

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
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Department of Sociology

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A Hegemonic City:

**Discursive approach to ideology and dominance in
development and planning of post-socialist Prague**

Dissertation Thesis

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2024

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Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on February 11, 2024

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References

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Abstract

Late capitalist society is dominated by specific attributes of neoliberal ideology, which are inscribed in various ways in the politics of governance in the context of geographical location, political and social organization, economic situation, and other parameters. Discourse plays a specific role in the reproduction and legitimation processes of ideology. This thesis elaborates a theoretical approach to ideological dominance in the topic of urban development, specifically post-socialist Prague. The latter, as an urban space that has undergone major changes of post-revolutionary transformation, becomes a specific arena in which the discursive manifestations of various actors contribute to the production of theoretically identified (and also other yet unrecognized) patterns of dominant ideology. These, in turn, create a discursive field in which reproductive and legitimizing schemas are produced that contribute to the fact that the theme of urban development serves as one of the significant means that reinforce the global hegemonic position of neoliberal capitalism. The thesis builds on Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical approach to identify the actor field within which the processes of reproduction and legitimation occur, and works with Bourdieu's theory of ideological domination, which he developed with Luc Boltanski. In a further theoretical contextualization of post-socialist studies and critical urban theory, the thesis develops a discursive analysis of the identified field. It seeks answers to central research questions that aim to show the main discursive mechanisms that contribute to the production of domination and to demonstrate the specificities of the delineated field in the space of the post-socialist city. The analysis renders the theoretical premises in the practice of a specific discourse, while discovering some additional elements of hegemony formation within the topic. On the other hand, it notes borderline cases and counter-discursive manifestations that confront the dominant ideology and thus create a vibrant discursive field. In line with the theory, the research shows that the performativity of ideology in urban development and the path to dominance is a complex topic with a number of specific attributes that contribute to specific decisions and discursive practices that influence the shape of urban space and the actors' access to decision-making.

Abstrakt

Pozdně kapitalistická společnost je dominována specifickými atributy neoliberální ideologie, které se různými způsoby propisují do politik vládnutí v kontextu geografické lokalizace, politického a společenského uspořádání, ekonomické situace, a dalších parametrů. Specifickou roli v rámci reprodukčních a legitimizačních procesů ideologie hraje diskurs. Práce rozpracovává teoretický přístup k ideologické dominanci v tématu územního rozvoje měst, konkrétně post-socialistické Prahy. Ta se jako urbanizovaný prostor, který prošel zásadními proměnami porevoluční transformace, stává specifickou arénou, ve které diskursivní projevy různých aktérů přispívají k tvorbě teorií identifikovaných (i dosud nerozpoznaných) vzorců dominantní ideologie. Ty následně vytvářejí diskursivní pole, v němž dochází k tvorbě reprodukčních a legitimizačních schémat, jež přispívají k tomu, že téma rozvoje města slouží jako jeden z významných prostředků, který posiluje globální hegemonní pozici neoliberálního kapitalismu. Práce staví na teoretickém přístupu Pierra Bourdieu, s jehož pomocí identifikuje aktérské pole, v jehož rámci k procesům reprodukce a legitimizace dochází, a dále pracuje s Bourdieuovou teorií ideologické dominance, kterou rozpracoval s Lucem Boltanskim. V další teoretické kontextualizaci studií post-socialismu a kritické urbánní teorie je v práci rozpracována diskursivní analýza identifikovaného pole. Hledá odpovědi na centrální výzkumné otázky, jež chtějí ukázat hlavní diskursivní mechanismy, které ke tvorbě dominance přispívají, a ukázat specifika vytyčeného pole v prostoru post-socialistického města. Analýza vykresluje teoretické premisy v praxi konkrétního diskursu, přičemž objevuje některé další prvky tvorby hegemonie v rámci tématu. Na druhé straně si všímá hraničních případů a kontradiskursivních projevů, jež dominantní ideologii konfrontují a vytvářejí tak vibratní diskursivní pole. V souladu s teorií výzkum ukazuje, že performativita ideologie v územním rozvoji a cesta k dominanci je komplexním tématem s řadou specifických atributů, jež přispívají ke konkrétním rozhodnutím a diskursivní praxi, která má vliv na podobu prostoru města a přístup aktérů do rozhodování.

Keywords

Dominant ideology; hegemony; media; discourse; urban development; urban planning; Bourdieu; Boltanski; development; post-socialism; Prague

Klíčová slova

Dominantní ideologie; hegemonie; média; diskurs; územní rozvoj; městské plánování; Bourdieu; Boltanski; development; post-socialismus; Praha

Length of the work: 76 024 words

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1. Introduction

The longer I engage with the city in my work, the more I recognize not only the complex and multi-layered terrain it represents, but even more its nature as a manifesto of the parameters of contemporary society and its global and local characteristics becomes visible to me. It is no accident that the city has become one of the central terrains of sociological research. The city is the best laboratory, as has been written many times. It concentrates social tendencies and processes in a narrow geographic area, it is a space of concentration. In late capitalist society, it has also become a place of both accumulation and production of capital. And just as the city concentrates people, technologies or services associated with capital production and accumulation, it also concentrates the ideology behind the current setting and the actors who come to dominate social position within it. In doing so, urban development in a society dominated by neoliberal capitalism becomes an arena in which the processes of reproduction and legitimation of an ideology (whose main interest is the accumulation and production of capital) can be very clearly observed and their nature can be examined. The processes of reproduction and legitimation of the dominant order in such a defined arena therefore - as I want to show below - become the basic research framework of this work.

When I look at nowadays Prague, I see the beauty and sentiment of home, my favorite spots and viewpoints, pubs and clubs, cafes I've been going to for years, views from the hills and the Vltava valley with its red roofs, the bunches of friends scattered around the city and getting together in the evenings, our old house in Nusle and my elementary school, the times at Vinohrady gymnasium, the abandoned places in the periphery and my joy of finding spaces where we feel good, creative, and belonging. They can still be found. But more and more, I also see the jarring manifestations of global capitalist culture cutting its teeth into the landscape of this city, gradually transforming it. A lot of places I used to love have disappeared. Nusle, Karlín, Žižkov, and other districts are becoming spaces for luxury housing. The visualization of success and the Prague of the future on developers' banners takes on the form of a manager in a perfectly fitting suit with a barber shop haircut. My circles, and the places that serve them, corral where it is still possible to be without generating profit and being dependent on a culture of profit - but the space for that is shrinking. Downtown has,

after the covid period, become even more of a backdrop for the foreign tourist experience, and the peripheries living their lives have increasingly given way to "revitalization" that usually takes the form of new construction of housing and work infrastructures designed only for those who can and want to keep up with the dominant culture and can financially afford it.

But it is not just the transformations we see in virtually all cities in the Global North, such as the gradual change of neighborhoods connected with the signs of capital performance in urbanized areas and the rise in prices, often associated with the influx of people into cities, but also dependent on economic flows, private investment, and commodification. Prague has specific characteristics common to cities in post-socialist regions (however much we may speculate about post-socialism as a concept), but also characteristics exclusively its own. When I returned to the Czech metropolis in the spring of 2023 after six months in Washington, D.C., where most of this work was written, I felt - without any illusions or overly positive sentiments about life in the U.S. - as if I were returning to a grayness and stodginess so similar to the usual "Western" stereotypes of Eastern Europe that I had previously ignored and not considered real. I began to see much more of the manifestations of something specific that is rooted in a mentality captured by a treacherous combination of the socialist past and current global pressures. It could mean, for example, that even in the 2020s, in a time of multiple ecological and social crises, we are unable to break free from our dependence on cars, which are still a symbol of the freedom and individualism acquired by the revolution. Just as we can't imagine the end of capitalism, we can't imagine removing the north-south arterial from the city center, and we can't talk about traffic control in the city until the ring roads are completed. The specific nature of individualistic (hence privatisation) culture has been reflected in the wide range of structures that are necessary for city life. An entire generation is facing housing unaffordability driven by an ethos of meritocracy and individualism. New government cuts to help the covid-ravaged economy will again - as so many times in recent history - hit the most vulnerable hardest.

The privatized space of the city and the resulting characterizations of actor roles and their power shape the definitions of relationships and possibilities for forming and influencing the city, its places and the people who use them. The main players are the development companies, which set the trend and further deepen the weak position of

the public administration, which tries to negotiate at least minor social benefits with a bent back, and some solutions it does not even dare to voice out loud. What I develop below in concepts such as *path dependency* or *zombie socialism* is a manifesto of an entrenched *dogma* (and eventually also a *stigma*) that, combined with global influences, forms an explosive mixture that leaves its mark on the space of the city and the people who live in it.

The longer I have been working and mentally involved in the topic of Prague's development, the better I understand the mechanism that drives these changes. More and more, I see how crucial it is *who speaks* about the city, its changes and development, and what interests they pursue. More and more, I see how important it is to follow the process that raises issues, decides their relevance and legitimacy, and thus the actors who have access to this process. *Discourse* sets the direction. And if one follows it for a long time, one notices certain tendencies. It raises questions: Why should the cure for the housing crisis be only the largest possible construction, driven almost exclusively by private actors, and the price continue to be determined by the market situation? In a situation where a disruptive climate makes the streets hot in the summer, and causes flash floods at other times, why are we reinforcing infrastructure for cars and building on city green areas with projects from which specific private companies have the sole economic benefit? Why do we regulate large transformational areas on the basis of negotiations with private developers and only let the public into the discussion when everything is settled?

As Samuel Stein (2019) has shown, the real estate industry has become one of the world's largest industries worth thirty-six times the value of all the gold ever mined, forming about 60 percent of global assets. However, despite its enormous economic power, it won't be possible to gain such a dominant position without appropriate institutional and administrative framework, and mutual ties between the important actors. The role of planners and managerial system directed by state and municipal policies is crucial within the process of dominance creation, and the alliance of private and public stands in the core of the process – called by Henri Lefebvre (1974) and David Harvey (1982) *the secondary circuit of capital* – of capital accumulation and its re-investment within the urban space, which gradually affects life in cities, urban transformations, and eventually also the local environment, determination of public space and the actors, who use it, or affordability of housing and costs of urban life.

Discourse stands as a decisive element of what we consider “normal”, what is considered as “expert knowledge”, whose opinion is considered relevant, and what is – as a consequence – eventually authorized to be realized.

As an activist, I have tried for years to enter the public debate and have had the opportunity to observe for a long time how it evolves and how it affects what is ultimately decided. The compatibility of my positions with the dominant ones has often faltered. I have long believed that we are supposed to be building a society that can be inclusive and solidarity-based, that has the potential to care for each other, and in which it does not matter how big our wallets are because the level of social wealth is so great that it must be enough for a good life for all, even within the boundaries of cities as the places of societal concentration. And that all this is manageable within the limits set by our planet. The reality, however, is, of course, different. The reproduction and legitimization of the status quo are directly related to how we talk about society and its values, who talks about it, and how much impact their talk has. In a late capitalist society, such discursive reproduction is tied to the degree of economic, social, and other capital ownership.

This is a sophisticated, complex, and ultimately fascinating process, and it is to this process that I have chosen to devote my dissertation. Within the examination of discourse, I want to try to find the roots of why some urban solutions and policies are desired, and others are taboo or – within my research terrain – at least stigmatized as “socialist” and therefore undesirable in (not only) the Czech context. I want to trace in detail those processes that determine who has the right to take the space of the city and realize their projects, ideas, visions, and goals in it; to identify the roles and contributions of specific actors in talking about urban development in a particular way, as well as the ways in which this discourse is transformed and its impact on the final form of the city. In my case, this tracing takes place in the space of media content, which, in addition to purely media statements, includes reflections of the discussion of important cases or planning policies that took place in the period under review, including authentic narratives produced in-person.

In doing so, I use specific segments of social theory (with the central emphasis on the theory of *dominant ideology*) as a central tool of understanding, in which this text is deeply embedded and fundamentally builds upon in the design of the research conducted. The initial framework is Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, which I argue,

has the ability to perfectly schematize the specific field of my research and serves as a tool for identifying the different actors, their roles and their positioning in the field. This approach goes hand in hand in my text with Bourdieu's theory of ideological domination, which he elaborated in a lesser-known text (1976) with Luc Boltanski, and I further complement it by specifying the research field in the context of research on post-socialist cities and critical urban theory. I subject the research field thus defined (the "field of urban development in Prague") to an analysis of the discourse produced (since discourse, in our case, serves as a kind of manifestation of domination and, at the same time, a legitimizing and reproducing process of ideology), which tries to communicate as much as possible with the input theory.

I therefore set the following as the central research question (which I further develop in the methodological part of the thesis and focus on the answers mainly in the second part of the work): *What are the discursive mechanisms of ideological dominance and its (re)production and legitimization within urban development and urban policy in Prague?* In doing so, I focus on a specific data sample that represents the central media discourse on the topic, while also reflecting to a large extent other narratives produced by central actors. In line with the approaches to critical discourse analysis in urban studies (Lees, 2004), I want to present my work as an action research agenda that is able to construct substantiated social critique and support positive change.

The findings show that the processes characterized by the theory of ideological dominance are relatively clearly visible in the development of the city, and not only that, they also confirm the assumptions of many critical urban theorists about the city as a place of capital accumulation and a de facto laboratory of capitalism. The dominant ideology performs distinctly there, in line with the input theory (with other additions that the research has shown), and suggests a deeper essence of contemporary society. Domination occurs in specific spaces, in specific actorial deployments, and with specific inter-actorial connections. It is supported by specific discursive and social practices (e.g., also adopted policies or planning documents), and discourse itself as a key determinant works dialectically in relation to space - the physical space of the city and discourse influence and (re)produce each other. Within discourse, central narratives are produced and play a central role in the reproduction and legitimation of ideology. In doing so, they are often associated with the hegemonic production of

knowledge deflected by particular kinds of expertise, in which the possession of symbolic (or pro-field-specific) capital (which we can call *spatial capital*) is significant. Dominance exhibits multi-spherical resistance, including possible resistance to political alignment in decision-making spheres, has the capacity to marginalize alternatives, and in the topic of urban development, moreover, through the tools of alienation, self-affirms its position by remaining beyond the reach of actors with lower capital ownership through specific mechanisms of language and knowledge.

I believe that in the text, I show quite vividly the role and influence of specific actors on the shaped discourse, the power of the private sector, although it may not be completely visible at first glance, but also the role of the produced counter-discourses that oppose the dominance in particular topics and have the ability to shape not only the discourse but also the spatial solutions themselves. Therefore, the hegemonic boundaries, although visible and present, are also somewhat blurred and affected by the distinctive nature of post-socialist Prague. However, we can see also influential role of urban social movement, although fragmented, and counter-discursive actors, who are able to step into the field and up to certain level disturb the process of domination, which takes place in a multi-layered arena, that even rearranges the actoral positions in relation to different topics.

In the context of the broader contribution of the thesis, I believe that the text makes a fairly robust contribution to studies of urban planning and development and a broader social theory on several levels. From a theoretical perspective, it deepens the possibilities of using Pierre Bourdieu's social theory in urban studies, in conjunction with the lesser-known approach to conceptualizing dominant ideology that he developed with Luc Boltanski, which I use in a specific field. At the same time, the extensive theoretical framework thus formed is applied by the thesis to the post-socialist urban setting in a way that has not been used and published before, bringing a new perspective to the role of ideology in planning both at a broader level and in the study of post-socialist planning and policies. I hope readers will find this journey as fascinating as it was for me, and that it will help us better understand the nature of contemporary cities and better shape their future to be more inclusive, more solidarity-based, and more sustainable.

2. Late Capitalism, Cities and Development

Urbanization has been accompanying human society in various waves for a very long time. From first urban settlements to the industrial revolution followed by what is sometimes referred to as "urban implosion", cities were areas of trade, centers of political governance as well as social and religious life (Gottdiener, Hohle, King, 2019: 39). Modern historical epochs have taken cities through industrial booms, economic crises, war conflicts, and finally, a gradual turn to the liberalization of the economy and the birth of a new regime of governance that we know today as neoliberalism. Its implementation and influence on life in cities and their structure (social, urban, and economic-political) went through various stages that were – among other factors – related to political development in the given geographical areas. The development of cities in (post-) socialist countries was therefore different from the cities of the global West for a certain period of time, and its reverberations are still visible today in the methods and principles of planning, public debate, and the urban structure itself. However, the dominance of the neoliberal system of governance with an emphasis on the principles of the free market and the global interconnectedness of the economy largely unified the trends characteristic of urban development, which in the post-socialist environment with post-revolutionary transformation often prevailed with even greater force (see e.g., Horak, 2007; Pixová, 2020; Sýkora, 1994).

Neoliberalism around us

The prevalence of neoliberal capitalism is usually associated with the political programs of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, which translated the theoretical ideas of Milton Friedman (see, e.g., 1962, 1980, etc.) and Friedrich von Hayek (1944, 1960, etc.) into concrete political practice, the core of which lay primarily in privatization and support of private business, intellectual individualism, increasing the efficiency of industrial production, weakening the role of trade unions, and so on. Neoliberalism is today generally associated with free market policy and the effort to remove its barriers. In the Czech context, the policy of neoliberalism is particularly associated with the era and ideas of the former prime minister – and later also the president – Václav Klaus,

under whose leadership the so-called “voucher privatization” took place, also associated with the privatization of state and municipal housing funds.

As we will be going through the post-socialist specifics of neoliberal governance with special attention given to Prague later, it is necessary to go deeper in the description of its global characteristics and common features in cities worldwide. Not only does the prevalence of neoliberal capitalism play a crucial role in the shape and economic, social, political, or environmental condition of our cities; it has become the central distinction in the scientific study of society.¹ Neoliberalism and the analysis of its role, manifestations, and impacts have become the leitmotif of famous social-scientific bestsellers or specific studies of a wide range of thematic areas, from the study of social inequalities in society to the environmental aspects of global development. It also became an excellent basis for developing new popular social theories. Neoliberalism as a world system is the alpha and omega of our existence, it is the giver of life and the sower of destruction; it is the core of the greatest political and intellectual conflict of society and, at the same time, the inseparable context of political decision-making. It stands behind environmental disasters, the rise of populists, financial crises and the growing polarization of the poor and the rich. Still, on the other hand, it is also behind many scientific advances, technological innovation, and the growing well-being of specific parts of society, including the Central European one. It has become so internalized for practically all areas of social life that we are basically no longer capable of its immanent reflection within our decision-making and everyday life.

On the contrary, compared to the historical experience of the repressive nature of communism, neoliberal capitalism has the ability to mask the exercise of its power and support its dominant position through the daily actions of the actors who live in this system. David Harvey shows the connection of the dominant system to the original values of neoliberalism, through which neoliberalism has rooted in us in association with freedom and has de facto made us neoliberals whether we like it or not. The ethos of neoliberalism that we have adopted through the exercise of its power causes changes in our actions depending on the institutional position of individuals (actors),

¹ At this point, it must be admitted that a certain polarizing role that the political dominance of the free market plays in society also applies to scientific research. This shows the power of the role that the political dimension plays not only in the examination of society but also in shaping public discourses and the state of society itself.

and also supports our individualism (Harvey, 2007: 6). The values of neoliberalism have been reflected in its basic ideological line, which presents the liberation of individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutionalised framework characterised by strong personal property rights, free markets and trade as the most progressive means of achieving human well-being. The role of the state in this case is to create and maintain such an institutional framework (Harvey, 2005: 2). It is the Václav Klaus' ODS² that has become a symbol of this ethos in the Czech environment, which, in connection with the post-revolutionary spirit of freedom, has become a fundamental premise of the dominant social discourse, and which quite possibly causes the strength of resistance to regulatory measures of freedom of business, which is one of the key parts of the topic explored here – for example, in the context of construction and housing, which form the basic factor of territorial development under the dominance of neoliberal management.

Neoliberalism has become an all-pervasive social order, and if we stick to the core of the conflict that accompanies it (i.e., the conflict of political right-left polarization that is increasingly difficult to recognize today), its power and bad historical experience have led to the suppression of alternatives and consolidated its dominant position as an ideology, although few people realize that it is an ideology. Even left oriented theorists, although they talk about the finitude and destructive power of capitalism, may be finding it difficult to see beyond its edge (see e.g., Fisher, 2009; Streeck, 2016; Žižek, 2010; and others).

Some influential theorists, such as Pierre Bourdieu or Terry Eagleton, show neoliberalism as a culturally constructed *doxa*, primarily through the context of ideology analysis.³ The interpretation of *doxa* may be very well compared to Harvey's approach and description of the process of internalization, maybe just deeper elaborated in Bourdieusian very descriptive and structural way. In Bourdieu's description, "*doxa* belongs to the kind of stable, tradition-bound social order in which power is fully

² *Občanská demokratická strana* – Civic Democratic Party; a liberal-conservative party that was part of the Czech government in the years 1992 – 1997, which was the period of Václav Klaus' being the prime minister, and later in the years 2006 – 2009 and 2010 – 2013. The 2021 election helped ODS get the prime minister's chair again and the 2022 communal election brought also the Prague's mayor back to ODS.

³ Although Bourdieu rather uses the concepts of *symbolic violence*, *symbolic power* or *symbolic domination* in order to avoid using the word „ideology“, as it has been very often misused, or used in a very vague manner (Bourdieu, Eagleton, 1992: 111). Nevertheless, he explicitly uses the concept of *ideology* in his analysis of dominance that I use as the main theoretical framework in this text.

naturalized and unquestionable, so that no social arrangement different from the present could even be imagined" (Eagleton, 1991: 157). In other words, the process of dominance creation implicitly supports the construction of ideological frames that are being reproduced and believed to be given. In the context of urban development, this creates a specific disruptions in decision-making mechanisms that may often come out from the initial plans of private investors, lack public participation and segment the creation of the city according to societal positions of involved actors.

Global urban change and framing of local patterns

In order to establish theoretical, epistemological and methodological grounding, we must be aware of the interconnectedness of the processes that have resulted in the current situation of global neoliberal capitalism and its manifestations within contemporary cities. Although factors such as the new division and distribution of labor, property-production relations, commodification of land and real estate, and others, which are associated with the birth of capitalism in the 19th century, may seem banal from today's perspective, they are still at the heart of the process of modern urbanization, although they went through shifts in their character and diversified regional manifestations. Since then, urban transformations have been defined by a relatively similar basic principles – more or less organized development is driven more or less by private capital. Yet similarly, the intervention of public administration varies regionally and except for the created regulatory frameworks, it also varies in the scale of public investments. This brings specific spatial and social manifestations that, despite specific local differences, show common features.

The growth of urbanization associated with the industrial revolution was dialectically influenced by the transformation of political governance and the breakdown of feudal relations, massive changes in the social division of labor, the development of wage labor, and also changes in land administration. The commodification of land revolutionized the way cities are built and gave rise to the real estate market that today forms the backbone of the global economy. One of the consequences of this process was ongoing spatial separation of social classes, the development of industrial areas, as well as the unprecedented growth of residential

districts. The urbanization trend concentrated social events in narrower geographical frameworks of cities.

