Warsaw Uprising. Consultations with specialist doctors and diagnostic-laboratory tests are offered. Warsaw insurgents are also eligible for free taxis within Warsaw and entitlement to free use of the Non-Reserved Paid Parking Zone, through the issuing of free Insurgent Parking Cards by the Authority. It is worth noting that the insurgents can also count on financial support in the form of an annual award – in 2023, its amount was PLN 10,000 and in 2024, PLN 20,000.

This puts the group of insurgents in the role of privileged elderly people, who are offered much more than other Warsaw seniors in gratitude for their merits. As one interviewee comments: “[...] not everyone has an equal chance of receiving such support in old age” (P3). An excellent example is the story of one volunteer (P4) who accompanied an insurgent to the ED. She was concerned about the long wait for diagnostic tests, but after revealing that the patient was a Warsaw insurgent, they were immediately admitted. The doctor, appreciating his role and merit, decided to perform a comprehensive examination. The other side of this story is told by one of the insurgents:

I can tell you by my own example. I went to the outpatient department next to the Brody Hospital. There is a special number that for a privileged person to use. I received line number and I waited. I waited and I waited. After an hours I couldn't stand it; nervously, I walked up to the reception desk and said, “Ma'am, I don't know what it's like, but I've been waiting so long please see, it has been an hour and my number hasn't been called.” She looked at me and answered: “Sir, we have to help the privileged patients more than the normal ones.” (PW4)

The above story may be an example of the realisation of entitlements resulting from Article 47c of the Act of 27 August 2004 on health care services financed from public funds (Journal of Laws of 2008, No. 164, item 1027, as amended). According to articles, war invalids, military, and veterans (including, of course, insurgents) have the right to use health care services and pharmaceutical services without a queue<sup>9</sup>, and the waiting time for an appointment with a specialist is a maximum of 14 days.

The creation of the Home of Warsaw Insurgents, with municipal funds, was not only the opening of another of the services—the day care centre—dedicated to this specific group, but especially the establishment of an institution with the functions of a coordinator for insurgents. It not only responds to their needs, but it is also an important factor in the diagnosis of new areas of support and helps to create a field of opportunities for their implementation.

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<sup>9</sup> More about veterans' entitlements can be found on the National Health Fund website.

## The Role and Functions of Volunteering in Caring for Warsaw Insurgents

The Warsaw Insurgents' Home gathers around it more than 100 male and female volunteers who work with the insurgents in various capacities: working directly in the Home on Nowolipie Street, spending time in the insurgents' private flats, assisting during their outings (*e.g.*, to offices, doctors) and trips organised by the Home, *etc.* As the Insurgents' Home does not have many full-time employees, volunteering becomes an important resource for the institution and the work of volunteers an essential support. In the context of the functions previously discussed, staff train volunteers in various areas such as first aid, education to old age, in dealing with bereavement,<sup>10</sup> *etc.* The aim is to prepare volunteers for their roles as educators, observers, and verifiers of the health and functioning of the insurgents. The role of the staff is not only to train, but also to help the volunteers to remain calm and rational in their approach to their duties.

On the one hand, staff try to prepare volunteers for their role as educators of the families of the insurgents, so that they do not replace the families (P1), but provide comprehensive knowledge about possible solutions to difficult situations, such as securing an elderly person, incorporating care services, or placing them in a nursing home. On the other hand, volunteers are trained to be observers and checkers, trying to look carefully at each insurgent, analysing their needs and emotional state, and respond as far as possible to their current problems and needs. According to one staff member volunteers should be vigilant, cautious in their opinions, and ready for possible interventions. It is also worth emphasising that the Home's cooperation with the insurgents is an excellent example of an individualised form of support<sup>11</sup>. Each person is treated with full respect and taking into consideration their individual needs and experiences. In this context, it poses quite a challenge – for volunteers to be attentive to various changes in an insurgent's behaviour or health condition, focusing solely on that person. As one respondent comments:

We also have this sense of heightened vigilance within us, so that if something concerns us, we check it out. But we always advise everyone to be cautious in their judgement, cautious in listening to different sides, especially if the person we want to listen to is an older person. Because there are also different kinds of diseases, dementia diseases. We teach, mostly volunteers, because the staff is a team trained to do that, that you can't ignore it, but you also have to have that reserve in yourself,

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<sup>10</sup> In this aspect, the Warsaw Insurgents' Home, for example, cooperates with the Institute of Good Death.