The connection between more general global economic principles and the study of the city was not always perceived as essential as it is today. Before the 1970s, when the first political neoliberal turn occurred, the local scale and local economy were at the core of the sociological investigation of the city. Economic activity at the local level gradually came to be controlled by decisions at the global level. Businesses have become increasingly controlled and operated remotely by multinational corporations, and even local firms sell more and more products that are created through a global production apparatus. However, the local aspect of urban life is still an important part of scientific research, and it is therefore necessary to take into account macro- and micro-scales within the analysis, i.e., to understand socio-spatial relations, perhaps also in connection with the reproduction and legitimization of the dominant power principle (as in our case), we must take into account all socio-spatial levels – local, national and global (Gottdiener, Hohle, King, 2019: 14 – 15).

Urbanization has become embedded in global perspectives as an inevitable process of the Anthropocene, which becomes a product of capitalist accumulation and control (Ernstson and Swyngedouw, 2019; Malm and Hornborg, 2014). The spatial manifestations of late capitalism in urban environments shape the specificities typical of the Anthropocene, and also create a requirement for a transformation of the sociological investigation of the city, for which urbanization is a central global process (Wakefield, 2022). Urbanization, meanwhile, is a complex, multilayered phenomenon that is not only related to socio-demographic transformations and mobility processes; the political-economic context shapes it into specific transformations of urban landscapes that bring about changes in construction patterns and reinforce the role of private market actors in the production of space.

Neoliberal urban governance and research on the interconnection between processes of neoliberalisation and urban landscape transformations has been at the core of critical urban research for several decades, whether it is finding the structures that support "actually existing neoliberalism" in contemporary cities (Brenner and Theodore, 2002), or the interest in the agenda of central structures in the form of states, organisations, institutions, cities, or other actors in the context of processes of

maintaining or resisting neoliberalism in urban context (e.g. Crossan et al., 2016; Purcell, 2003).

As Stein (2019) has shown, it is the private real estate market that has gradually become a central pillar of the neoliberal system that concentrates a substantial share of global capital, and in conjunction with public governance and urban planning settings, de facto bears the key responsibility for how urban spaces are shaped in the context of social urbanization, and how their inhabitants are distributed in their spaces. At the same time, the dynamic transformation of urbanized environments under the pressure of the real estate sector requires an immanent reflection and constant revision of the conceptualizations we bring to the field of urban research from the position of critical urban theory (Brenner, 2019).

From our point of view, a precise conceptualization of global urban processes and issues such as gentrification, the development of private development projects and their impact on the surrounding *social* and *physical space*, the influence of global corporations, commodification of housing, or the effects of climate change on cities, may not be entirely necessary. We should rather emphasize an awareness of the existing global dynamics that are in constant dialectical contact with local manifestations conditioned by historical and contemporary social, political and economic contexts, in the spirit of the *socio-spatial perspective* of urban studies (Gottdiener, Hohle, King, 2019). In this way, we can then frame local processes appropriately in the context of global events, and this framing needs to be kept in mind and constantly updated. In doing so, interdependencies continue to reinforce and reproduce the characteristics of the dominant order, while their dialectical nature shapes neoliberal domination into a densely interwoven and tangled web of relations, actors, currents and capitals that are difficult to confront from critical positions. At the same time, however, it also means, in our case, to keep in mind the constant reflection of local specificities and geographically defined processes that make the research terrain we have defined a unique organism, as I want to show in the following chapters. The aim here is not to find a unified theoretical framework, but much more precisely to identify reproductive and legitimizing mechanisms.

3. Post-socialism and its specifics: Prague and beyond

As stated, the question of the role of the current global hegemonic position of neoliberal governance is always exposed to local specificities and their historical, political, economic, social, and cultural context. Although this may not be apparent from the position of the Western perception of science and often not sufficiently reflected (as it is shown further in the text), in the context of post-socialist cities, the discussion over the meaning, and thus the relevance of post-socialism in the context of global neoliberalism, is very lively and reflexive both from an epistemological and factual point of view. It is necessary to take this discussion into account to achieve a certain overview of specific approaches to the investigation of the cities of Central and Eastern Europe, to find a particular starting framework, and then to take it into account in the analysis consistently. In addition, in this chapter, I would like to show a specific transformation of management and planning in Prague, which will serve as a basic framework for delineating the research field and subsequent analysis.

On the basis of analysis and theoretical research, I argue that the terrain of Prague as a post-socialist city has undergone a specific historical, political-economic and social development, which introduces distinctive elements into the resulting spatial and decision-making and planning situation, consisting in particular of a unique administrative setup, decision-making climate, spatial planning scheme and structure, ownership distribution, and actor distribution of positions and roles. Despite the necessity of reflection on the current discussion on the investigation of post-socialist cities, I nevertheless claim that a number of general hegemonic principles of global neoliberal capitalism are also functional in the environment of our research terrain.

I see two main interrelated reasons behind this. On the one hand, it is global economic interdependence, which also affects post-socialist countries that have entered global markets with a departure from socialism. In this way, the dominant economic patterns also pass into the environment of national and local economies. Secondly, and in reflection of the discussion presented further, I am of the opinion that the specifics of the post-socialist environment, at least in the more narrowly defined context of Prague, ultimately shape an environment that is inherently neoliberal in its

principles of management, decision-making, public discussion, and spatial practice.⁴ I consider the main reasons to be the historical context, which is often pointed out in the expert discussion, and its influence on the formed discourse and dominant ideas, and also the state of social formation arising from transformation processes, which created a new organization of society and defined dominant actors.

In general terms, post-socialist cities and countries tend to be described by several central characteristics. A typical unifying line is the process of transition from a state-controlled central economy to a market economy, the emergence of a new political culture and political spectrum, new political climate, the related restructuring of public administration, the creation of new political, economic and cultural elites, relocation of public property (either within the institutional system or through the process of privatization),⁵ decentralization of management and planning,⁶ as well as characteristic spatial processes such as suburbanization, gentrification, and others.⁷ In the context of a narrower focus on urban planning and development, institutional changes gradually began to be reflected in the professional and political discussion. The complicated institutional and bureaucratic system of urban development related to spatial planning, permitting processes, and political decision-making, often broke down on informal ties that were able to influence the central principles of decision-making. In this chapter, I would like to show some theoretical approaches that will help us better understand the formation of the actor field and the current arrangement, each reflecting some aspect of post-socialist development. I do not aim to synthesize these approaches, but I consider their reflection necessary.

⁴ As shown by some scholars (see, e.g., Bockman, 2011; Rogers, 2010), neoliberalism developed in post-socialist countries has somewhat stronger roots bonded to the post-socialist nature itself, which I am trying to show later on in this chapter and also within my description of ideological performativity.

⁵ Privatization plays a crucial role within the current decisive setup of Prague. Since the 1990s, Prague has privatized over 80 % of its housing stock, remaining with only about a 5 % share of municipal housing in 2020s (Hl. m. Praha, 2004; Hl. m. Praha, 2021). Similar situation happened with privatization of construction land, which often even gained the possible scale of construction benefiting mainly private developers through the spatial plan modifications.

⁶ This could be, however, questioned as the planning system in Prague remains relatively central.

⁷ Suburbanization and gentrification arise in post-socialist conditions under a slightly different circumstances as in most of the cities, where these concepts originated – such as in American or Western European cities. In the Czech context, suburbanization was mainly tied to the rapid urban transformation related to political and economical changes in the 1990s (see, e.g., Hnilička 2005); gentrification is more of a recent phenomena occurring mainly in former poorer neighborhoods or in prosperous town centres in relation to general growth of prices in cities, especially in Prague.

Historical development of Prague and its sociological mapping

Despite its long and vibrant history, that gave birth to the charming old parts of today's Prague, most of the development related to urbanization and accumulation of capital (both economical and cultural) was tied to societal transformations that began in the 19th century and continued within the last approximately 200 years. The city found itself in the interest of researchers before the 1st World War; the interwar period then brought an increase in texts in the context of growing urbanization and construction. After World War II., there was a slowdown, however, from the 1960s, empirical studies of the city began to be significantly promoted, especially in the context of reactions to the growing housing crisis and the related development of state housing policy and housing construction. Despite the absence of significant institutional sociological research on cities in the Czechoslovak environment, significant texts were created both in the context of housing (e.g., Musil, 1971) and the discipline's connection with geography and urban planning (see, e.g., Musil, 2005; Ferenčuhová and Galčanová 2013; Illner, 2012, etc.). Sociological works at the workplaces of architects and urban planners often appeared as part of applied research. Nevertheless, sociological research in state socialism necessarily pointed to related social problems, e.g., inequalities arising in the allocation of apartments, which took place mainly through the ownership of political and social capital (see, e.g., Szelényi 1983). Other questions of urban social research were devoted to, for example, satisfaction in housing, neighborhood, leisure activities, and others, also in the context of housing construction and sanitation, and urbanization processes (Ferenčuhová, 2013: 176 – 182).⁸

For Prague, the construction boom in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s⁹ meant a fundamental reformation of the urban structure with significant overlap to the present day. A ring of panel housing estates was formed around the wider center. Some important transport structures defining the shape of the current city were also

⁸ See Ferenčuhová, 2013 also for a broader insight into urban sociology in socialist Czechoslovakia; for reflection of internationalization of Czechoslovakian urban sociology under socialism, see *ibid* 219 – 233.

⁹ The peak of socialist construction culminated in the 1970s, when around 90,000 apartments were completed annually (data by the Czech Statistical Council). At the same time, a large part consisted of cooperative and company apartments, which, together with a massive number of state apartments, were largely privatized after 1989.

created.¹⁰ The post-revolutionary sociological examination of the city in the Czech environment is related to the development of the discipline itself and brought about - also in the spirit of following international trends and domestic phenomena - a division of urban sociology into several sub-topics.¹¹

In our context, it is important to draw attention to research that continued the pre-revolutionary tradition of researching housing and planning, thus extending it also to questions of urban policy and administration. According to Ferenčuhová (2013: 206 – 209), the research responded to the reforms carried out in the transformation period after 1989 and the changing political-economic context. Cities were undergoing changes in the legislative framework of governance, reform of local administration, decentralization, privatization, and restitution, or also processes of regeneration of urban areas and urban renewal, as well as a newly emerging economic setting, which, among other things, led to certain chaos and ambiguity of the new rules (Sunega, 2005: 275; see also Surazska, 1996; Sýkora, 2002; Ferenčuhová, 2012: 66).

Gradually, new principles entered urban planning and decision-making mechanisms, often in the context of European trends – for example, the development of strategic plans and new approaches to planning.¹² With the adoption of the spirit of the neoliberal way of governing, even in the context of spatial transformation, new forms of social polarization, emerging in the context of neighborhoods gentrification or suburbanization,¹³ began to appear. At the same time, differences were manifested within cities and regions. In the context of reinvestment in cities, other phenomena such as exclusion and segregation also occurred (see, e.g., Růžička, 2011; Brabec, Sýkora, 2009; Matoušek, Sýkora, 2011 et al.).

¹⁰ To a large extent, they can also represent barriers to sustainable transformation (e.g., the North-South highway, so-called “magistrála”, on the other hand, the Prague metro network was created, which is today the central pillar of the appreciated public transport system).

¹¹ What is specific about the Czech environment is that the various sub-disciplines of the study of the city have never been covered by the term “urban studies,” as is the case at most foreign universities, and rather (despite intersections between disciplines) remain within the boundaries of traditional disciplines and individual academic workplaces.

¹² E.g., the gradual transformation of a rather conservative method of functional planning, which I describe later in the text, culminates in recent years with the preparation of the Metropolitan Plan of Prague. At the same time, Prague has adopted a number of new strategic frameworks, which are intended to help solve critical and complex problems of today, such as the Adaptation strategy to climate change (Hl. m. Praha, 2017), the Strategy for the development of housing in Prague (Hl. m. Praha, 2021), and others.

¹³ For suburbanization in the specific Czech post-socialist context, see, e.g., Hnilička, 2005; Sýkora and Ouředníček, 2007; Ouředníček, 2007; or Lokšová and Galčanová Batista, 2021.

In the context of Prague, there was a gradual transformation of previously poorer areas, such as Karlín, Žižkov, Holešovice, and currently, for example, Nusle or Libeň. A number of these processes at the local level were mapped in more detail in some student works and theses or in the form of exhibitions.¹⁴ In some cases (e.g., in Karlín in the context of the reconstruction after the floods in 2002, in Žižkov, or currently in Nusle), there was a gradual or, on the contrary, very rapid displacement of the original inhabitants going on. Often this problem concerned the Roma and socially disadvantaged groups. In a similar way, the socialist housing estates are also currently being transformed, which, especially as a result of rising real estate prices, are becoming new locations for the middle class, as well as new places in the sights of developers and investors. A separate chapter is created by former industrial sites (brownfields), which with the departure of industry into the outskirts or poorer regions undergo a rapid transformation led by mostly private investors.

Some cities including Prague have been facing outflow of former long-term residents from the inner city, who have been replaced by international managers or short-time rental apartments.¹⁵ Although, nevertheless, in the context of the concentration of economic capital in the Czech metropolis, the transformation of the historical center is taking place, it also includes an increase in tourism and Airbnb accommodation, which affects residential housing in the broader city center. On the other hand, continuing suburbanization is manifested by ongoing migration by moving to the outskirts of Prague.¹⁶

Many of these principles are characteristic for many post-socialist cities. In the context of globalization processes, there is a transformation in the services and trade sphere, which significantly influences the spatial formation of post-socialist cities. In addition to the global market's influx of brands and services, we can currently observe this in the transformations of public space and its use or modes of transport (such as the current phenomenon of shared scooters or bicycles of global multinational

¹⁴ For example the Pro/Měna Karlín exhibition in the VIPER gallery:

<http://www.vipergallery.org/vystava/promena-karlin>

¹⁵ See data from the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic:

<https://www.mistopisy.cz/pruvodce/obec/4609/praha-1/pocet-obyvatel/>

¹⁶ See data from the Czech Statistical Council: <https://www.czso.cz/csu/xa/pohyb-obyvatelstva-v-mestnych-castech-prahy-20112020>

companies). At the same time, the transformation of services has also transformed work rhythms, employment methods, and daily interactions and movements in the city.

Sýkora (2009a) describes the process of the difference between the targeting of investments under socialism and today, especially in the context of land management, thereby indirectly referring to global trends in the issue of real estate management. Internationalization and globalization of capital, deindustrialization, deregulation of the influence of the public sector, and neo-liberalization of administration are also included among other phenomena of globalization that manifest themselves in the environment of the post-socialist city (Ferenčuhová, 2013: 214). This also brings post-socialist cities closer to the shared concept of *global cities* (Sassen, 2001, 2005), albeit in their specific way.

Ferenčuhová (2013: 215 – 216) divides the explanation of urban changes in the post-socialist context into three branches. The approach of the so-called "double transition" (Temelová, 2007, 2009; Sýkora, 2009a, b) or "double modernization" (Musil, 2003: 159 – 160, or accepting the same idea using other terms - see, e.g., Gajdoš, 2009: 307; Falt'an, 2009) emphasizes the influence of two main transformation processes: the action of global forces and trends, and the transition to a market economy and democracy. In other words, this approach characterizes the action of a combination of global and local pressures and social changes. The importance of translocal ties and the role of competition between cities for investors, resources, tourists, and residents is growing. At the same time, pre-determination by previous socialist and pre-socialist development is part of it, (i.e., a certain link to the past and the legacies it creates, both spatial and social, is present). The second approach further divides the transition process into several phases. E.g., Sýkora (2009b) distinguishes the moment of "revolutionary change" after the fall of the regime, associated with the introduction of reforms, and longer-term processes of transformation as an adaptation to this "revolutionary shock". According to this approach, the transition consists of multiple processes in different areas. Compared to the shock transition, which he considers to be controlled, these processes take place spontaneously. Sýkora then followed up on his work in collaboration with Bouzarovski (2012) by creating the concept of "multiple transformations," which Ferenčuhová (2013) considers a third approach. It combines previous models in which transformations occur on several levels – institutional, social (including culture and

politics), and urban. Urban transformations represent characteristic spatial changes, such as suburbanization, commercialization of the center, and regeneration of inner cities (Sýkora, Bouzarovski, 2012: 46). On the one hand, in the *multiple transformations* system, changes occur in parallel. On the other hand, urban transformations are nevertheless linked to changes in the sphere of institutions and social changes. In this sequence, institutional changes create the conditions for social changes, which subsequently also occur within the framework of spatial adaptation (Ferenčuhová, 2013: 215 – 216).

However, it is Ferenčuhová, who, in later texts (e.g., Ferenčuhová, Gentile, 2016) develops a critique of the *multiple transformations* approach, especially concerning the process of political transformation, which takes place in a certain continuity, although with the setting of specific changes in the 1990s (as can be stated based on the approach of Sýkora and Bouzarovski). Nevertheless, the development of political transformation continues and continues to shape society. The multiple transformations approach thus reflects the current changes insufficiently.¹⁷

Golubchikov (2016) develops a similar criticism of the three-dimensional transition, especially in relation to ideology, when the process of transformation itself must be reflected as an ideological project, the goal of which is the unification of state systems under global subjugation by neoliberal capitalism. This has specific spatial implications related to the global patterns and scope of capital. Nevertheless, he attaches the most significant importance to the urban dimension, which becomes a mediator of social change and helps the ideology obtain its practical consequences.

I would allow myself to enter into the solution of the dilemma by asserting that although spatial changes are happening continuously, institutional changes have nevertheless fundamentally influenced more conceptual urban solutions and the way of planning, which is to a large extent conditioned by the post-socialist spatial plan from

¹⁷ Ferenčuhová already hints at criticism in her earlier work (2013: 216), where expresses doubts about the correctness of the conceptualization of transformation as a temporally phased process, at the end of which there are spatial changes (because they were occurring all the time continuously), as well as the prevailing emphasis on the analytical separation of local and global processes. At the same time, Ferenčuhová draws attention to the significant differences in research on post-socialist cities, which raise doubts about the generalizability and creation of a universal theory (Grubbauer, 2012; Hirt, 2013) and also to the criticism of the concepts of *transition* and imagination associated with post-socialist transformation for their ideological nature (see, e.g., Kuus, 2004; Stenning, Horschelmann, 2008; Brandstädter, 2007; Ferenčuhová, 2012).

2000 and related systems. The debate is currently largely defined by the need to modernize spatial planning. Nevertheless, the term *modernization* also carries its ideological essence, under which, in the context of post-socialist Prague, intensive development led by the dominant private sector is hidden. The reflection of the mentioned criticism is therefore absolutely necessary.

Conceptualizing transformation and the transition to capitalism

A different perspective was shown in an older text by Eyal, Szelényi, and Townsley (1998), who focused primarily on the first phase of the transformation in the context of the formation of new social elites and the transition to the capitalist system of economy. Their conceptualization of the formation of *capitalism without capitalists* gives detailed insight into the transformation of a society in which no private owner class existed before the adoption of capitalism. Nevertheless, in *post-socialist capitalism*, a relatively broad group of elites in the classical sense is formed (Eyal, Szelényi, Townsley, 1998: 1). According to Matějů (2002: 381), the authors construct a new theory of transition, which arises from the combination of *evolutionary theory* (the replacement of old socialist institutions with new ones that are more compatible with the market economy) and *path-dependency theory* (in which the functioning of new institutions is limited by the patterns of behavior and values of the old system).

Bourdieu serves the authors as a tool to illustrate the process of formation of new elites, in which those who held a greater amount of different (mainly cultural, social, or political) capitals and at the same time were able to get rid of old and unnecessary capitals and acquire new ones, became a more privileged position in the newly emerging capitalist society. At the same time, the absence of a class of owners meant that capitalism was thus formed without *capitalists*. However, the transformation of social differentiation soon created a new capitalist class. The ability to adapt to new conditions was vital in the process. Soon it became apparent that the pre-revolutionary underground intelligentsia, which had the moral legitimacy to become the political leaders of the transformation, could not accomplish this task without the help of earlier socialist managers who could manage institutions and enterprises and carry them through privatization, and economic technocrats who had the theoretical know-how for economic transformation. This created an "alliance of compromise" based on the

conjunction of specific capitals, which became the main driver of the transformation. According to Eyal, Szelényi, and Townsley (1998: 113), this alliance also gave rise to the spirit of *managerialism*, a concept that is sometimes associated with post-socialist transformation. It does not necessarily mean that managers and technocrats are real governing actors. However, they create specific *governmentality*, at the heart of which is the idea of limiting the economic role of the government in order to use monetary means to regulate the economy.¹⁸

An analogous conceptual idea of the mental setting of a post-socialist society is presented by Sonia Hirt (2012) when she uses the term *privatism* in the context of post-socialism. She characterizes it as "disbelief in a benevolent public realm and the widespread sense that to appropriate the public may be the best way to thrive in private" (2012: 4). In other words, the neoliberal belief in personal freedom implemented the freedom to own into basic mental and practical premises of life in a newly formed society. The division of private and public is central, as it is manifested in everyday practices and social and spatial arrangements. The setting of the public sphere after the transition to capitalism caused the expansion of the private and the contraction of the public. Spatially, this phenomenon led to the expansion of private development and the destruction of public space. This is confirmed by Judit Bodnar (2015: 2096) as a universal sign of public spaces in late capitalist cities, where private influence on public spaces grows and makes them commercialized. Very often, the partnership between private and public seems to be the only (and best) possible way how to maintain public spaces and have them adjusted for the capitalist functioning of current cities.

Chelcea and Druță (2016) elaborate on an interesting conceptual idea of *zombie socialism* to describe the specifics of post-socialist cities, with the background of the theoretical and conceptual incompleteness of post-socialism, especially in the context of a poor reflection of the lingering ties of socialism to the newly established democracies. As my analytical work in the Czech environment also shows (see, e.g., pp. 128), in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the tendency of economic and political elites to create specific narratives and images about socialism persists,

¹⁸ This governmentality de facto represents the neoliberal notion of individualism and the individual motivations of actors to valorize their human and economic capital in response to adequate opportunities created by monetary rules. This consequently leads to the concentration of real economic power in the centers of monetarist technology and the newly prevailing economic doctrine, especially in banks.

intending to create a deterrent example of management and administration from this period, and on the contrary, to support neoliberal capitalist patterns. Chelcea and Druță talk directly about the "use of the ghost of state-socialism as the ultimate boogeyman, disciplinary device, and ideological antioxidant (2016: 521)."¹⁹

In the Czech context, Mertl and Krčál (2013) bring a relatively innovative perspective through the concept of *neoliberal governmentality* within the framework of the characteristics of governance changes, especially in the context of related social reforms. In doing so, they indirectly followed the presented characterization of the spirit of managerialism and deepened it through a later perspective. They are based on Foucault's original concept and a number of its international reproductions in the context of the characteristics of neoliberalism, in order to describe the way of governing in post-revolutionary Czechia as primarily (an effort to) construct normality within the social discourse - that is, what is considered normal and abnormal in society.²⁰ According to other definition, *governmentality* is described as focusing on conflict and instability, and on how ways of viewing certain processes have been constituted, and how they emerged as accepted ways of knowing and acting on the world (Gribat, 2010: 34 cf. by Lokšová, Galčanová Batista, 2021: 2). As Huxley (2007 cf. *ibid*) points out, "governmentality approach enables us to see the exercise of power as a set of programs and practices interfering with a set of messy local struggles" shaped by the demands of different actors.

According to Mertl and Krčál (2013: 77), the roots of the construction of normality lie in the very essence of the neoliberal system, which defines the market principle as the "neutral," "true," and "fairest" regulatory social mechanism. In contrast to the liberal idea of free exchange, where actors have the opportunity to enter the market and participate in it, in the neoliberal idea, the essence lies in the "mutual competition of participants in market interactions, while in such a concept, the market is a mechanism for dividing actors into those who in competition survived, and those who did not

¹⁹ To characterize *zombie socialism*, they use specific examples of created hegemonic discourses and data from the areas of work, wages, the relationship between work and everyday life, income taxes, housing and others, which leads, among other things, to the conclusion that "the presence of zombie socialism for almost three decades in Central and Eastern Europe made some of these countries "more" capitalist than countries with longer capitalist traditions in Europe (2016: 521)." Through this, they also directly confront the concept of transition because neoliberal hegemony has long since ended the transition process.

²⁰ This is to a large extent close to one of the attributes of hegemony and ideological dominance, which I deal with further in this work.

(Foucault, 2009: 116)". Neoliberal governmentality promotes the ethos of personal responsibility within the normalization process, which corresponds to the restoration of the free market principle. They emphasize, however, that the still existing remnants of the welfare state prevent the enforcement of full neoliberal governmentality, and specific ideas, ideologies, and practices thus function in a certain "cohabitation". The market becomes a moral imperative. It allows capable individuals to assert themselves and identify the incompetent. Market principles are subsequently introduced into all social spheres through related value formulas, which corresponds to the gradual deconstruction of the welfare state. Part of neoliberal governmentality is also the stigmatization of those who oppose the dominant principle, that is, those who failed to assert themselves in the competitive struggle on the market (Mertl, Krčál, 2013: 87 – 92).

Furthermore, at the core of the techniques and strategies of neoliberal governmentality, among other things, is the effort to depoliticize society (because politics in the context of the free market is no longer needed, or it produces forms of action that inappropriately interfere with market logic), the objectification of the informative value of statistics, demographic indicators and economic data, the "objectivity" of "expert" knowledge, the rehabilitation of banking institutions and private corporations with public funds, the formation and maintenance of risks as motivational and control tools of the population, and others (Mertl, Krčál, 2013: 102 – 125).

Planning and political transformation of Prague

Horak (2007) evaluates the first decade of the transition in the context of the transformation of management within the local government, taking into account the specific issues of the protection and development of the historical core of Prague, as well as the development of urban transport infrastructure and planning. At the same time, he notes regional differences in the ways of transformation of the Visegrad Four (V4) and other post-socialist countries and the increased emphasis on the role and potential of self-government in the development of democracy within the V4. Among the factors that made it possible to build a solid municipal government was the transformation of municipal financing in the early 1990s, which allowed for greater autonomy in decision-making. However, this also required gaining new skills for those,

who were operating the systemic changes on the level of governance. This – often „learning by doing“ process – was conditioned by the limited experiences of new administration, low regional coordination of planning and housing policies, newly emerging pressures by the landowners and newcomers to the urban areas, and by developers, who aimed to capitalize on the new desires for safe private homes (Lokšová and Galčanová Batista, 2021: 1 – 2).

Civic organizations played a significant role in the formation of local administration, which formed a relatively strong base and tradition of civil society in Prague. They had a significant impact on the methods of management and decision-making, including urban planning. Horak (2007: 122) uses the interesting term "politics of mutual delegitimation" to characterize the mutual ties between citizens and political actors, while aspects of it are still visible from today's perspective and can be considered a specific feature of post-socialist development in Prague. Compared to Horak, Pixová (2020) considers the role of the newly dominant neoliberalism more significantly in the context of civil movements and develops a critique of the new system, including on a conceptual level. The anchoring of democracy in the post-socialist state is weak and subject to private interests shaped by the neoliberal ethos, literally speaking of a state captured by the corporate sphere. Along with neoliberal urban development, this has led to changes in the civic sphere in the last decade. Urban activists are increasingly resorting to entering municipal politics as the only possibility to effectively influence decision-making and development in the city. Among other things, this led to the development of new local political groups. The process can be seen as a continuing stage of post-socialist transformation at the institutional, political, and social levels.

Based on long-term field research, O'Dwyer (2021) talks about new forms of "post-communist populism" in the context of newly established urban movements. Populism in post-communist countries has been conceptualized from many different perspectives (see March, 2017; Kratseva, 2016; Shafir, 2008; Císař, 2017; Krygier, 2019; Shields, 2012; etc.). O'Dwyer shows that, in conjunction with other processes in post-socialist countries, this form of populism (in his way of explanation) is becoming relatively less conservative and potentially more inclusive. In this way, it realistically reflects the nature of political management in Prague in recent years, from which the explicitness of *dogma* (*doxa*, as described by Bourdieu) is disappearing within the

framework of the new political coalition. Neoliberal premises are becoming more latent and less recognizable, including in connection with greater interdependence with the civil sector, but always following the rules of the field.²¹ The populism has been adopted by post-socialist urban movements as well, characterized by O'Dwyer as ideologically flexible, with the ability to erase the political division on the right-left spectrum.²² At the core of this flexibility is the movement's focus "on the people" (and giving value to city inhabitants as the center of attention), criticism of "corrupt elites," and preference for bottom-up participation and common sense over representative or technocratic institutions (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 2013: 498 – 505). Movements are becoming more participatory and less professional than post-communist civil society organizations are usually described, reaching a wide range of civic actors through ideological flexibility and adopting a wide range of strategies. These are often neighborhood associations that are active in their locality, sometimes discursively framed as NIMBY.²³ O'Dwyer (2021: 44 – 45) assesses post-socialist urban activism in Prague as tending to reformism and campaign tactics with the aim of restructuring the planning regime. At the same time, he describes post-socialist planning regimes as incubators of populist narratives (which I consider an interesting assessment in the context of my analysis of ideology). Similarly, a performative nature of the ideological ability of the elites to (sometimes) better hide the true neoliberal nature of their actions and narratives, can be visible in this approach to framing of populism.

To this day, the Prague method of land-use planning continues to a large extent from the socialist era. The currently valid territorial plan from 2000 is fundamentally linked to the socialist way from the 1970s (Horak, 2007: 135). According to Roubal (2019), the first post-revolutionary plan from 1992 had a more protective nature, and its primary purpose was to prevent unrestrained urban transformation. This corresponds to Hirt's (2012: 76) claim, according to which it is not unusual for post-

²¹ This differs, for example, from Pixová's (2020) explicit criticism, which shows the performative capabilities of neoliberalism in capturing public institutions, including the ability to conceal the ideological essence of management and decision-making. In her approach, neoliberalism is explicitly performative, capturing anything that comes in its way.

²² In our case, political vagueness is also one of the characteristics of urban movements in post-socialism, which Pixová also points out (2020: 29): "In my research, I discovered Czech citizens and activists rarely criticize the new global form of [neoliberal] political economy...Instead, they frequently see urban problems and controversies as a local problem, anomalies in an otherwise well-functioning system." This is subsequently confirmed also within my own research presented here.

²³ The activity of each group is different, and the label NIMBY is rather used as a defamatory label created by construction supporters.

communist countries that although planning institutions have changed, the central principles have remained the same. Perhaps this is also why the Prague conceptual style of planning can be considered relatively conservative. O'Dwyer (2021: 46) attributes insufficient participation and increasing clientelism in planning and development in Prague to institutional factors, especially in the context of decentralization and insufficient know-how and capacity of municipalities (Hoffman, 1994; Maier, 1998). In addition, the way of planning, in the context of growing pressure from investors, led to an increasing number of territorial changes underlined within the spatial plan, which on the one hand increased the capacity of development, and on the other led to the prolongation of permitting processes, which is another relatively frequent argument in today's public discussion (see pp. 103).

The city's central town hall has long been under the influence of a strong right-conservative neoliberal party (ODS), whose government – among other characteristics – was linked to major corruption cases.²⁴ However, more fundamental changes took place in the last ten years, when TOP 09, ANO, and the Pirate party gradually took turns in the city's leadership. With the TOP 09 government, we can associate the beginning of a change in thinking about the way of planning, which gradually began to deviate from functional planning and gave birth to the idea of the new Metropolitan Plan, which aims to bring greater flexibility and support the development of the city. However, this also carries specific risks, especially regarding ensuring sufficient amenities, heritage protection, or the physical dimensions of future construction, not to mention the ideological motivations of such transformations in the planning system.

The Metropolitan plan was, to a large extent, intended to become a symbol of a technical-ideological turn in planning and definitively break the threads of socialism in the current development of the Czech metropolis. However, in the context of the character of the field of territorial development (see Chapter 6.) and the actors involved, the character of civil society outlined here, and the engagement of some of its representatives at the municipal political level, the Metropolitan Plan became much more the arena of a complicated discussion about the future vision of the direction of Prague's development. In it, two dominant ideas – in a simplified way – compete: the idea of necessary development as a tool for the international, thus global

²⁴ In the spheres of Prague activists, the era of former mayor Pavel Bém was referred to as a period when people "were going to the city hall with plastic bags," which referred to carrying bribes.

competitiveness of the metropolis, and also as the only and necessary tool to ensure affordable housing for the people of Prague. In contrast, an opposing discourse is developed in the public discussion, emphasizing the necessity of regulation to prevent unrestrained development, from which private investors and development companies in particular benefit. The result of this discussion is gradually transformed into new regulatory mechanisms, such as spatial studies conducted on the most valuable transformation areas (brownfields), as well as the first signs of imposing more fundamental requirements of the local government on private investors.

In this context, O'Dwyer (2021: 54) speaks of an anti-communist narrative frame produced primarily by the initial leading author of the Metropolitan Plan, the architect Roman Koucký, and his close collaborators (at the heart of which is the pressure for construction development and planning flexibility); and anti-neoliberal, which was represented in particular by activists and also the Green Party during its tenure at the Municipality, when the conflict over the future form of planning was sharpened at the political and civil levels. However, as Pixová (2020: 158) points out, following the concept of *neoliberal governmentality*, the discussion was dominated by a narrative created by architects and the developer lobby (i.e., "experts" within the field) and promoting urban renewal and gentrification.

The result of the elections in 2018, in which a member of the still relatively new and (supposedly) innovative Pirate Party became the mayor of Prague,²⁵ more deeply demonstrated the gradual transformation of the municipal governance nature. Within the process, the resonance of the positively accepted belief in the image of Western capitalism and the echoes of the socialist institutional system with all its limits (including non-transparent and corrupt decision-making and the effects of the culture of privatism) were transformed into an image of a reform-populist narrative frame (O'Dwyer, 2021: 56). This brings changes to methods of management and gradually partially implements some principles of positively perceived development of cities in the sense of sustainability and good governance. However, it also fulfills parameters of the characteristics of the dominant ideology, which I analyze later in this work. Neoliberal

²⁵ The eventually governing political coalition included, except of the Pirate Party, the middle-class civic group with a strong cultural and social capital Praha sobě, and a conservative center-right coalition of TOP 09 (with the leading figure of the architect and vice-mayor for regional development Petr Hlaváček - see pp. 132 -, who initiated most of the changes in planning and decision-making lately), the Christian Democrats, and the STAN, party of mayors.

principles are becoming less recognizable, but they are still present. At the same time, even the new government could not avoid robust corruption scandals. The elections 2022 brought the Mayor's chair back to the hands of still dominantly neoliberal ODS, which brings another interesting shift yet to unfold.

It should also be mentioned that although the planning sphere and the broader political spectrum represented in the Prague City Hall have historically reflected to a large extent the neoliberal dominance in the approach to urban development, the political climate and the representation of political parties at City Hall and in the local districts also reflects a polarised debate - in some districts, civic movements and/or more progressive parties (Pirates, Praha sobě, Greens) were elected in 2014 and 2018, which largely influenced the nature of political action and related debate. This does not mean, however, that the neoliberal ethos has been eradicated, but rather, in the spirit of the characterised form of post-communist populism, that it has become diluted and more latent. Conversely, in the context of the return of ODS to rule at the City Hall in 2022, we are witnessing the take-back of an unapologetically neoliberal narrative framing of specific issues.

The conceptual dilemma of post-socialism

As I have shown, the characteristics of the post-socialist situation are significantly complex, show regional differences, and manifest themselves in many areas of social life. Its conceptual disability is, therefore, problematic and subject of lively academic debate. How to build a theory of post-socialism based on what has been said? Is it even possible? Can we include all the specific differences? The task of this part is not to answer these questions, however, at least a brief reflection of the discussion may be helpful to frame the research terrain correctly.

Virtually all theoretical approaches to the post-socialist situation have met with some kind of criticism. The definitional scope of the term *post-socialist* is largely defined by the prefix *-post* itself. According to Tuvikene (2016: 512 – 513), this concerns a departure from ideas of collective, socialist living and state governing patterns toward individualism and market orientation. Indeed, the extant literature on urban changes in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries has centralized the rise of "privatism" and gating (Hirt, 2012), ad hoc urban planning (Ruoppila, 2007),

and the pluralization of rules and actors in *heteropolitization* (Gentile, Tammaru, and van Kempen, 2012). Unlike neoliberalism, which presents the above-mentioned processes rather as universal political ideas implemented within the global space, post-socialism refers to the historical-cultural and socio-political condition that arose as a result of the disintegration of the socialist regime. This makes it more specific and brings this situation to the fore. At the same time, it also refers to the period after the end of the Cold War (Chari and Verdery, 2009), which, among other things, is characterized by the weakening of left-wing parties in the West, new migration flows from the East, and the opening of new important markets in countries behind the Iron Curtain and also stepping of those markets' actors on the global market (see also Rogers, 2010).

Another approach is shown, for example, by Nancy Fraser (1997), for whom the state of post-socialism is reflected in increasing inequality, marketization, and the lack of broader alternative discourses, which culminates in the division of policies of *redistribution* and *recognition* (Tuvikene, 2016: 513). From our point of view, we can emphasize here the fundamental influence also on the formation of the discourse, its nature and its mutual interweaving with decision-making and professional argumentation in urban development. Among the problems and theoretical doubts faced by the use of the concept of *post-socialism*, despite its constant topicality and relevance, are, for example, regional anchoring (usually when using the term, we are talking about the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union), the incompleteness and continuous development of the processes that are associated with post-socialism,²⁶ or the strong connection of post-socialism with *common knowledge*, i.e., attaching meanings within the general public discussion, which further complicates conceptualization (Ferenčuhová, Gentile, 2016: 487 – 488).

The different trajectories of CEE countries show themselves again even after the democratic revolutions, which in addition to conceptual problematization, also calls into question the integrity of the CEE region itself. As Hirt (2016: 500 – 501) also shows, it is not so much about the exact characterization of the trajectories of specific states and cities. However, the awareness of significant differences is fundamental when

²⁶ Especially the process – legitimately questioned nowadays – of *democratization*, as well as *marketization*, which in the context of more than 30 years after political coups reaches new specific dimensions. The behavior of markets in the post-socialist countries would deserve a comprehensive separate analysis.

perceiving the conceptual complexity of *post-socialism*. Last but not least, she pauses over the future of the term, which implicitly lacks imagination for future development.²⁷

Another problem is the dilemma between focusing on the future of the theory of post-socialism and empirical research. According to Tuvikene (2016), post-socialism must be understood as an abstract and theoretical concept rather than a descriptive one. At the same time, it must be de-territorialized, i.e., it must be applied to specific aspects of cities and their societies rather than territorial units. The vagueness of the term makes it possible to work with all approaches published so far, which can be considered an advantage.

Hirt, Ferenčuhová, and Tuvikene (2016), therefore, propose to bridge these pitfalls through a closer connection of the investigation of post-socialist cities with the concept of the *socialist city*, i.e., to a certain extent, they require paying more attention to the socialist past. As Hirt (2016: 497 – 501) shows, although the post-socialist city as a term is very complex and full of meanings, it cannot exist without the socialist city. Socialism, on the one hand, defined the socio-spatial dimensions of post-socialist cities in a very fundamental way, both in terms of comparatively more generous public spaces, especially in the context of ceremonial spaces and rings of residential development. On the other hand, it is often associated with relatively lower class segregation in neighborhoods (although it is by no means possible to speak of its disappearance - see, e.g., Szelényi, 1987) and a lower degree of marginality (which was, however, rather better hidden), or a relatively high share of industrial production. These characteristics of the socialist city shaped the main functions of the unique political economy of socialism, especially concerning the greater power and ability of the socialist state to control urban land, real estate, and means of production (Banerjee, 2004; Hirt, 2008, 2012, 2013).

In some authors (see, e.g., Dangschat, 1987; Hegedüs, 1987; Tosics, 1987), on the contrary, we see a tendency not to use the concept. Mutually distinctive oppositions between descriptions of the *socialist* and *capitalist city* nevertheless persisted in the

²⁷ Ringel (2022) – while emphasizing the theoretical attributes of the temporal multiplicity of the concept – suggests, that rather than abandoning the concept itself, it is necessary to re-think the perception of time in relation to post-socialism with regards to the future. Despite the heated critical debate, according to him, post-socialism still provides essential characteristics of the transition from socialism to capitalism, especially concerning the ideological specificity of post-socialism, in which he also sees potential for future research.

scholarly discussion even after the fall of the Iron Curtain, while in some cases, the socialist city serves as a conceptual model for understanding post-socialist patterns and transformations (see, e.g., Gentile and Sjöberg, 2006: 711; Tsenkova, 2006: 45).

I consider the perception of the role of socialist legacy and its influence not only on current decision-making methods but, above all, patterns of thinking and the discursive climate, essential in the context of my research field. However, rather than the research of socialism itself, from my point of view, a reflexive involvement of the socialist past is needed to understand the universally created narratives that speak to the resulting image of the management system.

Reflection of the theoretical position of research on post-socialist cities

In the context of global urban social theory, some authors (e.g., Ferenčuhová and Gentile, 2016) draw attention to the poor reflection and visibility of post-socialist/post-communist studies in urban studies, which leads to frequent distortion and degradation of research on post-socialist cities. Despite the relative (primarily regionally anchored) development of the study of post-socialism in recent years, the use of ideas produced by Western science is present within countries and states beyond the border of the former Iron Curtain, while there is no transfer in the opposite direction, i.e., from the countries of the region to the field of global science (see e.g. Sjöberg, 2014; Grubbauer, 2012). This ultimately reflects the overall post-colonial nature of contemporary science, which in the context of urban research is significantly framed by Anglo-American and Western theory in general (Ferenčuhová, Gentile, 2016: 483).

In a similar spirit, criticism is developed by a number of authors. Soaita (2019), for example in the context of housing research, fundamentally criticizes the unreflective transfer of the concepts of the analysis of neoliberalism as a lens for understanding the practice of housing in the post-communist space, especially concerning the specifics of financialization processes or conceptual dichotomies that are formed within the framework of dominant scientific approaches. Ouředníček (2016) develops criticism against the background of the concept of *developmentalism* – the belief in the gradual restructuring of former socialist cities along the Western model and the gradual "correction" of their socialist character. During the nineties, this became the dominant

paradigm of urban studies in most CEE countries. A strong confidence in Western theoretical concepts' descriptive and explanatory powers was included. Like other authors, Ouředníček points out that decades of research on post-socialist cities have shown the need to search for new regionally specific concepts, which, according to him, can also help greater internationalization and recognition of post-socialism research in the international debate.²⁸

As the main reasons for the dominance of Western approaches, Ferenčuhová and Gentile (2016: 483 – 484) see, on the one hand, the anomaly of post-socialist cities in the sense that classical approaches to the functioning of capitalism require a certain correction here, which impairs the ability of locally based studies of post-socialism to contribute to global urban theory.²⁹ On the other hand, Western conceptualization creates from post-socialist cities isolated areas, which, in addition to the aforementioned anomalies, also creates the “non-modernity” of these cities from the point of view of the first world urban theory. Theory produced outside this Western "exclusive" club is perceived as particular and, therefore, less important. Leitner and Sheppard (2016: 230) talk about the hegemonic nature of Western science, which, nevertheless, through its characterization – often based on local observation generalized to universal knowledge – has low universal validity. In the 1990s, this led, among other things, to the fact that in the post-socialist space, there was a tendency to conceptually catch up with Western science. However, recently - as we have already mentioned - the number of critics of such procedure has been increasing (besides the above mentioned, further, e.g., Hörschelmann and Stenning, 2008; Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008; Ferenčuhová, 2012; Hirt, 2012).³⁰

To briefly reflect the future development of the theory of post-socialist cities, Ferenčuhová and Gentile (2016: 486 – 490) find three main challenges: (1) the content

²⁸ Other authors (see, e.g., Robinson, 2005, 2011, 2013; Roy, 2009; Jacobs, 2012; McFarlane and Robinson, 2012; and others) often recognize the value of neoliberal criticism and the characteristics of neoliberalism produced by Western science within the framework of criticism, but emphasize, for example, the regional conditionality of universalized conclusions, which often comes from a handful of cities in the northwestern global quadrant.

²⁹ According to the authors, the approach of Sýkora and Bouzarovski (2012) and their concept of *multiple transformations* succeeded to a certain extent - however, the concept (as I have already mentioned) was criticized as it does not sufficiently reflect the changes that took place after the transformation in the 1990s.

³⁰ At the same time, post-socialism studies can also be included in the broader context of the creation of science. Tuvikene (2016: 508) shows that post-socialism research also influences the development of post-colonial studies, which is reflected in comparative research (see, e.g., Robinson, 2006, 2011; McFarlane, 2010).

and relevance of central concepts – primarily in the context of concepts such as post-socialism, transition or legacy, and consequently their links to Western theory and related concepts of a more global nature; (2) the role of the socialist past in shaping the present and future – which, among other things, is emphasized by Ferenčuhová in particular as a central key for understanding the present (see Ferenčuhová, 2016: 501 – 508); and (3) the contribution of the post-socialist world in theorizing the nexus between social change and urban space, whereby the relationship between social change and urban change is valid for all cities, and the post-socialist specificity can thus have a useful contribution in terms of developing new conceptual tools.

Kinossian (2022: 1240) adds the following on the topic of linking global urban theory and approaches to post-socialism: “There may be at least three areas of dialogue around the research on the post-socialist city. Firstly, protean post-socialist processes offer a harsh test for urban theories if they seek to claim global relevance. Secondly, the diversity of transition outcomes challenges the variegation of the liberal capitalism thesis because the latter has geographic limits. Thirdly, the emerging new state capitalism requires analytical scrutiny of its variants, including state-led and illiberal forms currently dominant in China and Russia.” In our case, it continues to increase the appeal for reflection on regional specificities and their historical and social development, but it does not show too many ways for theoretical synthesis.