<sup>11</sup> As Teresa Zbyrat (2014, p.164) points out, we are currently in the process of moving away from deprivation of needs towards their individualisation by aid and care institutions.

to check if certain things are really happening, because, well, there are situations where someone has a dementia disease, shows symptoms of a disorder and some... some of these diseases are so insidious that the person from outside talks and looks like they understand everything perfectly and only if someone who knows the person well knows that something is happening to them. And we also observe that life and the body and everything changes. This change can even happen overnight. It can also be very difficult. It doesn't happen very often, but maybe someone was insanely nice and sympathetic and suddenly they've become unpleasant and unsympathetic and that are also some difficulties that volunteers in this volunteering have to face here [...]. So, with this checker, it's that kind of thing that we try to discuss the different situations that we experience, that someone notices in the team, to possibly safeguard such a person, well, and just maybe detect some illness. (P1)

Another statement from the respondent quoted above also reveals the role of staff in this process:

This is where we train people against things that are difficult for an ordinary, healthy, fit person. About situations where someone cannot live independently, about situations when a medical condition requires placement in a hospital or Health Care Centre, where they will be taken care of. And here we train in situations that support persons might experience, which is... Someone visits someone in hospital and sees that the person is in a safety belt and the standard social reaction is to cry: "God, how are they treating him?" I spend a lot of time personally explaining: "You can make the assumption that the hospital staff are incompetent, lazy and they immobilise Mr or Mrs because they feel like it. You can make that assumption. It's very unlikely, but it can be investigated, but most likely imagine that this staff has just saved someone's life because they are in such a bad mental and physical condition and so confused, disoriented that maybe they could jump out of a window or hurt themselves?" So, you really have to look at different situations with such calmness, report it, express your emotion, because it's certainly a difficult view, but don't jump right out to the conclusion that the staff are behaving badly [...]. So, our role is to calm down the certain heated emotions that come up in such situations... I even had the conversation yesterday, the member of the family shout out "I'm going to make a ruckus right there." Because how can it even be that there's no room in cardiology? Well, it can be like that. (P1)

Staff therefore act as *emotion coolers*, ensuring that volunteers (and family members of insurgents with whom they come into contact) do not react too emotionally in various situations, for example in situations involving cooperation with the health service, but instead approach it with detachment and common sense. This is a step towards effective

action – after all, you also need to be able to help (P1). Home staff and volunteers also have access to supervisors who help them in difficult situations.

### **Co-operation of the Warsaw Insurgents' Home With Other Institutions in Terms of Services Provided**

As part of its activities, which include the comprehensive coordination of aid and support for insurgents, the Warsaw Insurgents' Home establishes partnerships with various external entities to respond to the diverse needs of its residents. At least five types of established partnerships can be distinguished: in care and rehabilitation, health, food support, culture and time animation, education and security. The most common are social welfare centres<sup>12</sup>, entities linked to the City, services, cultural institutions, NGOs, private business companies<sup>13</sup> *etc.* Some partnerships are permanent, with a view to providing comprehensive care or support, others are purely ad hoc, but their common denominator is always a response to a real need of the insurgents, according to the principle that in helping it is important to listen to the other person (P1).

The Warsaw Insurgents' Home also looks after individually made proposals addressed to individual insurgents. As one interviewee recalls, they are a platform in communication between the participants of the Home and external persons or institutions. Acting as intermediaries they ensure the safety, independence, subjectivity, and autonomy of the insurgents while they make final decisions. The following statement illustrates this mission well:

We take great care that the full subjectivity of individuals is preserved. We do not dispose of these individuals. We always say to our various external partners that we do not decide for the insurgents. We are a certain platform that can pass on a request. We can express an opinion on a proposal, but we do not decide for someone that they will go somewhere, they will not go somewhere, they will do it, they will not do it... this decision is always a personal one. We also make sure that we do not treat this collective as “insurgents.” They are individuals. Each of these people has their values, their views, their character, their things that are important to them. So, we try to make sure that these initiatives, once they appear, are different externally, so that it is not

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<sup>12</sup> It can be argued that a side effect of the activities of the Warsaw Insurgents' Home is also the “disenchantment” of the image of the Social Security Office, treating cooperation with this institution as bringing only positive experiences.