Therefore, it is not ambition of this work to create a theoretically precise framework of a specific post-socialist city such as Prague, as the theoretical discussion is vibrant and I am not comfortable with sticking to just one theoretical approach. For my purposes and goals, I believe it is important to keep in mind an immanent reflection of specifics of the research terrain, its legacies and impacts that the socialist past and post-socialist transformation had on it. Nevertheless, the global nature of neoliberal politics and rootedness of global capitalist principles in everyday actions are present here, and are actually at the core of my interest. On the one hand, I hope that this more detailed reflection will help to better frame the topic, on the other hand, I still want to take as my starting theoretical framework the foundations of critical urban theory and the approaches of practice and field theory and theory of ideological domination outlined in the following chapters. I am of the opinion that they are not in conflict with the aforementioned polemic, but nevertheless exist in a dialectical relationship and complement each other within the text.

4. Social space, social field, capital and the urban question

I was considering the use of Bourdieu's theory within the urban research for years and finally, here I want to develop it in the defined field of research. Eventually, I am by far not the only one who has decided to go the Bourdieusian way and as I show later, all the different studies of urban spaces using it proved it helpful and relevant.

The theory managed to gain a relatively strong position against many critics,³¹ and at the same time demonstrated considerable flexibility and potential for use in new sociological approaches and different thematic directions³² as well as its own theoretical reconfiguration.³³ Bourdieu's central theoretical frameworks and concepts, (i.e., *habitus*, *capital*, the *social field*, and relations within the field, including the distribution of power positions), the related concepts of *symbolic violence* and *symbolic power*, as well as his work on culture, education and the reproduction of inequalities, are most frequently encountered. As I will soon show, the benefits of his theory are excellent for illustrating actor positions within the framework of urban development, decision-making methods, the creation of discursive dominance, and ultimately also the reproduction and legitimization of ideology inside and outside the field.

The basis in the theory creates what Bourdieu called a *social space*, which represents a particular set of *social positions* homologously connected to a specific set of activities and goods. In the distribution of *social actors* within the social space, there are mutual relationships through which mutual influence takes place. It connects social status, associated dispositions, and taking positions or choices made by social agents (actors). In the social space, Bourdieu places actors on the basis of two main principles of differentiation – *economic* and *cultural capital*. The mutual proximity of actors in this primary mode of division will also mean their proximity in other areas and vice versa (Bourdieu, 1998: 12 – 13). Economic capital can be understood in the classic Marxist sense of material resources, cultural capital can be perceived as the sum of education and social origin, but it is also closely connected with *social capital*, when, for example,

³¹ See e.g., Adams, 2006; Croce, 2015, 2019; Dopita, 2006; Emirbayer, 2010; King, 2000; Petrovic, 2013; Schatzki, 1997; Shusterman (ed.), 1999; Tittenbrun, 2017, 2018; Yang, 2014, etc.

³² See e.g., Bathmaker, 2014; Byrne, 2000; Chan, 2004; Eder, 1993; Garrett, 2007; Girling, 2004; Haluza-DeLay, 2006, 2008; Karol, Gale, 2004; Power, 1999; Strandbu, Krange, 2003; Vašát, 2012; Waterfield, 2015, etc.

³³ See e.g., Gerrans, 2005; Lane, 2006; Latour, 2005; Lizardo, 2004; Margolis, 1999; Warde, 2004, etc.

the level of education determines our social contacts. The basic binary division according to two types of capital is not final; on the contrary, the resulting position of the actor in the social space, i.e., the social field, is also influenced by other types of capital. Bourdieu expands the basic dichotomy of capitals to include the mentioned social and also symbolic capital. However, as pointed out by Růžička and Vašát (2011), the concept of capital is better understood as formless, taking on specific forms only depending on a specific social and historical context, especially within the study of a specific social field.

Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* then refers to *social dispositions* based on social conditions associated with the individual's given status. Each class of positions corresponds to a particular class of habitus, that is, a class of attributes, practical activities, and material possessions of actors or groups of actors. For each actor or group of actors, this set is different depending on their social position (Bourdieu, 1998: 14). In other words, a specific location in the social space is internalized for the actor within the set of dispositions and mental categories that the actor uses in their actions. From a methodological point of view, it is not possible to promptly observe or verify habitus. As Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) show, habitus should be understood more as a hermeneutic tool presented by the researcher in order to identify, describe and analyze specific features and actions within the social environment. Another approach (Reay, 2015: 22) shows the habitus as a reference to a set of deep inner emotions that connects this inner emotional world of individuals with external social and structural processes (Mosselson, 2020: 280). However, within my analysis, I mainly work with the concept of capital.

The actors' capitals and habituses, in combination with the actors' actions, also determine their distribution in partial *social fields*. We can imagine these as certain clusters in the general social space, which actors define on the basis of dispositions, capital, and interests and in which social actors build or maintain their social position. There can be countless social fields, and actors can and usually do operate in several fields at the same time. However, it can also be true that some social situations take place outside the social field, or take place in several fields at the same time. There are specific rules of the game in them, and new forms of capital are also acquired in them, which are specific to the given social field (e.g., in the scientific field, an actor

can acquire educational capital, in sports, sports capital, etc., while maintaining the basic division of capital)(Růžička, Vašát, 2011: 130).

It is capital that determines the position of an actor within a given social field, both in terms of the volume (measure) of specific capital and in terms of its structure (i.e., the ratio of specific types of capital – economic, cultural, social, or in connection with capitals for the field specific ones)(Wacquant, 2002: 22). It is a decisive factor that will define the actor's ability to maintain or strengthen their social position within the field and social space. The key is the total volume of capital (primary dimension) and subsequently also the relative distribution of the volume of different types of capital in total capital (secondary dimension)(Bourdieu, 1998: 14). At the same time, field-specific capital (which can also include basic forms of capital – economic, social, etc.) is important. Thanks to it, actors are able to perform forms of identities and signs that are valued within the field, which allows them to achieve social dominance (Mosselson, 2020: 279).

The whole system works on the principle of relationality, which is the basic premise of Bourdieu's theory. If someone occupies a high position in the system of capital distribution, someone else must occupy a low position. At the same time, there are relationships and connections between the actors. This schematic concept makes it possible to imagine any social actor and, in a certain way, to define their social position in the social space, i.e., a specific social field. The premise of relationality is a key prerequisite for characterizing ties in the social space and partial social fields, with which we will work extensively here.

Loïc Wacquant summarized Bourdieu's work as a critique of "inherited categories and accepted ways of thinking and the subtle forms of governance that technocrats and intellectuals brandish in the name of culture and rationality" and a critique of "established patterns of power and privilege, as well as the politics that support them" (Wacquant, 2002: 69). Such a definition can also be read as support for a critical and committed approach of a sociologist, especially in relation to the examination of power positions, relationships and categories, and decision-making methods and mechanisms. According to Wacquant, Bourdieu describes the multifaceted processes by which the social order is reproduced and through which the practical acceptance of existing hierarchies is enforced from those in a subordinate position. In this way, Bourdieu de facto describes the structural violence arising from

the process of legitimization and consolidation of structures of inequality (2002: 69). The close connection with power and techniques of governance (linked to the processes of distribution and hierarchy of power constructed by capital) and the way of their legitimization and reproduction are among the central motivations that lead me to use Bourdieu's theory in the topic of territorial development and the study of cities.³⁴

Bourdieu comes to town

The flexibility of Bourdieu's theory has allowed it to be widely used across fields of study, urban studies being one of them. Applying the aforementioned concepts to the city sphere is therefore far from being the first such attempt in the context of international science. However, for Bourdieu himself, the study of the city was not a very visible area of interest; nevertheless, the concept of space is already more significant in his context, especially in connection with his definition of *social space*. He took spatial aspects into account already in his early field research in Algeria and the historical province of Béarn. These early studies show the spatial correlation of social and mental structures, in other words, that social distance and power relations are expressed and reinforced by distance in space, and that access to sources and centers of accumulation of different kinds of capital is a key determinant of the speed and strength of social change (Wacquant, 2018). In later materials, we find a significant emphasis on space, especially in *The Weight of the World* (1999). Finally, we should mention an article originally from 1991, which was published in 2018 in Wacquant's English translation in a special issue of the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research (IJURR)* where he directly focuses on the manifestations of social space in physical space, especially in the context of social inequalities. Here he directly showed the principle through which his theory was used by a number of other authors, namely the process of creating dominance in space through the ownership of capital, the

³⁴ Bourdieu did not avoid criticism; on the contrary, some authors refer to him as one of the most criticized sociological classics (Jenkins, 2002), while the criticism was multifaceted and touched the vast majority of his work, including the key concepts mentioned above. Nevertheless, as Jenkins stated, the scale of critique also confirms the unquestionable quality of Bourdieu's work. For the purposes of this text, however, I consider the polemics on the criticism way too complicated, and it is possible to refer to other works devoted to the criticism of the theory (which I have pointed out in the beginning of this chapter – namely for example King, 2000; Warde, 2004; and furthermore for example Alexander, 1995; Gartman, 1991, 2002; Desan, 2013; and many others).

different nature of social and physical space, and the role of habitus in shaping the social environment associated with a specific physical location.

For Mike Savage (2011), who is – together with Loïc Wacquant – among the central authors who emphasize Bourdieu's contribution to the study of cities, his concepts represent a bridge between the often separated theoretical frameworks and the empirical study of the city. According to Savage, urban theory focuses on one hand on new technological dimensions of urban development, on the other hand, a number of empirical studies focus on inequalities and stratification in the urban environment. For some authors, the "spatiality of class" becomes a central phenomena of contemporary cities (Parker et al., 2007 in Savage, 2011: 511). Marxist-oriented approaches, which form the basic interpretive framework of this work, have been able to create a strong analysis of neoliberal restructuring of cities and modes of governance, however, they often remain outside sociological debates about ways of conceptualizing inequality (ibid). This can be seen in several texts presented here, which in most cases show the concrete effects of the neoliberalization of governance and decision-making in cities, but give up attempts to fit the described processes into the conceptual frameworks of social theory, or deal with a certain reanimation and updating of the Marxist way of describing society. Conceptualizing urban policies through the theory of Pierre Bourdieu and relational sociology allows us to uncover the deeper logic hidden in the choices of individual stakeholders within urban politics (Shin, 2013: 268).

For a relatively long time, the connection between Bourdieu's work and the study of the city took place mainly within the framework of planning theory or in social geography, where Bourdieu was already used in the 1980s by, for example, Allan Pred (1984), when he described power relations and the ways of their social reproduction. Thanks to Bourdieu's broad focus, which also included research methods, the investigation of the nature of knowledge, or the emphasis on a reflexive approach to academic practice, his work also appeared in the literature of planning theory as support for various theoretical perspectives. These include calls for planners to make greater use of his approach in order to improve and be more reflexive in relation to both the nature and quality of knowledge involved in planning and within planning institutions themselves and in specific urban development processes (Gunder, 2011; Howe & Langdon, 2002). As we mentioned above, engaging Bourdieu's work also

helps draw attention to the subtle or hidden ways in which power manifests itself in planning practice and the ways in which it flows (Mace, 2016; Shin, 2013). These examples show how the work of Bourdieu can be transferred within planning theory to the practice of planners and the flows of power inside and outside spatial planning (Mace, 2017: 120).

For example, Devas and Rakodi (1993) call for the focus of planning theory on the management of governance, politics and related agreement making. The demand to create more inclusive planning models stems from the twisted socio-spatial relations created by contemporary urbanism (Shatkin, 2011), which also leads to a demand for greater reflexivity of the normative roles of planners and experts in the framework of social change (see Campbell, 2012; Wu and Brooks, 2012 in Shin, 2013: 268) .

In France, Bourdieu's conceptual framework in connection with the city was developed by, for example, Pinçon (1976a), taking into account the importance of the three mentioned concepts (*field, habitus, capital*) for urban studies and the possibilities of their application. In his other work (1976b), he uses the framework with regard to the social structure of social housing projects. At the time, however, this system was not accepted in the French environment of urban studies, which was significantly influenced by a distinctly structuralist form of Marxism, represented primarily by Manuel Castells or Nicos Poulantzas. For many, it diverged from the economic conception of class by emphasizing different forms of capital and their influence on the formation of *social space*, just as it was difficult for many Marxists to accept the internalization and entrenchment of the social structure in the form of a habitus (Pinçon-Charlot and Pinçon, 2018: 118 – 119).

On the scale of international science, several authors (Wacquant, 2008a, 2008b; Allen, 2008a, 2008b; Butler, Robson, 2003; Watt, 2008; Mace, 2017; Savage et al. 2005, Savage, 2010; and others) use the concepts of *habitus, capital, or social field* in the spirit indicated above. The concepts are able to allow a theoretically strong anchoring of urban theory so that it takes into account the significance of flows and mobility, and at the same time, it is able to place them in the processes of social stratification. However, the use of these concepts still represents a rather isolated and fragmented section of urban studies. This is partly due to the fact that Bourdieu is seen as a reductionist sociologist with regard to his limited interest in geography and – despite the hints mentioned above – a rather problematic ability to create satisfactory spatial

dimensions in his work (Hillier & Rooksby 2002), which manifested itself mainly in his later texts dealing with the critique of neoliberalism, in which the tendency to defend conventional national models without sufficient reflection of the principles and manifestations of globalization is shown (see, e.g., Bourdieu, Wacquant, 1999 in Savage, 2011: 512).

The uncertainty regarding the spatial dimension of Bourdieu's work stems, according to Mace (2017: 121), from both the longer period of time and the order in which his works were published in English (with many still awaiting translation). At the same time, Bourdieu's interest in space changed throughout his career depending on the development of different aspects of his theory (Savage, 2011). A different emphasis on the spatial dimension of his texts is reflected, for example, by Hubbard and Kitchin (eds. 2011) in the second edition of *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*,³⁵ the citation of his work appear in later texts on relational planning (e.g., Healey, 2007), and Hillier and Rooksby (2002) devoted a complete edited work to trace the relationship between Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* and place. The role of place and space is highlighted by Bourdieu in various phases of his work, including in his earlier texts, as I already mentioned before (e.g., when he examined how physical space reflects social relations in the Kabyle household – Bourdieu, 1990; Fogle, 2011; and more also later in this text).

The possibilities of using Bourdieu for the study of cities were significantly deepened by Wacquant and Savage in a jointly organized workshop at the University of York at the turn of May and June 2012.³⁶ The workshop brought together researchers engaged in the study of Bourdieu's concepts (in addition to the above, also *symbolic power* and the concept of *doxa*) in connection with grasping and analyzing actions, structure, and politics within the city. Both in their subsequent texts (Wacquant, 2018; Savage, 2021) draw specific conclusions and impressions from this encounter. For Wacquant (2018: 91), this results in three dimensions that represent both the motivation for organizing the workshop, but also act as a reaction to this event:

³⁵ Bourdieu is not included in the first – this points to the process characterized at the beginning of this paragraph.

³⁶ Symbolic power and urban inequality: taking Bourdieu to town
<https://www.york.ac.uk/sociology/about/department/2012/taking-bourdieu-to-town/#tab-1>

- 1) Bourdieu's early and late empirical interest in urbanization and the spatial dimension of dominance;
- 2) an explanation of the topological mode of argumentation and trialectics of symbolic, social, and physical space at the heart of Bourdieu's view of society and history;
- 3) thanks to the workshop, the main significant part of urban research and theory was gathered and presented by a new generation of authors. After all, it is precisely in the last fifteen to twenty years that we reflect the strongest increase in texts that fruitfully use the Bourdieusian approach to the study of cities.

The collected contributions used Bourdieu on a relatively wide range of areas of urban (or metropolitan) life – from the investigation of the spatial dimensions of inequality, urban migration, ethnicity, and precarity, through urban public policies and the transformation of urban space, symbolic dominance, cultural capital, and the urban middle classes, to broader themes of power and privilege in urban space or deprivation and the problems of urban public housing projects.³⁷

In Savage's characterization of the role of the Bourdieusian approach for urban theory, he considers the key focus on the concept of *social fields* (as opposed to the emphasis on *habitus* presented in the texts by, e.g., Hillier and Rooksby, 2002 or Painter, 2000), as it enables ways of operationalizing relational strategies, which Savage equally as Doreen Massey (2005) sees as essential for an adequate theory of space (Savage, 2011: 512).

Savage's emphasis on developing the concept of field to understand the relational bonds of actors in urban space follows on from the concept that Bourdieu develops in *Distinction* (1986). Here, Bourdieu emphasizes the *field* at the expense of the *habitus* with regard to the key link of the actor to the social conditioning of the dispositions gathered in the habitus, which further determine the individual agenda of action (Bourdieu, 2005). There is no rejection of the role of habitus, but the role of class (and therefore field) as a determining element in an individual's actions is emphasized. This concept brings a fundamental enrichment to the Lefebvrian (1991) tradition, which highlights the relationship between physical and social space; field theory is able to

³⁷ Papers were presented by different generations of researchers, including doctoral students, and the symposium thus demonstrated that the use of Bourdieu within urban studies can be multifaceted and effective and appeal to different generations of researchers.

point out the relational nature of physical and social space in the sense of taking social positions and their distribution within a place (space). From this perspective, habitus is both a help and a hindrance to the recognition of reference points within a field that enable and justify the engagement of an actor in a given field (Mace, 2017: 121 – 122).

Field theory became important for Bourdieu in his later work as well, where the connection between social and physical space is further developed, especially concerning the development of reflection on the nature of physical space, from which certain properties of social space are derived. Actors and things are deployed in a certain arena where they occupy specific places. The arena or space represents the dimensions of the physical space in which the actor or thing is located. Thus, in this approach, social categories are rooted in a specific physical space, and the physical space becomes a certain concretization of the social space. The difference with his conception in *Distinction* lies in the fact that, while in *Distinction*, the distribution of the "powerful" and "powerless" is tied to different positions in social space, here, the conflict between actors with different amounts of power is conditioned by a specific position in a fixed physical space. In this case, the lack of capital makes spatial mobility and the ability of social organization difficult.³⁸ Thus, according to Savage, Bourdieu predicted some of Bauman's (1998) and Castells' (1996) theses in connection with the ability to identify the tension between the mobility of the "powerful" and the fixity of the disadvantaged as integrally related to the complexity of visions of social change (Savage, 2011: 514-515).

Based on his theoretical analysis, Savage proposes a certain radicalization of field theory following the social theory of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. According to the theory, fields should be read as decentralized processes in which localization cannot be perceived as given but as part of the processes within the field. Space cannot be understood as a set of positions or points, but as a set in which positions

³⁸ After all, such an approach is also applied in broader radical urban theory – for example, Madden and Marcuse (cf. 2016: 94) point to the role of planning in the context of the housing crisis and the ability to "disperse dangerous classes" in order to suppress political protest. A group of actors with a smaller share of power is forced to focus on their survival due to the unavailability of housing and becomes "fixed" in a specific physical and eventually also social space.

Analogously, Bourdieu himself develops this approach in the context of housing in the study *The Social Structures of the Economy* (2005), where he focuses on the organization of the housing market and how forms of capital are implied in it. According to him, housing is connected to space in two ways: it is built in a specific place and is subject to local markets, but at the same time, it is produced by universalizing market forces (Savage, 2011: 516).

are connected to certain wholes through defined relations of proximity (e.g., neighborhood, inversely, for example, expert or developer relations and ties), determination of social distances and observation of their transformation (De Landa, 2002: 22). Such a characterization, according to Savage, is close to Wacquant's (1992: 17) definition of the field as a relational configuration containing a specific gravity that it imposes on all objects and agents that enter the field (Savage, 2011: 517–518).

Finally, in his last book (2023), Wacquant focuses on the topological dimension within the trialectics of Bourdieu's concepts of *symbolic space* (the mental categories through which we perceive and organize the world), *social space* (the distribution of capital in its different forms), and *physical space* (the built environment). Beyond that there is some visible overlap in the categorization with Lefebvre's (1991) classical trichotomy of space,³⁹ indicating the high compatibility of the theory and its complementarity with classical critical urban studies, Wacquant's conception shows how inequalities are shaped in the context of capital possession and actorial habitus in the space thus defined. According to Wacquant, Bourdieu's spatial dimension calls for rethinking “the urban” as the domain of the accumulation, diversification, and contestation of capitals and the ground for the commingling and collision of variegated habitus, which makes the city a central site and stake of historical struggles.

Spatial capital and spatial habitus

Savage's approach shows the important role of the *field*, especially in the context of mapping actor positions and their mutual relationships, i.e., also a kind of springboard for understanding the processes and distribution of actors in the urban environment, territorial development and related decision-making. Even other vital concepts presented by Bourdieu's theory did not remain - for good reasons - without the attention of scholars who deal with urban development or planning. Just as it is possible to acquire different capitals in different thematic fields, some authors develop the concept of *spatial capital* to describe inequalities related to space.

³⁹ Lefebvre divides space in the context of its production into *spatial practices* (understanding space in its concrete, material, physical form that is empirically perceptible), *representations of space* (verbalized and conceptualized mental images of space - e.g., maps or otherwise abstractly modeled space), and *representational space* (lived, experienced space that is shaped by the activities of those who use it).

Alan Mace (2017) develops the term against the backdrop of a critical appraisal of the *field*. The field itself exists primarily on the basis of shared interests or shared rivalry and competition within the power game that shapes the rules within the field (Bourdieu, 1977: 169; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 97). Each field contains a set of unwritten or tacit rules that are constantly changing because they mostly work in favor of actors with higher classes of habituses or capitals. At the same time, the field shapes the boundaries of the discussion and its relevance, legitimacy, and naturalness within the field. This also results in a certain blurring of acts of social (or symbolic) power within the field. The ability of the field to create a relevant *discourse*, which is additionally shaped through the ownership of capital and dispositions formed in the habitus, is - at least as can be read from the theoretical approaches presented here - a fundamental reason for the chosen research method of this work.

The possession and application of capital within a field enables particular actors - along with more general dispositions (habitus) - to obtain social advantages and seek "distinctions" within the field. Bourdieu described distinctions as differences or deviations existing within a certain nature of actions considered innate, which exist in relation to and through reference to other properties (especially actor ones)(Bourdieu, 1998: 13). According to Mace, distinctions represent the process of shaping choices that confer social advantages (the "right" education, preferences in arts or entertainment, housing and neighborhood, and the like). Within this process, social, cultural, and economic capital play a symbolic role; simultaneously, the symbolic aspect refers to the fact that the specific content of capital is considered given rather than socially created (Mace, 2017: 122). Symbolic capital, as Bourdieu writes, is not a particular kind of capital, but what capital becomes in the moment of "unrecognition" - the power or capacity for potential or actual exploitation and is recognized as legitimate (Bourdieu, 2000: 242). The area and mediator of the process of non-recognition is culture, as it generates strategies objectively adapted for objective chances of profit in the sense of acquiring various capitals within the legitimized cultural field (Raynaud, 1994: 66).

As Mace continues, the combined effect of the field and the symbolic nature of capital obscures the process of exercising power through individual choices that appear natural or taken for granted, in other words creating the impression of an absence of alternatives. Last but not least, if habitus and capital cause an individual's

relative efficiency in one field, they are likely to be advantageous in many different fields. This causes field homology; a combined advantage that does not represent a mere transfer of advantages from one field to another, but is tied to a class affiliation (Swartz, 1997: 132 in Mace, 2017: 122). Based on this initial assessment of the mutual dialogue between field, capital, and habitus, Mace shows different conceptions of spatial capital that take into account the symbolic nature of individual capitals within the field. All cases show how privileged groups use urban space to their advantage.

Centner (2008) focused on the behavior of IT workers at the time of the Internet fever at the turn of the millennium. The Internet boom (denoted by the English term *dot-com*) allowed specific actors, benefited primarily by economic capital, to dominate and define specific places.⁴⁰ This process represents an example of symbolic violence and how the dot-com group used their individual capitals to accept their behavior at the expense of others. In doing so, he emphasizes the process of *non-recognition* (facilitated by fields), while the habitual expressions and application of capitals caused the dominance of space by this group to appear natural. Centner refers to the ability to claim and exercise dominance in space as *spatial capital*, which he identifies as a form of *symbolic capital* (Centner, 2008: 197).

Barthon and Monfroy (2010) use the concept to examine French households and their approach to education. Specifically, they show how the location within the physical and social space enables access to better education (e.g., a child with a worse social status will have an increased chance of quality education if they live in an upper-middle-class residential area). The positional dimension of spatial capital is therefore directly related to reaching higher social positions and the degree of mobility. Similarly, Rérat and Lees (2011) address the relationship between mobility and spatial rootedness using the example of research on the gentrification of the Swiss cities of Neuchatel and western Zürich. For them, mobility is a form of spatial capital. The higher level of it enables greater flexibility when choosing housing, and the choice of housing for these groups is more conditioned by aspects connected with mobility. In a similar way Rérat uses the *spatial capital* in Lees' and Phillips' edited *Handbook of Gentrification Studies* (2018), where the residential location and embedded patterns of

⁴⁰ Specifically, the takeover of places in Mission-Dolores Park in San Francisco by IT workers protected by the police and the displacement of local families who used the park into that times.

mobility determined by the structural setting define the individual ownership of spatial capital.

The last example that Mace (2017: 122 – 124) uses for his description of spatial capital is the work of Marom (2014), who uses the term “spatial distinction” in the context of the spatial development of Tel Aviv. He focuses on the analysis of the management of the city over time, which was more concerned with the spatial logic rather than the behavior of the residents, which led to the creation of different stages in which spatial distinction was manifested in the form of physical and cultural separation. This is caused by the differentiating forms of classification and prestige historically circulating within society and thus actively contributing to the manners of urban development and the division of society within urban spaces (Mosselson, 2020: 279).

However, Mace does not reflect some other approaches. For example, Marcus (2007) describes spatial capital in the context of the analysis of *spatial syntax*, which for him represents a way of analytical theory of architecture. Against the background of the urban study of Stockholm, it shows two new variables - density and diversity -, based on which it is possible to form a more general analytical urban theory. The measurement outputs in the context of these variables can then be described as spatial capital; in contrast to previous approaches, however, in Marcus' presentation, it refers to the *dispositions of space*, not the *dispositions of actors*. The degree of spatial capital depends on the spatial characteristics of the location in the context of the analyzed variables and is intended primarily to develop the possibilities of optimizing urban design. In the context of the Bourdieusian approach, this principle is connected especially with the economic dimensions of capital.

Aidan Mosselson (2020) shows, using the example of examining Johannesburg, South Africa, that the action of development primarily represents a certain socially and spatially conditioned and rooted *social practice*. It is based on the texts mentioned above by Marom and Centner while concluding that the strength of developers within a given social field lies primarily in conflicting dynamics and agendas, and the active adaptation of strategies and activities to the conditions of the given place. This stems precisely from the socially and spatially rooted nature of developers, which, in the spirit of the above, encourages the use of the application of Bourdieu's concepts and their operationalization. In addition to spatial capital, Mosselson also uses the concept of

habitus, specifically in relation to the concept of habitus as socially embedded, learned, and reproduced within everyday life. In conjunction with Lefebvre's (1991) concept of space, it shows that dominant groups do not only shape space, but that the ability to acquire spatial capital (and within the process, the ability to produce space) also means acquiring a specific habitus that reflects and communicates with a multitude of alternative dynamic realities of the lived space.

However, Mace emphasizes that both capital and habitus in spatial modification carry the risk of definitions of other types of capital (in connection with ethnicity, gender, etc.) and a deviation from the determining role of the field. This is manifested, for example, in the context of the definition of the *metropolitan habitus*, presented by Butler and Robson (2003), who recognize the risk of developing other alternative habituses, in other cases (e.g., Duncan and Duncan 2004; Savage et al. 2005; Fleischer, 2010) it is shown, that a Bourdieu-based description of taking up positions in space and place can do without defining spatial capital (Mace, 2017: 125 – 126).

Nevertheless, all the approaches mentioned show the applicability of the concepts in different contexts and connection with specific areas of urban life, including planning and decision-making methods. As Savage (2020) shows, Bourdieu's approach is much more enriching for the study of the city than just providing the basic conceptual frameworks that many authors have developed against the background of research on specific cities and social processes. It has the ability to synthesize across places, to connect the micro and macro level, to include the pragmatic interests of everyday life in the framework of a wider political economy, and also emphasizes the role of accumulation. Although I don't directly synthesize or measure the ownership of various capitals or habituses within my selected field, from my perspective and my goals, I believe that those examples show the mechanisms and benefits, that Bourdieu brings to the study of dominance within urban development and present a framework, within which various actors acquire positions in selected discourse, and as a consequence are able to form what is happening in the process of co-creating the urban space and access to it.

5. Ideology, hegemony and reproduction of the dominant order

Finally, if we are interested in the process of reproduction of the dominant order as the primary goal of this work, the initial theory and our developed approach must be placed in the overall framework of the theory of *dominance* and *hegemony*, which in result creates the most important part of my theoretical approach. *Ideological dominance* has long been a central element in the theory of society. Traditionally, it draws on Marxism to describe the process by which dominant classes acquire and maintain control over the exchange and circulation of ideas, and in other actors become dominated through dominant ideological performative attributes that naturalize and legitimize the inequalities embedded within the status quo. Within the dominated classes, this shapes the so-called *false consciousness*. In capitalist societies, within this approach, dominant ideology functions as a means to maintain social order and cohesion. Furthermore, e.g. Giddens (1997: 583) characterizes the dominant ideology as “shared ideas or beliefs which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups.”

From the perspective of my approach, Gramsci's theory of hegemony is traditionally used within the framework of Marxist characteristics of dominant or hegemonic systems. It considers the roots and principle of maintaining capitalist hegemony primarily as a product of the value and ideational hegemony of the system (i.e., it is not created and reproduced only through structural or physical violence or political coercion, but primarily through the reproduction of bourgeois values that have become universalized and objective - which was eventually followed by the previously described approach of Bourdieu). According to Gramsci, the absence of a proper cultural identity of the working class was the reason for preserving the status quo and continuing bourgeois rule. In other words, people are not only controlled by means of force, but also by ideas; political leadership is thus based on the consent of the governed to the worldview of the ruling class, which is expanded and popularized in hegemony (Bates, 1975: 351 - 352).

The essence of hegemony comes from the process of asserting a particular *ideology* among others and the ability to strengthen and maintain its dominant position. Ideology is far from having and cannot have one concrete definition. As Eagleton

(1991) shows, ideology encompasses many meanings, not all of which are mutually compatible. The concept is part of different histories and meanings, and according to Eagleton it is more valuable and important to consider these meanings separately in their depth and context rather than to summarize them in one big global theory. As the usual and central definition of ideology, he cites the following:

- a) the process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life;
- b) a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class;
- c) ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power;
- d) false ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power;
- e) systematically distorted communication;
- f) that which offers a position for a subject;
- g) forms of thought motivated by social interests;
- h) identity thinking;
- i) socially necessary illusion;
- j) the conjuncture of discourse and power;
- k) the medium in which conscious social actors make sense of their world;
- l) action-oriented sets of beliefs;
- m) the confusion of linguistic and phenomenal reality;
- n) semiotic closure;
- o) the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure;
- p) the process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality (Eagleton, 1991: 1 – 2).

Gerring (1997) highlights the advantage of wide definition options for using ideology as a flexible conceptual tool; however, he points - similarly to Eagleton - to the mutual contradictions of individual definitions and the difficulty of achieving mutual compatibility. Older texts also deal with the problematic multidimensionality of ideology, even in the context of building sociological theories (see, for example, Birnbaum, 1960). Ideology has thus historically been conceived - among others - from the point of view of examining its dogmatic nature, through dominant modes of thought, to focusing on groups that are most exploited through the reproduction of the status quo (Gerring, 1997: 957 – 958).

According to Eagleton, the tradition of examining and theorizing ideology has historically been divided into two main branches. The first begins with Hegel and Marx and ends with György Lukács and some other later Marxist thinkers, and was mostly concerned with questions of right and wrong recognition, conceiving of ideology as illusion, distortion and mystification. The second alternative tradition of thought was less epistemological than sociological, as it was more interested in the function of ideas within social life than their reality or unreality (Eagleton, 1991: 3). Traditional post-structuralist approaches, such as Foucault's or Baudrillard's, link ideology to the production of meanings and what is considered "truth" within discourse.

For Stuart Hall (e.g., 1973, et al. 1978, 1988), *language* represented a framework of power and institutions and a cultural reproductive element of hegemony in which culture figures as both *produced* and *received* by actors. For Hall, the process of creation, *coding*, and *decoding* of messages produced within the culture through the media was a tool for the reproduction of hegemony. At the same time, hegemony is representative of the occupation of the state through capital (Hall, 1988) and represents the relationship between "meaning and power" (Wood, 1998: 400). In his conception, Hall was also based on the general theory of ideology of Louis Althusser (1971), or defined himself in relation to it in the sense that Althusser's approach is focused too much on the reproduction of the dominant ideology without the ability to distinguish those reproductive parts of the discourse that do not fit into it (primarily concerning the position of *counter-discourses*). Hall therefore prefers the work of Voloshinov (1973) and Gramsci in particular, who brought the term "struggle for meaning" to the field of ideology and language, i.e., primarily the struggle between actors for accentuating preferred meaning for the dominant ideology (Hall, 2007: 71-72).

A similar principle is also used in the model of propaganda by Chomsky and Herman (1988), for whom the media represent effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry the function of propaganda supporting the system through dependence on market forces, internalized assumptions and without external coercion (1988: 306). In Gramsci's sense, consent is here "produced" by the tools of media propaganda. In his analysis of hegemony in mass culture, Gottdiener (1985) is also based on the semiotic approach of the Birmingham School, of which Hall was a key representative, when he describes its three fundamental relational pillars: a) cultural

objects produced within the industrial process; b) institutions that produce and distribute objects; c) and social groups that use them. At the same time, cultural objects carry different meanings for different social groups.

It is not our goal to develop a theoretical debate about the definition of ideology and its scope. At this point, I mainly want to show the existing connection between existing definitions, their relation to the role of *discourse* and the theory of practice, especially in the context of actors' distribution in social space and social fields. Upon careful examination of the above-mentioned definitions, we can state that many of them are relevant to the approach developed here, further confirming Bourdieu's approach to ideology and dominance.

Actors, structures, fields and ideology

For Bourdieu, the site of maintenance and reproduction of the existing order has traditionally been the school and the educational system, which was an instrument for the reproduction of social relations, both in their hierarchical structure and in the social recruitment of "agents" (actors) for the system (Raynaud, 1994: 64). At the same time, Bourdieu emphasized the role of educational institutions primarily in the context of state reproduction and existing social differences caused by the uneven distribution of cultural capital. The reproduction of the state through the educational system also has its specific consequences in the reproduction of categories of thought (through cultural tools), to which it also gives the appearance of something natural (Bourdieu, 1998: 69 – 72).

The approach to the genesis of the state is quite similar to Gramsci - for Bourdieu, it represents the result of the concentration of physical capital (oppression and power supremacy supported by institutions such as the army and police), economic capital in the form of the national economy, cultural capital in the form of information, and symbolic capital. In doing so, the state becomes the holder of *meta-capital*, which gives it dominion over the capitals of others and their holders and the exchange rate between them; thus, a new field of power is created, in which the holders

of certain capitals fight for participation in the state meta-capital, which would allow them to increase their influence.⁴¹

At the same time, symbolic capital becomes a key element for the concentration of all other types of capital. Bourdieu characterizes it as "any property (capital of any kind - physical, economic, cultural, social) if it is viewed by social agents whose categories of perception are such that they can know (see) it and recognize it, appreciate it" (Bourdieu, 1998: 81). The state becomes the site of concentration of symbolic power because it possesses all the means to enforce and inculcate permanent principles of vision and division corresponding to its own structures (ibid). Here, the above-mentioned criticism (Hillier & Rooksby, 2002; Savage, 2011) reflecting the insufficient geographical profile of Bourdieu's work and the emphasis on limited nationality is quite clearly reflected. If we want to analyze dominance in the context of the global neoliberal system, it is not possible to remain within the boundaries of nation-states, although we are analyzing a process with certain geographical boundaries (in our case, the boundaries of the Prague metropolitan area). Nevertheless, in many parts of his work, Bourdieu not only reflects on more general levels of analysis of hegemonic systems (primarily within his texts on dominance and the neoliberal system), but his analysis of dominance developed in collaboration with Boltanski, on the contrary, appears to be resistant to this kind of criticism, because it reflects the nature of neoliberal capitalism and perceives the state only as a certain part of it.

Here, however, the second part of the necessary reflection occurs, precisely in the context of the opposite principle, when we view accumulation in the form of symbolic capital at the communal level. From my point of view, it is also possible to apply the principle to the functioning of self-government, which is bound by the rules and system of the state.

Unlike Gramsci, Bourdieu did not limit his analysis of power and dominance to the analysis of their relationship to macro-political and macroeconomic structures.

⁴¹ At this point, Bourdieu's theory communicates very well with Hall's characterization of social struggles over the meanings of signs, specifically when Hall expands on Voloshinov's argument - as he writes, "if it is possible for language to have a social struggle over the meaning of a single sign, then signs (and thus the collapse of a whole range of signifiers and whole discourses) can not be definitively and permanently assigned to no side of the dispute" (Hall, 2007: 72). As he continues, "language expression and competence are socially distributed, not only with respect to class but also with respect to gender. Key institutions (in this case, especially the institutions of family and education) play a fundamental role in the social distribution of cultural capital, in which language plays an absolutely fundamental role, as educational theorists such as Bernstein and social theorists such as Bourdieu have shown" (ibid).

Through a probe into the world of agents (actors), he revealed the principle through which dominant representations are objectified in everyday reality (Bourdieu, Boltanski, 1976: 52). As Eagleton (1991: 158) shows, Bourdieu presents a re-examination and elaboration of Gramsci's theory of hegemony, primarily through the elaboration of various forms of symbolic violence, his strength being a convincing and sophisticated explanation of the relationships between social, economic, cultural and political forces within dominance. At the same time, his work has the capacity to withstand the criticism of Marxist and Foucaultian analysis of dominance, it is able to grasp the distorted character of the authority of economic facts, and at the same time, it enables the grasping of reality in order to understand the perception of dominance and its claims as natural, necessary, and also legitimate (Masquelier, 2017: 126).

According to Raynaud (1994: 66), Bourdieu's theory of dominance shows how formal liberal democracy achieves its real goals (i.e., dominance) through the suppression of apparent goals (citizenship). On the one hand, the electoral system plays a key role in the functioning of liberal democracy, helping to maintain the existing order, and at the same time, it is a central condition for the functioning of the system as an unrecognized and at the same time recognized impossibility of political participation (Bourdieu, 1984).

As mentioned, Bourdieu described the most common principle of ideology dominance and its reproduction in collaboration with Luc Boltanski (1976, or [1976] 2008).⁴² According to their original distinction, the *production of dominant ideology* is divided into two levels of description – universal features of ideology and particular features of a dominant ideology. In the first case, it defines *ideology* in relation to twelve specific characteristics, namely:

- 1) practice

⁴² For the Anglophone audience, their approach has been summarized in texts by Simon Susen (2014; 2016). He presents the concept of "production of dominant ideology" in the approach of Bourdieu and Boltanski as an unconventional reflexive scientific project with significant potential for further development in the field of dominance theory, emerging outside mainstream academic currents in counter-hegemonic opposition to academic and social dominance. It aimed to explore and confront the social philosophy of the dominant faction of the dominant class. Bourdieu and Boltanski were based on premises about the relationality of the social world; their description is - as evaluated by Susen (2016) - constructivist (without deterministic assumptions when evaluating social positions), critical, non-dogmatic, and emancipatory. He presents the concept as an original contribution to the contemporary sociological study of ideologies, primarily with regard to its ability to understand the sociological role of discursive forms in differentiated stratified societies. At the same time, this insight is as relevant today as it was in the 1970s when it was created (Susen, 2014: 110).

- 2) cohesion
- 3) diversity
- 4) positionality
- 5) intersubjectivity
- 6) differentiability
- 7) partiality
- 8) normativity
- 9) authenticity
- 10) self-referentiality
- 11) hegemony
- 12) domination

A certain gradation is visible in the characteristics, i.e., from the basic assumptions and integral components, we move to the merits of the matter. Ideology is firmly rooted in the production of social practices (1) and is strictly linked to them. The predominance of practical dimensions of ideology over theoretical ones goes hand in hand with its socio-ontological perception as an intuitively and objectively given reality. Through this, it has the ability to penetrate and structure actions and interactions rooted in ideology (Susen, 2014: 91). In this characteristic, the theory communicates well with the general characteristics of neoliberal ideology, at least in the sphere of theoretical approaches from which we start, such as David Harvey's, who literally says that the neoliberal system of governance has ingrained in us and made us neoliberals despite our political or philosophical ethos (Harvey, 2007: 6). This means that if we proceed from the characterization of post-socialist neoliberalism as a dominant hegemonic ideology, neoliberalism functions as an objectively and intuitively perceived reality within which we act and construct our practices.

Second, shared ideological frameworks have the ability to strengthen social cohesion through ritual re-affirmation and group belief in its necessity and legitimacy (Bourdieu, Boltanski, [1976] 2008: 11). Discourses produced within an ideology contain symbolic reference points that function as markers of cultural identity and assist in (and are part of) the social processes of group formation. The primary function of hegemonic discourses is the expression and production of the logical and moral integration of the dominant class, while counter-hegemonic discourses, on the other hand, ensure the social and normative integration of controlled (*dominated*) groups that are interested

in breaking out of this position in the long term, created by mechanisms of inferiorization. An effective ideological discourse represents a set of values, principles, and assumptions whose proponents have the ability to develop collective solidarity (Susen 2014: 91 – 92).

Societies differentiated in partial social fields are also characterized by *diverse* (3) ideologies that shaped them. Values historically shaped by discourse are malleable and, in some cases, mutually contradictory, just as the viability of ideology is unimaginable without a certain degree of elasticity and adaptability. For the symbolically negotiated process of social development, the battle of ideologies is as important as the discursive struggles within the intersubjective construction zones of these ideologies (2014: 92). Here again, the link to Hall's concept of ideology creation as a *discursive battle* is evident.

Fourthly, each ideology is fueled by the structuring force of the distribution of actors in social space (i.e., the social field, which applies to us as the thematically defined field). Susen refers to the deployment of actors as social *positionality*. Dominant individual or collective actors reinforce the existential significance of the asymmetrically organized positions they occupy in social space through the continuous effort to divert attention from their relationally defined location. This process is carried out in order to create supposedly *neutral positions* or *neutral places* within the social space that serve as ideological laboratories in which a dominant social philosophy is generated through the collective efforts of various factions of the ruling class. Conversely, ideologies directed against hegemonic sets of values and principles are shaped by dominated groups and for them (just as dominant ideologies are produced by dominant groups and for dominant groups)(2014: 92 – 93).⁴³ This fragment of dominance is deeply elaborated within my analysis as it belongs to the contested moments of the theory. It presents a certain strategy of the dominant class to produce and legitimize the dominant ideology through *neutralization*. De facto it says that the production of the dominant ideology is legitimized through the neutral positions of the places from which it originates, while these places are objective, given, necessary and, through a complex system of definitions and perceptions, are perceived as the ones that are supposed to produce the ideology. On one hand, the role of neutral places is

⁴³ As the analytical part shows, the expert and alienated nature of the examined field plays a crucial role in this process.

crucial for understanding the process of objectification of the hegemonic order; on the other hand, I consider the tendency to perceive such a process as intentional strategy of the dominant class to be problematic.

Fifth, ideologies emerge from the experience of *intersubjectivity*. The production of ideological frameworks is the output of dialogical processes in which the opinions and wills of various members and factions of particular social groups or classes are shaped through different perspectives. At the same time, the exchange of viewpoints often takes place in neutral places (2014: 93). Ideology also cannot exist without a specific structure of *differentiations* (6) that occur in the categorized sets of values, principles, and assumptions that make up ideologies. Ideologically negotiated differentiations are manifested through the relatively arbitrary construction of classifications, oppositions, and hierarchies (ibid).

Seventh, the emergence of ideology is unthinkable without the perspectival power of *partiality*. The neutrality of place creates an effect of objectivity through the diversity of the group it touches; the place thus becomes a meeting place for people from different factions, who themselves create meeting places through the *multiplicity of positions* they occupy within the dominant class. Neutral places are places of dialogue. The objectification and legitimization of dominance also take place in them through the *provision of access* to underprivileged groups, who are allowed to participate in dialogue and thereby create the appearance of *belonging*.⁴⁴ At the same time, neutral places create their own formal rules, which are usually identified as neutrality or objectivity. The neutrality effect is a direct consequence of partiality in the production of ideology (2014: 93 – 94).

Neutral places can be included in the more general theoretical concept of Bourdieu as part of the structure of the *bureaucratic field*. To a large extent, shares of economic capital and especially informational capital are necessary for their existence, while both types of capital are related to the process of unification of the financial and cultural market controlled by the state. These operations are codified through experts and, as a result, lead to the concentration of symbolic capital in objectified and codified structures that can be based either on processes mediated by the state (Bourdieu,

⁴⁴ As a typical example from the examined field we can mention participation of the public in the urban development.

1998: 69 – 92) or, better and more concretely, by a hegemonic structural order that does not only represent the state but a complex structure of actors and groups of actors deployed within the hegemonic social field.

Furthermore, any ideology is, by definition, *normative* (8). This means that even if the defenders of a specific dominant ideology defend a subject-specific (economic, legal, or technocratic) discourse based on the unforced power of epistemically based objectivity, they cannot avoid using the assumptions necessary for the social construction of reality. Ideology is, therefore, not only a set of more or less logically connected principles but also a set of value-based meanings of relationally arranged realities. Ideologies create the impression of *naturally occurring discourses* as authentic representations of reality by virtue of their origins in neutral places and thus also become vehicles for symbolically negotiated experiences of *authenticity* (9). As part of the process of naturalization of normativity (i.e., "naturalizing" given reality as well as symbolic legitimacy), ambiguous reactions occur through ideology, where on the one hand, we *naturalize the social*, in the way that through ideology we are persuaded to acceptance and generalization of historically conditioned schemes of recognition, perception, and reflection; on the other hand, we *socialize the natural* through the process of converting our experience of reality into a discursively codified encounter with normativity. Both processes are unthinkable without the habituation of intersubjectively maintained conventions, which are by definition variable in time and space, as it is possible to reconstruct them repeatedly through specific practices (Susen, 2014: 94). Simply put, the experience of authenticity experienced through ideology is linked to specific dialectical processes of objectification that become part of everyday reality.