<sup>13</sup> *e.g.*, one volunteer mentioned that every year one of the big construction companies organises a joint planting of potted flowers for the insurgents as a form of activating them and an opportunity to spend time together. This activity is not considered a brand promotion by the company and information about it is not made public.

the case that insurgents something and insurgents another not something. This is a heterogeneous social group. There is one thing they have in common – they were all participants in the Warsaw Uprising, but you will find out that these people participated differently in that uprising, had different functions, were of different ages. This is also some thing that matters from the point of view of how we work. We treat ourselves as a certain coordinator of the support of the offer. (P1)

The mission of taking care of insurgents' subjectivity is also expressed in the selective and careful review of offers of cooperation, given their intentions. In line with the overriding principle that the *insurgent comes first* (P1), the staff of the Warsaw Insurgents' Home try to refuse partners who instrumentally try to use the insurgents' image for their own purposes. As one interviewee comments:

If partners appear, in relation to whom we have the feeling that the only aim is to use the image of an insurgent, for what purposes? Well, you know what purposes – then we are very much against it [...]. We want to have the feeling that someone is really doing something for the insurgents, with respect for their subjectivity [...]. (P1)

The coordination of communication by the Warsaw Insurgents' Home between insurgents and the various people and entities wishing to work with them is crucial, especially given the specific nature of this group as elderly people. They often find it difficult to remember details of appointments and commitments. In this context, the Insurgents' Home acts as an assistant or manager: it watches over their plans, keeps records of the insurgents' individual commitments, and reminds them of upcoming appointments and meetings in an orderly and systematic way. As one respondent puts it:

The first such source of information is us, so we ask to be informed. I know it is difficult. I know that foundations or associations that operate from grants find it hard to explain themselves to a municipal institution. Well, because somewhere they have this feeling: "Well, but wait, why should I explain myself to someone?" Many of them don't understand that these are people who are almost 100 years old, that he will say "yes, fine" today, and he won't remember anything in an hour, and this builds up in him unnecessary anxiety. And that's what we want to avoid as much as possible, yes? Because the more he's so anxious, nervous, we want to avoid him sitting up from five o'clock in the morning waiting for some car, then, so that there's no disappointment. Well, there are really a million different cases, and the idea here is that if something is going to happen, then let it happen and let the person get as much joy out of it as possible, not some frustration, anger. Well, because they don't need that anymore. (P3)

These activities are essential to ensure the well-being of the insurgents through efficient organisation and management of their time, as well as in the context of minimising the risk of mistakes and omissions. In addition, such coordination enhances the effectiveness of external partners' collaboration with insurgents, facilitating joint projects and initiatives. As one employee notes, the Warsaw Insurgents' Home is such a protective umbrella (P3), shielding the insurgents, in various dimensions: reducing stress and the risk of negative emotions: frustration, and disappointment, *etc.*

## Summary

The Warsaw Insurgents' Home is an example of an effective support model that can be an inspiration for other institutions working for the elderly. The institution provides comprehensive assistance to insurgents, organising and coordinating support in the areas of care and rehabilitation, health, food support, culture, time animation, education and safety. The home engages active volunteers and establishes cooperation with various external partners. Due to the older age of the participants, their health and cognitive abilities, it responds flexibly to their changing needs.

The practices described in the article can be seen as an exemplification of effectively organised elderly care and effective pro-seniority policies. The individualisation of support is a key element of this model. Staff and volunteers work closely together to ensure that each insurgent receives appropriate care; both their physical and emotional needs will be taken into account (including stress reduction and attention to general well-being). This makes the insurgents feel understood and respected, which has a huge impact on their quality of life and subjectivity. The article also tries to show that, even though the insurgents are no longer standing with their guns at the barricade and do not have to fight for Warsaw, the City tries to fight for them today, understanding that they are people who need real support, due to their emerging frailties and inevitable old age. The local government seems to understand this, honouring the insurgents not only in the form of medals and monuments, but by taking care of their dignity and subjectivity as elderly people, accompanying them in a real way and organising tools of support.

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