Tenth, ideologies are *self-referential*, i.e., they are an example of self-fulfilling prophecies, as they are based on values and principles whose validity they confirm on the basis of their own normative standards and codes of legitimacy. Each ideology can thus be considered a "prophecy that contributes to its own realization" (Bourdieu, Boltanski, [1976] 2008: 105). As ideologies are driven by the "lust for power," they set their agenda according to hegemonic criteria, i.e., according to the standards based on which the value of the practices of all individual and collective actors in society can be evaluated. If the actors are *ideologically unified*, practically everything revolves around them; self-referentiality represents a comfort zone in which the advocacy of key

ideas of an ideology is validated through *autopoietic standards* of acceptability. The construction of ideological frameworks thus operates on the basis of "circular circulation" through processes of *self-confirmation* and *self-reinforcement*, which are aimed at creating the "illusion of immediate evidence" and straightforward application. (Susen, 2014: 94 – 95).

This finally brings us to the two final pivotal points of the characterization. Production of ideology cannot be separated from social struggles conducted to strengthen *hegemony* (11) or conducted in opposition to it. Hegemony represents both unity and conformity or agreement, as well as division and intersection of different views. Individual factions of a particular class share central characteristics and objects of interest but are also divided by idiosyncratic features and interests. It is therefore not possible to separate the common features of ideology arising in neutral places from the secondary differences that separate ideological factions (*producers*) from clusters of ideological *products*. *Dominance* (12) then turns out to be a fundamental mobilizing element for the production of ideology, which arises mainly for the purpose of stabilizing, legitimizing, covering up, weakening, or revealing systems of dominance. Ideologies contribute to confirming the normative validity of asymmetric power relations and tend to reinforce, justify, or obscure social hierarchies. According to Bourdieu and Boltanski, the notion of "givenness" is the most refined and least obvious form of dominance, which manifests itself especially in the production of *hegemonic discourses*. According to them, the current role of critical social science lies precisely in questioning the legitimacy of social relations based on the characteristic logic of dominance, which can only consist in examining the relevant ideological constructions of justification created by epistemic authorities (or hegemonic creators of discourse) (2014: 95 – 96).

Ideological dominance

In sociological research, the dominant ideology has been characterized in different ways and in different contexts (e.g., Bakan, 1997, Whitelegg, 2020; Vallas, 1991; McDonald-Harker, 2016; Chant, Knight and Smith, 1989), often in direct connection with Gramsci's hegemony and its variations. As it is visible from what was said earlier, it is generally the product of a battle of ideas (Aarons 1987: 10), in which

certain sets of ideas occupy a privileged position, thus creating the "ruling ideas" already defined by Marx. According to Schlesinger (1986: 86), the dominant or "hegemonic ideology in capitalism works to conceal the real nature of social relations and to produce the political quiescence of the subordinate classes." Urry (1981) or Thompson (1984) see dominant ideology as a system of support, concealment, or simulation of systematically structured social practices and relations of dominance and subordination as natural, desirable, and necessary. To this end, the dominant ideology involves groups and classes in relations of subordination and dominance and mobilizes them in order to maintain the status quo. According to Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner (1980), a dominant ideology arises through the control of the means of mental and material production by the dominant class (Chant, Knight and Smith, 1989: 386).

Some authors work with the term *dominant culture* (Turner, 1988). At the same time, Turner refers to the meaning of the term culture defined by Clifford Geertz (1966) as a set of symbols, signs, conventions, customs, and practices through which various traditions, values, and beliefs of social groups or larger collectives are transmitted from one generation to the next. Therefore, language becomes the main element of culture, as it represents the primary mechanism through which this transmission takes place (Turner 1988: 51). If we return to the work of Bourdieu and Boltanski, the characteristics of the dominant ideology are as follows:

Dominant ideology distorts reality. It creates discursive frameworks of symbolically negotiated reference points based on partial or total distortion of reality. It has the ability to conceal counter-hegemonic evidence that could undermine its persuasiveness and social legitimacy. One of the tools used in the production of dominant ideologies is the creation of *binary categories* used in discursive practices. These should serve primarily to defend the social positions of the dominant class. At the same time, the interests of the producers of ideological frameworks are ambiguous, and it is therefore a key role of critical sociology to undertake the theoretical and empirical construction of the concept of the field of power and to explore and reveal its dimensions. At the same time, the power principle of creating hegemonic aggregates is often *not recognized* or *not recorded* by those whose interests it does not represent (Susen 2014: 96 – 98).

The dominant ideology is linked to the *production of knowledge*, which in many cases has ideological motivations, and serves as a tool for ideological justification.

Both politics and science can be used to confirm the legitimacy of an established social order. Reconciling the tension between the intellectualism of academics and the pragmatism of politicians and economic leaders (with the goal of changing the scientific understanding of the world in the sense of the dominant paradigm) is one of the key interests of every dominant ideology. Part of dominance and its maintenance is also the ability to seize the power created by the state as one of the most powerful institutions today. The state represents a power system, which in contemporary neoliberal societies is characterized by a hierarchy of social management, which, as a result, has the ability to be a key mediator between different social groups, thus becoming a key means of defending privileged positions in society. The reality produced by dominance becomes normatively skewed through the performativity of language, which wants to apply its standards in as many social spheres as possible, thus creating a regulative construction of reality. This means that the dominant ideology creates a framework of concrete reality that determines the ways of acting and orientation in the social space, which serve to maintain and strengthen dominance. On the other hand, these visions of the world also include a *realistic* level, which ensures the ability to be effective in the addressed population groups and implies a sense of their own necessity (2014: 98 – 101).

The legitimacy of the dominant ideology is strengthened by its agents' explicit ability to take *historical examples* and learn from them.⁴⁵ The dominant classes must be able to go through an individual and collective educational process that will allow them to revise their own ideological reference points depending on reality. There is also a close link with the characteristic ideology of self-fulfilling prophecies, as the tendency to cast themselves in the role of new prophets and visionaries through an appropriate revision of the past is evident precisely in the agents of the dominant ideology.⁴⁶ At the same time, dominant actors tend to take orthodox and traditional

⁴⁵ In the post-socialist context, this seems to be one of important aspects of dominance, reflected in the theory through the concepts of *zombie socialism* or *path-dependency*, and also within my analysis (see pp. 128).

⁴⁶ At this point, Bourdieu and Boltanski indicate a polemic current in contemporary left-wing debates, which are intensively concerned with the defeat of the left on the political scene. Although their text originally dates from the 1970s (with Boltanski's later revision), already at that time, they reflected the ability of the intelligent bourgeoisie to reflect on mistakes from the past, including today's less and less relevant division of the political spectrum into left and right, which they consider a backward glance. Today's dominant classes are much more difficult to classify from a political point of view, and within their characteristics, we use a different vocabulary and characteristics (e.g., degree of populism, ability to work with the media, ability to organize), which can have a much greater impact on the degree of their dominance or electoral success than placement on the right-left scale.

positions, while the views of dominated actors tend to be heterodox and subversive. Regardless of the conservative or progressive nature of the position, the key to planning the future is a true interpretation of the past and adaptation of the normative agenda of the ideology within the socio-historical background in which it is applied (2014: 101 – 102).

The dominant ideology cannot be separated from the process of *social reproduction*. The hierarchical classification of society is essential for maintaining the status quo (e.g., elite schools in the educational process serve as a means of rationalizing the dominant discourse); the dominant classes also have the ability (despite internal heterogeneity) to create idiosyncratic modes of perception, recognition, and action through which they are able to distinguish from other socio-economically defined groups. Full-fledged members of the dominant class are able to create and reproduce their own *modus operandi*, or "homological habitus," which is a condition for the creation of internally and externally differentiated social fields. At the same time, ideologies have a certain "endological" character, i.e., they generate basic absolute statements, including about the end of ideologies in the modern world. Implicitly, within the meaning, this means that the current dominant ideology of neoliberal capitalism, through the story of the end of ideologies, does not admit its own alternatives (2014: 102 – 104). Capitalism's ability to generate this universal narrative has become one of the central subjects of interest in contemporary capitalism research (see, e.g., Fisher 2009).

For dominant ideologies, the maintenance of power through the performance of power, or *hegemonic performativity*, is essential. This is created primarily through a *discourse* of power and based on the ability of strategic rationality consisting in the awareness of the hegemonic position and its use in the context of a rigorous analysis of the reality on which the exercise of power is enforced. The sustainability of the dominant ideology also depends on the ability to compromise and adapt or de-radicalize key principles, including the ability to cooperate with non-dominant classes.⁴⁷ However, the function of power exercise is based on *meritocratic principles*, i.e., positions, functions, and rewards are distributed within the framework of dominant

⁴⁷ It is important to mention, that the hegemonic performativity is nicely manifested also in the context of movements' strategies and practice. Snow and Benford (1992 as per O'Dwyer 2021: 43) argue „that social movements whose mobilizing frames offer the greatest fit with the “master frame” of a protest cycle enjoy greater success in achieving their desired outcomes.“

ideologies based on abilities in the spirit of the Darwinian selection process with an emphasis on talent, which in the most extreme ideologies has grown into assumptions of genetically defined competence and natural inequality. Dominant ideologies are inevitably linked to intellectual currents associated with conservatism, however often labeled as "progressive," "enlightened," "developed," "modern," or "liberal". Central to this "reformed" stream of conservatism is the ideal of democratic planning coupled with "economic humanism." The continued existence of "traditional" conservatism makes its revised version appear progressive. (2014: 104–109).

To summarize this characteristic, the dominant ideology depends on the ability to distort reality (1); creating binary discursive oppositions (2); using science to support own interests (3); seizure of power through the institution of the state and its power and mediation capabilities (4); deflection reality to further own agenda (5); the ability to learn from history (6); the external process of social reproduction and the ability to influence it (7); abilities to suppress and marginalize alternatives (8); abilities of reflexive exercise of power (9); compromise skills (10); the meritocratic principle of remuneration and social positionality (11); and finally the conservative nature of the ideology (12). As I show in further parts of this work, the principles of dominance defined in this way are present in their pure or transformed form, or modified form both within the broader analysis of the dominant social system and within the analysis of the partial social fields that exist in the social space and that are with it inevitably relationally connected and, at least in our case, represent one of the central scenes of power and economic processes today.

Although Boltanski has subsequently revised his approach to ideology and domination to some extent compared to the original text (especially in the context of revising the approach of science to the analysis of ideology and the nature of capitalism - see e.g. Celikates 2012; Jacquemain 2008, etc.),⁴⁸ this does not mean, in my opinion, that the central theoretical framework defined according to the analysis developed with Bourdieu loses its relevance. On the contrary, even in the context of my own analytical work, it becomes increasingly relevant and analytically clearly identifiable within the

⁴⁸ In general, Bourdieu and Boltanski's conception of ideological domination represents a specific outcome of an otherwise rather problematic and "tension-laden relationship" between the two characters, as Susen (2016: 196) argues. But he also adds in the same breath that „the unexpected, and partly posthumous, reunion between ‘the master’ (Bourdieu) and his ‘dissident disciple’ (Boltanski) equips us with powerful conceptual tools, which, whilst illustrating the continuing centrality of ‘ideology critique’, permit us to shed new light on key concerns in contemporary sociology and social theory.“

defined field. Moreover, in the spirit of Bourdieu's general theoretical conception, it remains analytically malleable and flexible, and represents a perfect tool for my defined research objectives.

Partial reflections before analysis - development, planning, ideological domination, discourse and post-socialist space

In the context of urban research and planning, the dominant ideology is of course intertwined with the whole story of critical urban research based on the approaches of Lefebvre, Harvey and others. The confrontation of the dominant ideology positions portrayed above is at the core of the concept of the *right to the city* and de facto establishes a whole major branch of urban studies. Within contemporary debates and approaches to urban planning and development, ideology and dominance continue to play a significant role, in different perspectives and contexts. For example, Sager (2015) shows the interconnection of ideologies with planning systems and the ways in which they manifest (with specific reference to neoliberalism in planning and the exploration of its hegemonic nature). Freund (2014) shows the technocratic qualities of neoliberalism and its related spatial manifestations, which links specifically to Harvey's (1989) analytical approach. Xue (2022) uses *critical realist theory of ideology* as a transformative potential in urban planning (including an analysis of the re-production of ideology in urban planning). Metzger et al. (2020) show how the unintentionality and hiddenness of ideology in planning works, specifically within the concept of *sustainability* and the goal-oriented setting of planners, which is influenced by ideology and embeds action within it. The concrete performativity of neoliberal ideology is shown, for example, by Grossi and Pianezzi (2017) in the context of the concept of *Smart Cities*, which they present as an expression of the neoliberal ideology rather than a technological utopia that acts as a generator of a collective imaginary while promoting the interests of business elites and diverting the attention away from urgent urban problems. Goodfellow and Jackman (2020) discuss the processes of domination in urban spaces through processes of *generative* and *repressive interventions* and related strategy-making, including legitimizing discourses.

It is *discourse* that has been one of the big targets of analysis of urban planning and development in the context of dominant ideology in current and previous scholarly

contributions (beyond the aforementioned theoretical frameworks of domination and hegemony, which give central importance to discourse and meaning-making - e.g., Hall, 1973, et al. 1978, 1988, 2007; Voloshinov, 1973; Chomsky and Herman, 1988; Gottdiener, 1985), and emerges as one of the important guides through which to trace not only processes of (re)production and legitimation, but also more specific nuances in the characteristics of dominant ideology. Steger and McNevin (2013) show the intersection of ideology with the development of cities, especially at the discursive and spatial level. Zanotto (2020: 104) presents the importance of discourse in the context of "how a particular socially shared belief system (ideology) that is taken as common sense (naturalized) provides the basis for particular ways of talking (discourses) about planning and urban development that legitimize and justify certain actions while making alternative possibilities unthinkable." Pinnock (1992) demonstrates the *alienation* of the topic of planning and development and related discourse for urban residents, for whom planning is simply something that "happens to them" and they cannot influence it. Shepherd et al. (2020) point to the contribution that placing ideology at the centre of planning analysis (with respect to narrative framing and its role) can have; Kiernan (1983), on the other hand, shows how the lack of theoretical grounding in planning and the role of anti-political discourse in planning is manifested.

Most of the approaches to dominant ideology thus embedded in the field of urban planning could be linked to the central theory of Bourdieu and Boltanski in the sense that they recognise (albeit in a different conceptual grasp) some of its principles. However, the situation is somewhat different in the environment of post-socialist cities. There is, as I have already shown, a rather vibrant debate over the possibilities of combining concepts produced by Western critical urban theory with post-socialist space (Soaita, 2019; Ferenčuhová and Gentile, 2016; Ouředníček, 2016; and furthermore, e.g., Rusiłowicz, 2015, and others), a number of texts are also devoted to the process of transition and its specificities, often also in conjunction with the description of ideology, and consequently *hegemony* (in addition to the previously mentioned texts, e.g., Pupovac, 2023; Danilova, 2014; Golubchikov, 2016; Tsenkova, 2006; Hann, 2002; in the context of the attempt to conceptually define post-socialism, e.g., Gallinat, 2022; Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008; in conjunction with planning, e.g., Tsenkova, 2014; Hirt, 2015; Wiest, 2013, and many others). However, in the context of the characterization of the performative role of the dominant ideology as

grasped in this work, we no longer find texts and research. A separate chapter is, moreover, the regional anchoring of the presented research in the context of the post-socialist space, which - as I have already mentioned - shows significant local specificities, whether in the former post-socialist countries as a whole or in smaller territorial units, e.g. in the Visegrad Four countries.⁴⁹ Another problem in the sense of comparative research is that there is no scientific consensus on a unified conceptual anchoring of the post-socialist space, nor has there been any significant synthesis of the nature of the dominant ideology in this environment in the context of global neoliberal domination, that would be internationally recognized and accepted.⁵⁰

In this context, the research therefore represents (as I already mention in the Introduction), from my point of view, an innovative and unique approach that, on the one hand, provides an original insight into the way Pierre Bourdieu's social theory is used in urban studies, specifically in the topic of urban planning (and its original application within the selected field); at the same time, it fundamentally deepens Bourdieu's conceptualization in the context of his approach to ideological domination, elaborated in collaboration with Boltanski; and finally, on the other hand, it brings a unique application of this rather extensive theoretical framework to the specific space of the post-socialist city in a way that it has not been used before. From the perspective of a comparative approach for the study of post-socialist cities, I would therefore argue that the thesis brings about a major theoretical innovation that has significant overlap both at the level of global research on the ideological dominance and performativity of neoliberalism in urban development, and in the context of the study of post-socialist cities and the policies and planning frameworks produced within them.

⁴⁹ Differences are also evident in the context of the Czech Republic itself, where Prague represents in a comparison a metropolis that is subject to completely different pressures and challenges and has a relatively different and more complex distribution of actors than, for example, regional cities.

⁵⁰ The question is whether this is possible, and as I have already mentioned, I personally abandon this attempt due to the complexity of the specifics and the related discussion - which I do not consider a weakness, on the contrary, acknowledging the complexity of such an ambition helps me stick to the main research goal, i.e., the processes of (re)production and legitimation in the environment of a specific discourse.

6. Actors in the field of urban development in Prague

Territorial (urban) development represents a very dynamic arena in which a vast number of interests, values, norms, tactics, actions, and policies mix (Bluestone et al., 2008; Corburn, 2009; Lineberry and Sharkansky, 1974; Stedman, 1975; Wolman and Goldsmith, 1992; Shin, 2013; and others), and which includes a large number of actors. On the broadest scale, we can say these are all the inhabitants of the city or a specific region. They all use the urban space in some way and are directly affected by its transformation, which they feel on a daily basis. A particular social field is already emerging here. The inhabitants of the city and the users of its social and physical space move on different dimensions of this field and use different tools to do so: some drive car, some use public transport, some go by bicycle; different dimensions of space are experienced by people within the framework of employment (a corporate office vs. a truck cab or a concert hall...) and in different dimensions of the concept of home (an apartment on a housing estate vs. a family house in a suburb).

As Mosselson (2020: 279) shows, both the city and the neighborhood are clear examples of the social field in both the physical and social sense. A city is a physical environment that has a defining nature in influencing how people build, renovate, occupy space, live, and relate to each other within the space (Amin, 2014). The neighborhood represents a social space through its inclusion in the struggles and contradictions of cultural values and systems of representation, as shown by many authors (see e.g., Ley, 2003; Jackson and Benson, 2014; Sihlongonyane, 2015; Watt, 2009).

The transformation of space changes the perception and use of it by its users. It can be the most minor changes: on the way to work, we are surprised by a repaired road or a newly planted tree. Moreover, we can continue with major changes: the route of the public transport line will be adjusted; the preparation of a new construction project will excavate a pit in the city center, and so on. Likewise, this change will manifest itself in the social composition of the inhabitants of the given area and the circulation of actors differently located in the given social space of the city. A homeless person is forced to move from a locality that is undergoing various forms of revitalization, new residents from higher social strata move to a revitalized locality (or

new owners buy apartments here for the purpose of investment), while the original residents are forced to move to a locality with a lower price level.⁵¹ Different clusters of social groups (and thus *social fields*) have their central places, which can be disrupted by urban planning processes that are often related to the scope and concentration of capital in the urban environment. The overall transformation of the urban fabric through spatial changes that unfold on the basis of policies and planning processes, and the activities of specific actors (determined by their position in the social space), have an impact on all users (inhabitants) of the city.

We identify here a specific social field of "users of urban spaces"; however, it includes in its breadth all actors who act and move in some way in the city space. Nevertheless, in order to understand the processes of construction, *production* (Lefebvre 1991), and *re-production* of urban space and the related social space (i.e., the field of users), it is necessary to focus our attention on those actors who have the most say in the way the city is shaped, based on their dispositions and the degree of specific capitals, i.e., distribution in a particular narrower social field.⁵² We can call this social field the field of *territorial* or *urban development* or the field of *territorial* or *urban planning*. Even in this field – although it may appear technical and administrative, there is a "system of social positions defined by the struggle between different actors in the development process" (Howe and Langdon, 2002: 221). At the same time, the actors who are deployed within it are far from only being members and users of technical and administrative tools. In addition to the apparent actors, which include planners, developers, architects, or various speculators (Mosselson 2020: 279), they are also politicians, a wide spectrum of experts (economists, sociologists, urban planners, but also natural scientists with regard to the current threat to cities due to climate change or the care of urban greenery, waters management and many others), members of non-profit organizations or civic associations, and thus also members of the general public, who through the measure of specific capital more or less accepted for this field, are included or dominated within this social segment (field).

⁵¹ For an interesting input on urban change in relation to social class and neighborhood, see Krase (2017).

⁵² On the contrary, some important actors that we would include into the narrower field may not need to use the particular urban space at all themselves – such as international corporations and investors, who inhabit some other space and only invest money, and therefore hold a high degree of economic capital.

In a Bourdieusian approach, we should try to reflect on the three levels that Bourdieu defines for social research from the perspective of social fields:

1) Analysis of the position of the studied field within the power field plus analysis of its development over time. By the field of power, we mean a specific sector of social space that includes actors who are dominant within their partial social fields, i.e., a kind of resulting set of "winning" actors who become bearers of social power.

2) Analysis of the internal structure of the studied field, i.e., among other things, analysis of the structure and method of distribution of forms of capital or principles of social recognition and legitimacy.

3) Analysis of the emergence of the habituses of those who occupy specific positions within the studied field. (Růžička, Vašát 2011: 130)

From the first perspective, I have already shown the strength of the field within the general system – the accumulation of capital makes it one of the most powerful fields. Further on, I will mainly focus on the other two dimensions, while I won't fully follow the conceptual level of capitals ownership or deep description of habituses, as I want to focus mainly on power relations (nevertheless based on distribution of actors in the field in relation to their capitals and partly also habituses) and their discourse manifestations.

A relatively wide range of actors represents territorial development, and to a greater or lesser extent, most of them are globally represented in practically every city across continents. The post-socialist cities of Central and Eastern Europe, including Prague, show specifics in the distribution of power positions and the composition of specific actor groups. They are historically conditioned both by specific eras of development, starting with development during the industrial revolution, the construction boom of the interwar period, through socialist construction, and finally, processes that fundamentally influenced the current state after the overthrow of socialist regimes in the context of post-socialist transformation, especially in the area of restructuring of public administration, privatization of property and real estate, and gradually also gentrification, financialization of housing and its commodification.

At a general level, the central actors of spatial planning and development in Prague can be classified into four main groups:⁵³

1) *Civic sector* - local initiatives and associations; activists and collectives; engaged professionals and academics; nonprofit organizations; city residents – owners, tenants, but also representatives of the private sector

2) *Public sector* - politicians - at the state, municipal and district level; authorities and institutions - ministries, departments of the municipality and city districts, building authorities, the Institute of Planning and Development (IPR), universities, involved officials; international organizations – European Union and related regulations, UN, UNESCO, etc.

3) *Private sector* - investors, investment funds; banks, large landlords; developers, construction companies; architects; real estate offices

4) *Media* – mainstream, public, independent (+ media with ties to actors from other groups)

However, it should be kept in mind that there may be an overlap between these groups, e.g., at the level of the civic and public sectors (the entry of active citizens into municipal politics - see Pixová, 2020), but also between the civic and private sectors (e.g. neighborhood actions such as community social washing), the civic sector and the media (professional or activist columns in the media or engagement of journalists), and also public and private sector (politicians are members of businesses or business associations), as well as the links between specific actors can be multi-layered and multi-directional. The definition of field boundaries is relatively fluid even in the context of Bourdieu's theory, and a complete list of actors is not the ambition of this text.

Civil sector

As indicated, the post-revolutionary development of Prague has a fundamental influence on the composition and share of representation of actors in the defined field.

⁵³ Within the description, to a certain extent and with modifications, I am based on the working and unpublished mapping of the field carried out by architect Jakub Nakládal (2019) as a basis for Prague urban activists to orientate themselves on the topic. I want to thank Jakub for all his amazing work he's done for the Prague urban movement!

In addition to structural and administrative changes, the mentioned processes (in cooperation with the legacy of socialist housing policies) also led to the fact that in the housing sector as a whole, the share of owner-occupied housing significantly prevails (roughly 70% compared to 30% of rented housing).⁵⁴ This has a significant impact on the orientation of the civil sector. Ownership structure predisposes to a certain extent the spectrum of activities and the level of involvement in the area of decision-making, which for owners, rather concentrated outside the lower social classes, concentrates on organization against disruptive elements in the neighborhood rather than on problems of a more structural nature, despite the high abstraction of planning and lack of time and the ability to penetrate the expertise of the topic.

At the same time, until recently there was no collective organization and enforcement of tenant rights in the area of rents,⁵⁵ which leads to the precariousness of rental housing, as well as the weakening of the attachment to place. Organized civic groups therefore often focus mainly on local topics and causes, while a more complex watchdog role falls to professionalized or semi-professional civic organizations and activist groups. Despite the high share of owner-occupied housing, the growing housing crisis is reflected in the abilities and focus of civic activism in the area of development as well. Also (and not only) in the context of global development, housing prices in Prague are growing at one of the fastest rates in Europe (see, e.g., Orcígr, Nakládal, Zahumenská 2019), which has not changed even a certain easing of construction and an increase in the number of permitted apartments recently.⁵⁶ Although it may not be apparent at first glance, the housing crisis represents one of the central elements of enabling and disabling citizen groups to participate in decision-making about the city's development.

In the context of development and planning itself, the strategies of citizen initiatives are concentrated on local actions in the form of petitions or participation in meetings of local councils or discussions in the Center for Architecture and Urban

⁵⁴ For deeper analysis of rental housing in Prague, see Deloitte, 2021.

⁵⁵ This has changed a bit with establishing of the Initiative of tenants (INN), however organized by a semi-professional organization Re-set. See <https://iniciativanajemniku.cz/>. I don't really count the relatively well-established Association of Tenants (*Sdružení nájemníků ČR*) as an organization of collective action, as it historically tends to be an actor that further reinforces the hegemonical status-quo.

⁵⁶ In 2021, the construction of more than 9,000 apartments was started in Prague, which represents roughly a double increase compared to the previous period - see data from the Czech Statistical Office: https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/bvz_cr

Planning (CAMP),⁵⁷ i.e., in the form of official submissions and comments. However, there is rarely a formulation of broader or more general requirements - these can be formulated in limited dimensions rather by the grassroots movement of urban activists connected to the environment of autonomous or activist collectives, or more likely by non-governmental organizations that are with both spheres of civil activism (civil society organizations and grassroots) in regular contact, and they often work together. There are a few hundred civic associations and local neighborhood initiatives in Prague. The grassroots activist movement is rather fragmented and without larger activist platforms. Political parties are also often active at the local level.

We can also include some engaged experts in the civil sector - for example, architects, lawyers, urban planners, social scientists, and others who have decided to enter the public debate through the civil sphere and often cooperate with the civil sector at a professional level.

Public sector

The role of the public sector at the city level is primarily represented by city representatives, both at the Prague Municipality, i.e., the city hall (*Magistrát*), and also by municipal politicians at the level of the city districts, of which there are a total of 57 in Prague and they differ in size and the amount of influence at the city-wide level. Some municipal politicians of larger city districts are also representatives of the Municipality, in some cases they are members of the so-called Councils (*Rada*), equivalents of government at both city-wide and local district levels. An important role is played by municipal authorities operating in the transferred powers of the state administration, in the context of development and planning, in particular the Department of Territorial Development (*Odbor územního rozvoje*), and also the Department of the Environment (*Odbor ochrany prostředí*), the Department of Transportation (*Odbor dopravy*), and the Department of Historic Preservation (*Odbor památkové péče*) and some others. They issue important official opinions and collaborate on the creation of essential city documents – in the context of the Department of Territorial Development, it is precisely the spatial plan on which this Department has a fundamental influence. At the city-wide level, a key institution is the

⁵⁷ <https://praha.camp/>

Institute of Planning and Development (IPR) and its Center for Architecture and Urban Planning (CAMP), which was created to educate the public and popularize urban development. IPR is responsible for most of the technical documents and cooperates in the preparation of changes to the spatial plan. These are currently taking place under the supervision of the Deputy Mayor of Urban Development office, who can be considered the central political actor with apparently the highest decision-making power. In addition, IPR deals with many other agendas, such as public spaces, public participation, creating databases and analyses, cooperation on urban strategies, and so on.

At the state level, the Ministry of Regional Development (MMR) represents a fundamental institution preparing legislation and the related spatial planning hierarchy. In addition, it establishes binding legal regulations, which may be of a strategic or conceptual nature, and create a central framework of rules for construction and planning.

Other ministries that play an important role (for example, in preparing the draft spatial plan), are the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Culture in the context of heritage protection, and the Ministry of Transportation in the context of transport planning. Other ministries can also play a marginal role in a specific context (e.g., the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in the context of social housing or other ministries in the context of commenting on territorial planning documents).

The Building authorities (*stavební úřady*) have an essential role within the state administration, which in the Prague context make local decisions within larger territorial units and are at the end of all permitting processes through the issuance of zoning decisions and building permits. In this way, they check the compliance of construction projects with the spatial plan and other binding rules and documentations and assess the opinions and comments of actors involved in the permitting processes.

Among the public institutions with a nationwide scope that further speak to the field is the National Heritage Institute (NPÚ), which has specific tools and possibilities to demand the protection of historical values in the territory, either for specific projects or in the preparation of spatial planning documents. Another is the Czech branch of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). A significant role is also played by transnational actors that are relevant in the context of Prague, such as in

many cases UNESCO,⁵⁸ or the European Union in relation to binding European legislation, and on a marginal level, for example, the United Nations.⁵⁹

The last core component consists of universities focusing on associated expertise, i.e., primarily architecture, urban planning, social geography, sociology, law, economics, etc. Technical disciplines, especially architecture, are the primary source of shaping professional discourse within the field. In addition, universities and education institutions create secondary analyzes and documents that inform decision-making. Public libraries also play a minor role, especially as mediators of discussions or professional know-how. Another group of actors is created by various professional associations, mainly from the area of technical expertise, or public research institutes. A specific role is sometimes played by the courts.

Private sector

Developers are among the most visible private actors in the field. They often act as visionaries, present an agenda in the issue of permitting and land-planning systems, and exert pressure on public administration, often also through the media. In Prague, they are the dominant land owners and are often among the main initiators of negotiating modifications to the spatial plan with the usual aim of increasing construction capacity. The largest developer in Prague is the Central Group owned by Dušan Kunovský, which builds up to 20% of new apartments; other large developers include Sekyra, CPI, Finep, Penta and many others. Closely related are private construction companies (Skanska, Metrostav, Eurovia, Strabag, etc.), and architects working for the private sector. Finally, we shall also mention the real estate agencies that mediate the sale and rental of real estate.

Banks and investment firms, which finance most projects, play an essential role in the construction process and the future fate of newly built real estate. A specific role is also played by private analytical firms such as Deloitte, partly also by the law firm Frank Bold – this may concern either the production of data documents or cooperation on fundamental laws or regulations. Interesting role is played by the Czech Chamber

⁵⁸ For example, in the context of permitting high-rise construction in Pankrác or projects in the historical center. However, UNESCO also comments on the spatial plan and the principles of regulation.

⁵⁹ Especially through international conventions, such as the Aarhus Convention, that should secure public participation in decision-making.

of Commerce, which is highly influential and played an important role in preparation of the new building legislation (see pp. 107).

Media

The role of the media in the field lies in the diversity of their nature, purpose, ways of communication, and the way they connect with other interest groups and actors. The media are the primary mediators of communication and, as such, shape professional and public discourse. The topic is covered to a certain extent by the majority of large Czech media, but in the context of more abstract schemes, such as changes to the territorial plan or other planning-related topics, it is more of an exception. Therefore, we more often encounter the presentation of visualizations and promotion of specific projects than the description of the abstract parameters and rules. Specific media may tend to focus more on specific topics and groups (e.g., engaged journalists look for topics with civic overlap, other media draw on press releases and statements of private actors, and advertising also plays an important role).

As follows from a more detailed description, the delineated field is a multi-layered framework in which specific groups are formed, power relations exist, and activities are developed towards other actors represented in the field. A simplified working visualization of the field can have, for example, such a scheme:

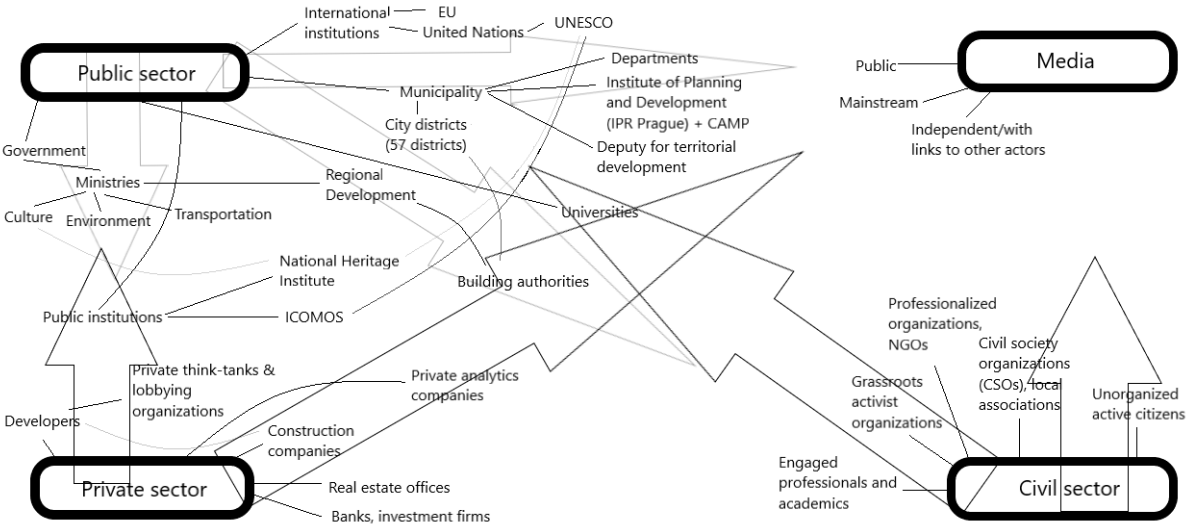


Figure 1: Field of urban development in Prague (simplified working scheme)

The diagram shows the distribution of actors based on four basic differentiating characteristics, as well as the basic structural links between actors. The arrows then illustrate the main directions of the developed activities, i.e. towards whom the activities are primarily oriented. However, the scheme designed in this way fails to capture power ties and hierarchies - from the working material for Prague activists (Nakládál, 2019), we can therefore show one of the proposals for the power distribution of actor positions based on a four-dimensional differentiation:

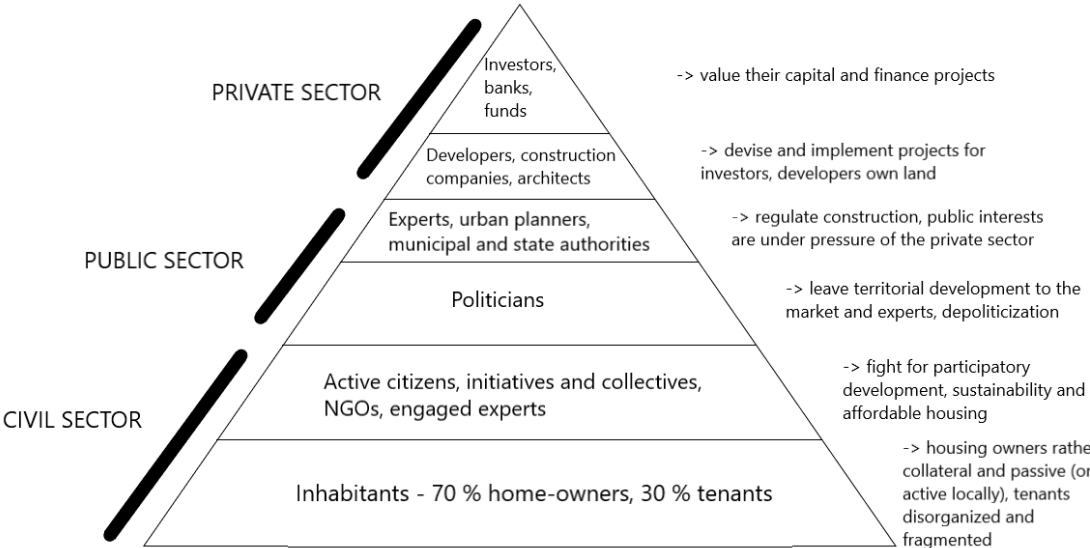


Figure 2: "The power pyramid" of urban development (Nakládál 2019)

The power pyramid dimensioned in this way is reflexive primarily from the point of view of economic and symbolic capital – although formal decision-making remains in the hands of the public administration, it is nevertheless subject to significant visible and informal pressures from private interests. On the other hand, pressure is also exerted by the civil sector, its strength, tools, and ownership of various types of capital are nevertheless smaller, or it is differently stratified (it may contain, for example, significant shares of cultural or social capital, however, in the context of the ability to transform the discourse, it lacks sufficient personnel and economic capacities). It is not my goal to create a comprehensive overview of the field, however, I hope this description shows its breadth and scale, including the most important actors.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Another option of schematizing the field may be using the classic Bourdieu's scheme of actors defined according to possession of capitals on an axis. However, from my perspective, constructing such a

7. Methodology

Within field defined in this way, I want to focus on how inter-actor linkages emerge, and above all, how dominant ideological elements operate. In doing so, I am faced with the relatively important question of the nature of the specific ideology dominating the field, which draws on global and local influences that have their historical, political, economic and social roots. Therefore, beyond the processes of maintaining power within the framework of domination, I will also look for the characteristic features in terms of values and ideas that constitute the ideological system performing within the thematic field. In practice, the knowledge of the existence of a certain dominance constitutes my main motivation for this kind of research, and understanding the mechanisms of reproduction and legitimation set by the chosen theory is nevertheless my central goal.

As I have already shown, *discourse* is an arena that plays a pivotal role in the process of maintaining ideological dominance. It reflects actor positions and the resulting power arrangements, and as the central platform of legitimation and reproduction, it offers, from my perspective, the greatest potential to explore these processes. I have therefore decided to conduct a *discourse analysis* and focus on the patterns through which ideological performativity and process of maintaining dominance occurs.

The relevance of discursive analysis for urban studies

As shown by Shirazi (2023), the interest among researchers in language in various fields of urban studies has been growing in the past years. This was caused partly through the need to respond to the dominant technical and technocratic approach to planning. This also highlighted the role of discourse as a component of urban processes and urban change and supported further integration of language into urban research.

scheme wouldn't have enough empirical evidence as placing individual actors may rely only on hints and circumstantial evidence that would be sorted mainly by researcher's individual judgment. Nevertheless, a deeper thought over this schematization may still be worth for further description of the field.

Discourse-based approaches, as shown by Keith Jacobs (2006), methodologically assume that politics is an arena in which groups of actors seek to establish particular narratives or versions of events as a means to achieve political goals. In other words, for discourse analysis, ideology is the central concern. In the era of global neoliberal hegemony, it may seem logical that studies focused on urban issues based on discursive analysis are growing. Still, at the same time, they are sometimes criticized as unsystematic and that they add only little to the empirical knowledge of the topic (Parker & Burman, 1993, Antaki et al., 2003). However, for example, Loretta Lees (2004: 101) underlines the growing importance of language in urban analysis in general, and even refers to this trend directly as a "discursive turn."⁶¹ Nevertheless, she sees two problems within the discursive conception of the city: (1) the relatively late arrival of the discursive turn causes an unclear connection with its theoretical and methodological roots; (2) the number of different approaches to discursive analysis, as well as its methodological plurality and inconsistency, at the same time cause ambiguities in its use in urban studies. On the one hand, this means some uncertainty when linking the research problem in the field of urban studies to the methodological procedure; on the other hand - at least in my opinion - it brings also some research freedom, especially when the theoretical base of the research is built with a strong reference to the role of discourse and its formative function in the construction of ideological frameworks and their hegemonic position.

Despite specific limits, authors dealing with discursive analysis in urban studies highlight its advantages. According to Fairclough et al. (2004: 2), people not only act but also represent their ways of acting and create imaginary projections of actions in specific discourses. That is why, among other things, the role of language is so important. Unlike research focused purely on decision-making, discursive analysis can better reveal the power and ideological conflicts that influence thinking about policy implementation. The method makes it possible to include observations not apparent from other methods, and the analysis is more accurate in the context of ideology and policy and allows taking into account specific nuances. As Jacobs (2006: 40) points out, the importance of language in the policy arena has already been recognized by researchers, which, among other things, leads to an increase in this type of analysis. The roots for the use of discursive analysis begin with the work of cultural geographers

⁶¹ Such as it was highlighted in social science in general – see Howarth and Torfing, 2004.

who dealt with the spatial aspects of cultural products. Jacobs also mentions the influence of linguistic philosophy as significant (e.g., Wittgenstein, 1974 or Winch, 1977).⁶²

However, at the level of general research - as stated by Lees (2004) - two major streams gradually emerged for discursive analysis. At the same time, both can be considered relevant from the perspective of our research goal. The first approach is based on the Marxist tradition of political economy and critique of ideology. For this approach, discursive analysis is a tool for uncovering specific ways of thinking and talking about how certain things should be done in a certain interest. According to this tradition, discourse is very similar or even identical to the very ideology it represents, especially in the context of serving specific interests, as well as creating the agreement of the dominated with the fact that they are dominated (van Dijk, 1997). This approach to understanding discourse is sometimes referred to as Gramscian, as discourse here becomes a tool to maintain hegemony (see, for example, Beauregard, 1993). Such an approach, as Lees (2004: 102) shows, also prevails in new urban sociology, i.e., also in the *sociospatial perspective* (see Gottdiener and Feagin, 1988; Mele, 2000) and becomes for us the key to understanding the formation of ideological dominance. As shown by some other works that we can consider part of this approach (Davoudi and Healy, 1995; Newman, 1996; Mossberger and Stoker, 1997), the aid for maintaining hegemonic positions (which we can relate also to hegemonic relations within specific fields) can be "discursive coalitions" that arise in urban politics (and which are subject to the main research emphasis within the stream).

Methodologically, it focuses on the formation of coalitions through the discourse and persuasive abilities of actors and examines specific narrative structures or the framing of problems. However, the problem with this approach may be that it takes the actors' identities as given without further differentiation, as Lees (2004: 102) points out. Therefore, extraordinary sensitivity and precise targeting of the essence of the statements is needed, without the actor's identity becoming the determining factor for the nature of the discourse, although it has a certain predetermining character. In other words, in my understanding, it should mean that the analysis must clearly follow the

⁶² After all, this is also related to the fact that ideology is an important phenomenon for linguistic philosophy - e.g., in the case of Stuart Hall or Noam Chomsky.

character of the language and be maximally reflexive regarding the perception of the given actor's position.

Lees (*ibid*) also points out that the works devoted to urban governance often perceived the dichotomous nature of the discourse in the sense that the discourse not only reflects political actors and their narratives but also affects the relations between them (which *de facto* reflects the classic Marxist dialectical approach to space, here however in the context of the discourse). Positioning and taking sides can be identified based on what the actors say. Language is also key to policy formation – it can change the perception of interests and problems, define the object of policy attention, support specific agendas, change the nature of communication between actors, and so on (Rydin 1998: 178).

This leads us to the second dominant approach, which is based on post-structural theory and, above all, the work of Michel Foucault. In this case, discourse is the process through which things and identities are constructed. In Foucaultian terms, discourses are not only (dis)interpretations of reality but rather create their own “regimes of truth” – acceptable formulations of problems and solutions to these problems (Lees 2004: 103). In other words, the discourse, in this case, has a slightly wider performative and constitutive potential. Through it, agents, economic or political, objects, agendas, preferred narratives, and others are created, which can subsequently be included within the policy. In comparing the two perspectives, the point is that the conflictual one has a particular pre-defining perspective, while the post-structuralist one counts on the active constructive role of discourse in relation to social reality.

As Jacobs (2006: 44) states, many authors explicitly drew on the historical approach of Foucault (1971; 1974; 1977; 1980). According to him, discourses are complex sets of competing ideas and values that are actualized by everyday practices. The task of researchers is to identify how discourses illustrate conflicts through meanings associated with power. Among the examples of the Foucaultian direction in urban studies, we can include, for example, the texts of Richardson (2004) and Sharp and Richardson (2001: 196). They interpret discourses as "multiple and competing sets of ideas and metaphors embodied in texts and practices."

Often there was a combination of both approaches.⁶³ Among classic texts, Lees (2004: 103) mentions Said's *Orientalism* (1978), in which Gramsci's critique of ideology is used with a post-structuralist perspective that reflects the constitutive nature of discourse; in urban studies, such an example is Beauregard's *Voices of decline* (1993). In comparison, as Lees points out, there is a visible consequence of the later approach of urban studies to discursive analysis, which manifests itself in a smaller reflection of theoretical and methodological tensions in connecting both approaches. She admits that there is a gap between the two currents, especially in the context of the description of the method, which according to her, is very complicated. However, at least basically, the method should include the following:

1) interpretive context; i.e., the particular social setting in which the discourse takes place;

2) rhetorical organization of the discourse; i.e., a certain argumentative scheme that organizes the text and establishes its authority

Fairclough (1992 according to Lees 2004: 104; cf. also Fairclough 1989, 1995 according to Jacobs 2006: 42) offers a three-dimensional framework of analysis – text analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. At the same time, *text analysis* should focus on the vocabulary used, grammar, and structure of the text; the area of *discursive practice* should include an analysis of the context and process in which policy statements are formed and considered and their links to other discussions or literature; *social practice* then involves the analysis of the broader ideological context and power structures in which discourses take place and are conceptualized in some way. According to Jacobs (2006: 42), Fairclough's conceptualization represents a definite analytical structure to navigate in discursive analysis. An example of its use is, for example, the work of Marston (2002), which shows the influence of discourse on housing policies. Using Fairclough's framework, it is possible to show how ideological stimuli work in favor of policy change. According to Marston, ideological discourses are

⁶³ In addition to the two currents identified by Lees, according to Jacobs (2006: 42), there are also other works that do not fall into this typology. These include the linguistic and ethnomethodological currents developed by social psychologists, particularly associated with the "Discourse and Rhetoric Group" at the University of Loughborough UK (e.g., Billig, 1995; Potter, 1996, 2003; Edwards, 1997; Antaki et al., 2003) and others. The main benefit of the methods of discursive psychology is the ability to see the actors' perception of the discourse, their interpretation, and production within the discourse (Jacobs 2006: 43).

often used by actors within organizations to support policies that are in line with their interests. In the context of methodological work, however, he also adds that Fairclough's critical discursive analysis (CDA) alone is not sufficient to fully capture the complexity of political processes. He points out that more qualitative and ethnographic methods are needed to do this (also in the context of housing and urban policies). From my perspective, undoubtedly it would be possible to methodically expand the topic by interviews with actors or different variants of observation. However, I believe that the theoretical basis I am building within this work gives the chosen method sufficient relevance and legitimacy. At the same time, I do not intend to examine political processes on a complex level; I aim at ideology. Moreover, Marston himself makes extensive use of the method, especially in the context of a conflict of ideologies.

Returning even more generally to modes of analysis in urban studies, Lees further predicts an increase in the kind of analysis that will focus more on interpretive and psychological dimensions, in other words, the *performative role* of language that is not necessarily prescribed only in written or spoken frameworks. For these approaches, she foresees a wider drawing from Goffman's studies of spoken interaction (see Goffman, 1981), i.e., a focus on how we present ourselves in urban space within the framework of interactions. As Lees continues, a more sophisticated debate about the method of analysis can also help us to realize what form of constructivism we want to deal with in our work - from the radical form, "nothing exists outside discourse," to the more epistemologically conventional position in which the constructed is part of ideological mystification. Lees also adds that discourse analysis is often used in the context of social justice research; but critics (Merrifield and Swyngedouw, 1996) show that it is not enough – it is not enough to just talk about social justice; it is necessary to create it. Therefore, a critical discursive analysis must also serve as an effective systemic critique, which has not been successful in the majority of discursive analyzes carried out so far. It is, therefore, an action research agenda that our work does not end but begins (Lees 2004: 104 – 105).

Research questions

From my point of view, it is not essential to lean towards one or the other approach within the framework of the analysis presented by me; on the contrary, I

would consider it counterproductive in a way. My approach wants to draw from both main currents. On the one hand, it is based on the principles of critical discursive analysis (CDA), that I have shown in the previous description. Ideology stands in the core of my research interest, and I perceive discursive representations as narratives in the context of ideological contents, and discourse, for me, becomes a central factor of reproduction and an accelerating factor of dominance. On the other hand, I grant the created discourse a performative potential and connect it to the performativity of governance, just as I grant it the ability to illustrate conflicts through meanings within the field in connection with power.

The theoretically depicted approaches to discursive analysis are not mutually exclusive, and at the same time, methodological ambiguity does not necessarily mean a degradation of the result. I consider it essential that the created analytical framework is able, on the one hand, to perceive the essence of what the created discourses represent and, at the same time, also perceive the influence it has on further decision-making. From practices within various governances, not only in matters of territorial development, but also in other fundamental local and global agendas (such as climate policy, water management, energy, housing affordability, transport policy, and thus also areas such as education or social policy or racial inequalities and LGBTQ+ issues), we know that the performative potential of discourse is considerable. The effort to disrupt and transform discourse and discursive dominance conditioned by ideology becomes one of the central strategies of social movements. Bringing new arguments, new narratives, and their promotion into the mainstream public discussion subsequently affects actual political practice.

For that reason, the research questions that I set out for the analysis give importance to both dimensions of discursive analysis, i.e., the focus on the content essence of ideology, its discursive display, and its performative role. I defined the main research question as follows:

What are the discursive mechanisms of ideological dominance and its (re)production and legitimization within urban development and urban policy in Prague?

Additional sub-questions should lead to its answer:

What are the essence and main principles and ideas of the dominant ideology in matters of territorial development and planning in Prague? How is it different, and what does it have in common with the global hegemonic system?

What actors enter the given discursive field?

The *discursive mechanisms* outlined by the main research question represent the parameters of discourse, which are characterized by selected approaches to discursive analysis, especially concerning narrative production, discursive context, and actorial practice. As the research focuses on discursive manifestations of ideology and dominance, the primary consideration is the presence of theoretically constructed aspects of the dominant ideology, their expressions, main thematic orientations, frequency, and distribution within the actor field. Conceptually, there is no distinction between domination and hegemony, as hegemony is considered an inherent part of domination based on the theoretical approach adopted.

Methodological procedure

The data for the analysis are based on regular thematic media monitoring through the ANOPRESS database. The monitoring was based on a basic set of relevant keywords, complemented by other fluctuating keywords according to current events (e.g., negotiation of major construction cases or important documents). From the resulting set of several thousand relevant articles and other media outputs, a total of 254 articles were selected and analyzed based on the methodology described below, and 1 486 specific narratives (excerpts) were extracted.

The data corpus comprises a random and non-random selection of media outputs (mainly newspaper and web articles, however, the database also includes TV and radio outputs and their transcripts) from June 2018 to February 2021. The beginning and end of the time frame are chosen selectively - both border months were discursively significant with respect to the agenda. The summer of 2018 saw the first public consultation of the new draft master plan (Metropolitan Plan), while the beginning of 2021 represented a narratively strong period within the field as a result of two cases - the publication of regulations for the brownfield site of the former freight station in Žižkov and the planned development near the InterContinental Hotel in the

center of Prague. Other selectively (non-randomly) chosen parts of the data corpus include some specific periods: October 2019, when the zoning study for the largest Prague brownfield site in Bubny was discussed; March 2020 as the period of the beginning of the pandemic of covid-19, when topic-specific narratives were produced; and July 2020 as the summer period, which is usually characterized by fewer outputs, but which may also create more space for specific topics and discourses. These five non-randomly selected months include the analysis of the complete dataset (all relevant articles generated by the monitoring). The random selection then consists of the remainder of the data from the selected two-and-a-half-year period, which was included in the analysis through the principle of every tenth monitoring set (conducted every few days). The set usually contained multiple articles - in which case all of them were analyzed.

The analytical work was based on a multi-stage inductive coding system divided into several categories. The first category distinguished the most general theme of the article with the analyzed narrative (excerpt). The second category involved the creation of a primary and secondary code based on more precise characteristics of the narrative (theme, content).⁶⁴ The third category was then differentiated based on a general binary distinction of the narrative - whether the excerpt was rather ideologically *dominant* or *subversive*.⁶⁵ According to this category, codes related to the categorization of the dominant attribute of the narrative were formed (grounded in theory of Bourdieu and Boltanski but retaining space for new categories), or codes expressing the nature of subversiveness, while in many cases also carrying some ideological attribute. At the same time, it is important to stress out that this categorization is only a classificatory methodological tool, which (with the awareness of the reflection of the individual performative position of the researcher, who is, moreover, as I describe below, an active actor in the field of analysis) does not play a significant role for the conclusions formed. On the contrary, in some cases the analysis

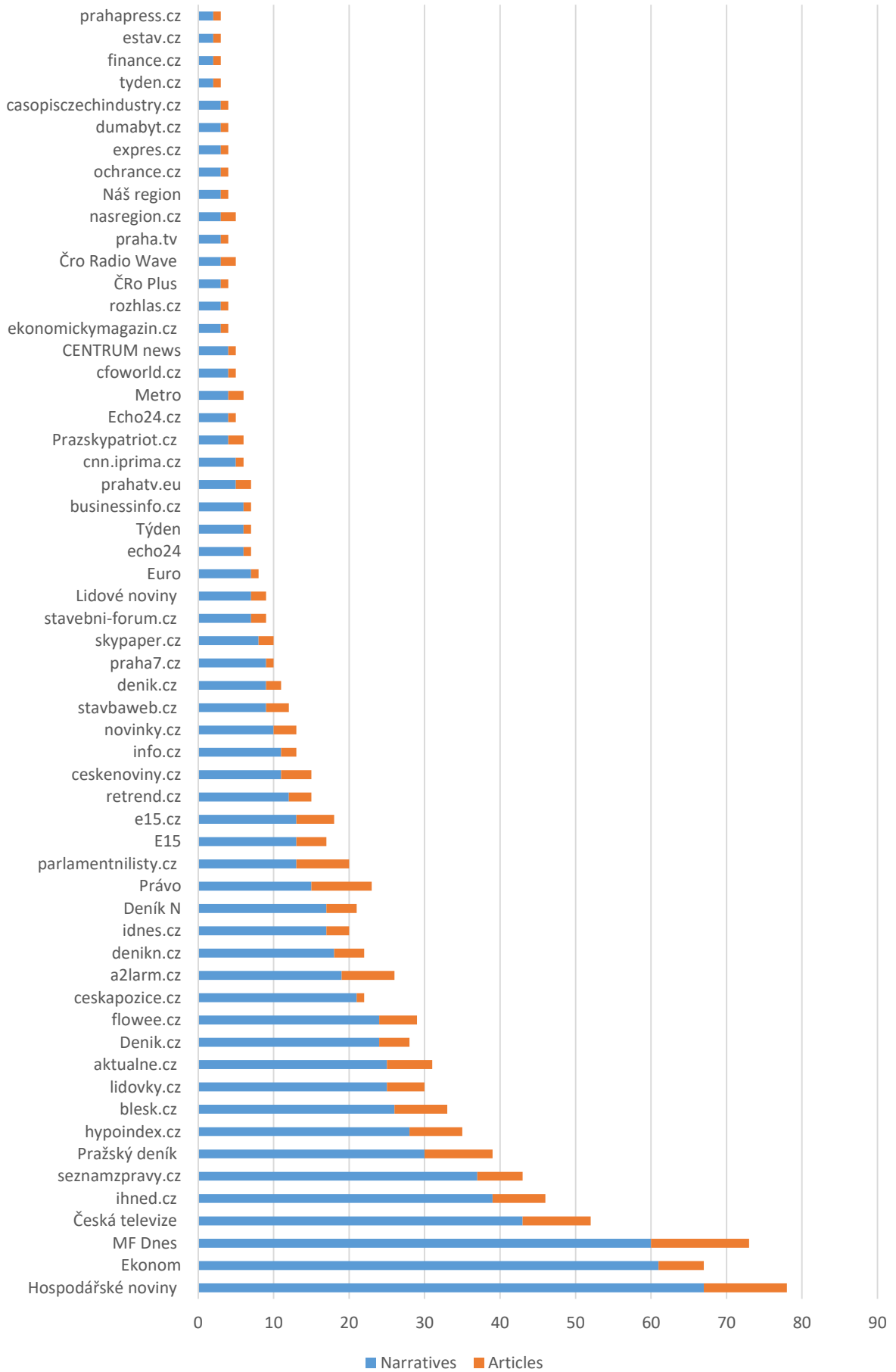
⁶⁴ I further develop the description and statistics of coding in the following chapter. I admit the possible performative role of the researcher in this way of analysis as attaching an excerpt to a code of topic and identifying its core content relies on individual evaluation. However, I still believe this is mostly connected to precise understanding of the text and its meaning, which is not necessarily connected to the position of the researcher, but to the researcher's abilities to focus on the exact meaning of the text.

⁶⁵ The framing of a narrative as rather dominant or rather subversive is based on the specificities of the dominant (neoliberal) order outlined by the theory and its premises in conjunction with other theoretical characteristics for the post-socialist space that I have described in the thesis.

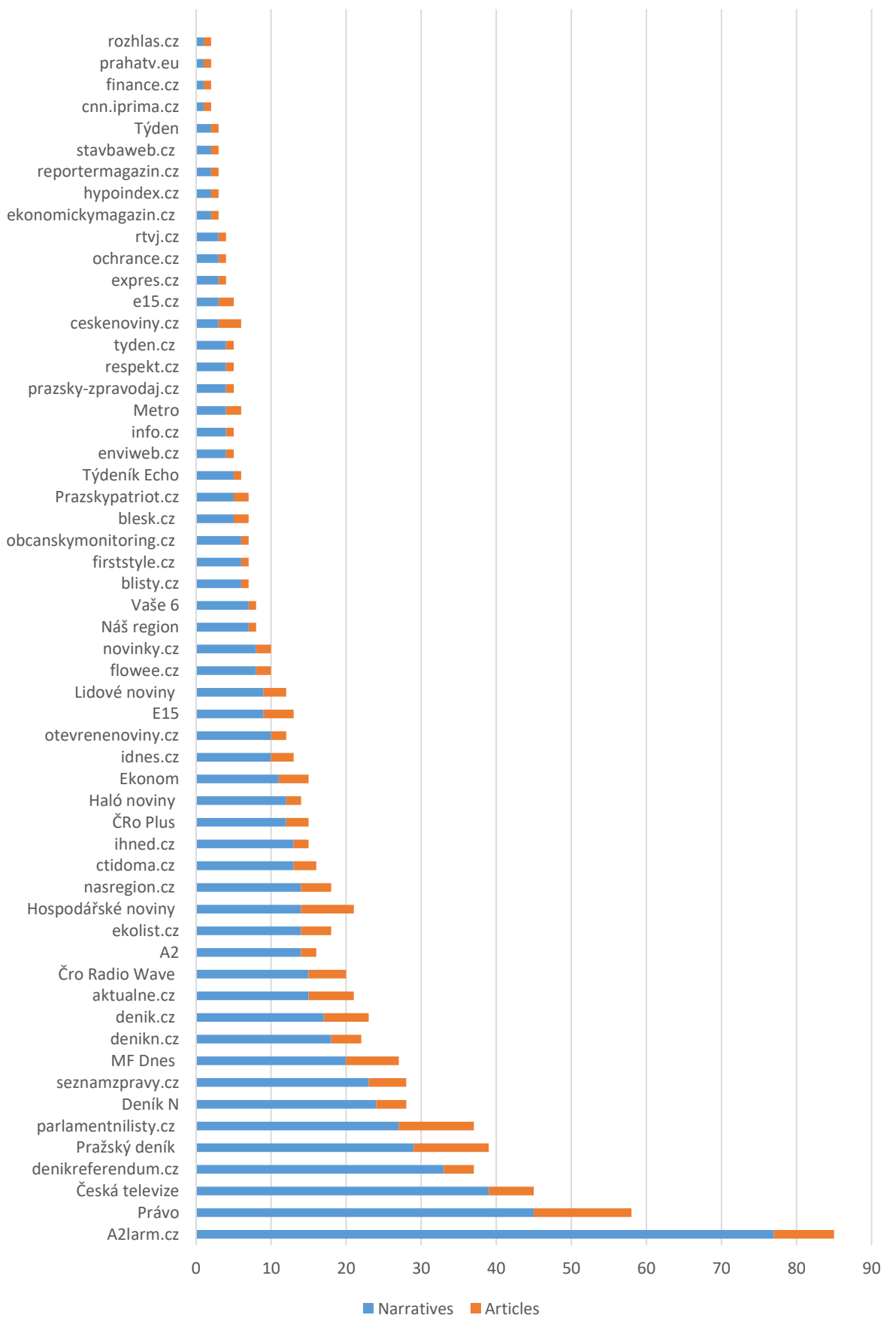
have shown there may be border cases present within the discourse, which don't tend to be classified neither as dominant, nor as subversive, and I believe the way of analysis created space for them to show up.

Nevertheless, the multiplicity of specific characteristics generated in this way is worth mentioning. Of the resulting set, 139 media outputs were identified as primarily dominant as opposed to 115 subversive ones. A total of 833 narratives had a dominant attribute compared to 653 subversive ones, and a total of 202 articles contained at least one dominant narrative compared to 169 that contained a subversive one. The basic binary characterization of narrative dominance or subversiveness also yields interesting statistics showing specific media proportions. In the analyzed data, *Hospodářské noviny*, *Ekonom* magazine, and *Mladá fronta DNES* proved to be frequent producers of dominant narratives, while *A2larm.cz*, *Právo*, and Czech Television (which was also ranked as the fourth largest producer of dominant narratives) showed significantly subversive characteristics. The frequencies of dominance and subversiveness are shown in Graphs 1 and 2. The complex nature of these basic characteristics is further elaborated in the analytical section, as well as further work with topics and shaped codes.

Graph 1: Dominant discourse



Graph 2: Subversive discourse



Reflection of the research position

In the context of the above - and not only methodologically, but also theoretically outlined research premises - a certain degree of reflection on the possible risks of the chosen field of research set up in this way is necessary. Media discourse analysis alone will not encompass all the dimensions of ideology as I have so far set them out. For one thing, it has limited possibilities in examining *discursive* and *social practices*, i.e., in particular actions and shaped social and governance frameworks. Two central dimensions extend the limited reach of media analysis in research. The first is the discursive properties of the field itself. While my study has not explicitly focused on discursive manifestations within *neutral places* (e.g., public hearings at the IPR and CAMP, or council meetings) and shaped discursive practices, the media outputs in the dataset do contain these discursive practices to a large extent in the form of reproductions. These are specific quotes or even transcripts of passages from public meetings that have become part of more comprehensive articles on the issues at hand. In this way, significant manifestations of the reproduction and legitimation processes of ideology enter the corpus under analysis and become part of the analysis.⁶⁶ Similarly, I do not specifically analyze, for example, the resulting emerging legislation or spatial planning documents based on an independently conducted textual and documentary analysis; however, I do include these frameworks in the study through my own actor position and pre-understanding,⁶⁷ which constitutes a second important dimension of the extension of the research to the 'extra-media' discursive manifestations.

On the one hand, my long-term presence and active involvement within the field⁶⁸ provide a major advantage in terms of knowledge of the content of regulatory frameworks and the initial valuation of actor positions and ownership of different types

⁶⁶ However, the method used cannot, of course, capture informal or behind-the-scenes negotiations and ties, which are largely tied to the shaped discourse and constitute an important formative structure of the field. Here it is certainly possible to suggest further research through other qualitative methods, especially interviews or focus groups.

⁶⁷ That actually includes also a study of relevant secondary sources and within the process, the documentary analysis itself, although not conducted within the actual research process, but within my own actoral behavior in the field.

⁶⁸ Since 2015, I have been a member of Arnika, a non-profit civic organization that, among other things, deals with the development of Prague and acts as a civic watchdog and expert opposition to development in Prague. It is linked to local Prague CSOs, provides information services, and runs media campaigns. It also includes forming links with actors in the field. The specificity of the analyzed data is that I myself, through my own media statements, am part of the analyzed corpus, as Arnika is one of the important discursive actors.

of capital. On the other hand, it poses a research risk, especially regarding the danger of skewing interpretations towards one's existing ideological position, which is usually openly contradictory to the dominant order.⁶⁹ In my analysis, therefore, I stick as much as possible to a purely interpretive scheme embedded in the input theory (i.e. theoretical findings and classifications of Bourdieu and Boltanski), while analytically remaining open to new findings that are not conceptualized by the theory.⁷⁰ In doing so, I completely exclude from the analysis my own statements and media representations that are included in the corpus; however, I am unable to exclude the role of my organization and the formative performative function it has within the shaped field - this would make the analysis incomplete and introduce bias.

Other limitations of the analysis include its limited ability to capture the dynamics of discourse over time. However, such an analysis would be desirable for a more accurate depiction of the performativity of ideology in the field. This, in fact, is captured in the critique of theoretical approaches to post-socialism I outlined earlier, which shows the lack of reflection on interconnections and conceptual shortcomings of some approaches. A related issue is the limited ability to assess the performance of specific political representations at the local and state level across electoral periods.⁷¹

At the same time, the analysis itself has significant potential for performative action within the discourse, which is one of my central research motivations. Demonstrating the hegemonic nature of urban development attributes can help to better understand the nature of urban governance and planning in the future and potentially lead to more inclusive and sustainable urbanism. I do not attribute such a high ambition to my work, but the potential for holding up a mirror to the actor distribution of positions in the field and its discursive representations is nonetheless there.

⁶⁹ From the perspective of methodological reflection, I reject the assumption of the unbiased position of the researcher. On the contrary, in the context of analyzing the performativity of the neoliberal order, it is necessary to realize that in the dominant system based on a particular ideology, "objective" research of society is not possible. However, more „positivistic“ streams of knowledge tends to believe in such a premise. Sociology can treat risks methodologically, but it will never achieve "pure" knowledge.

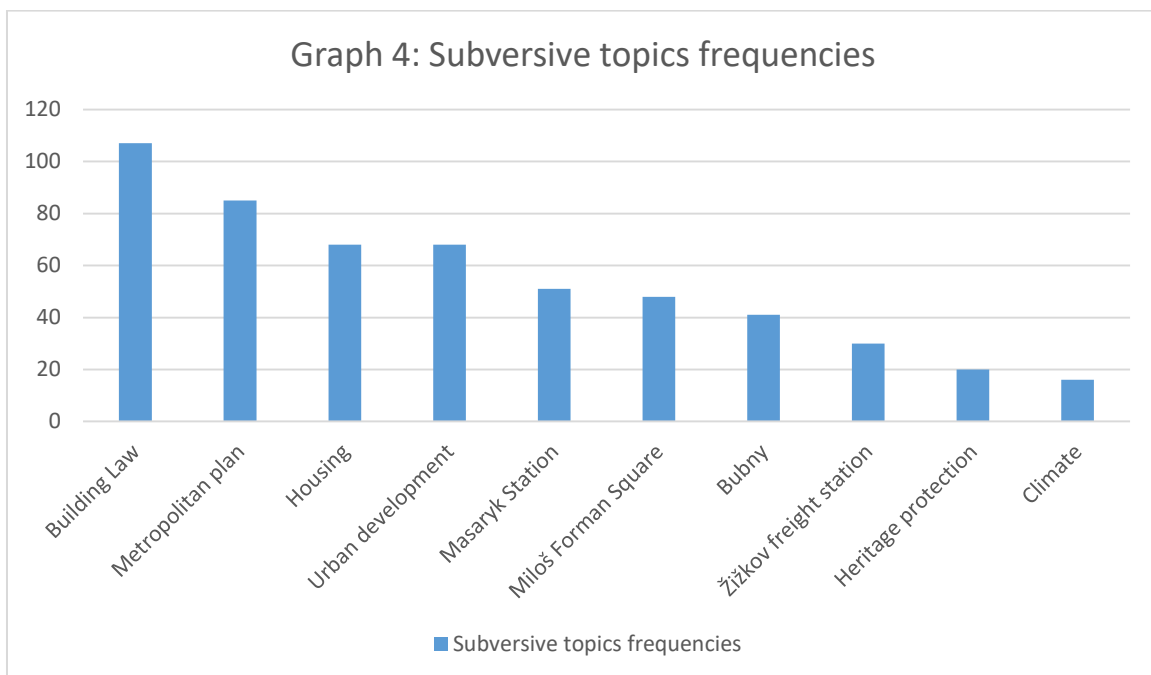
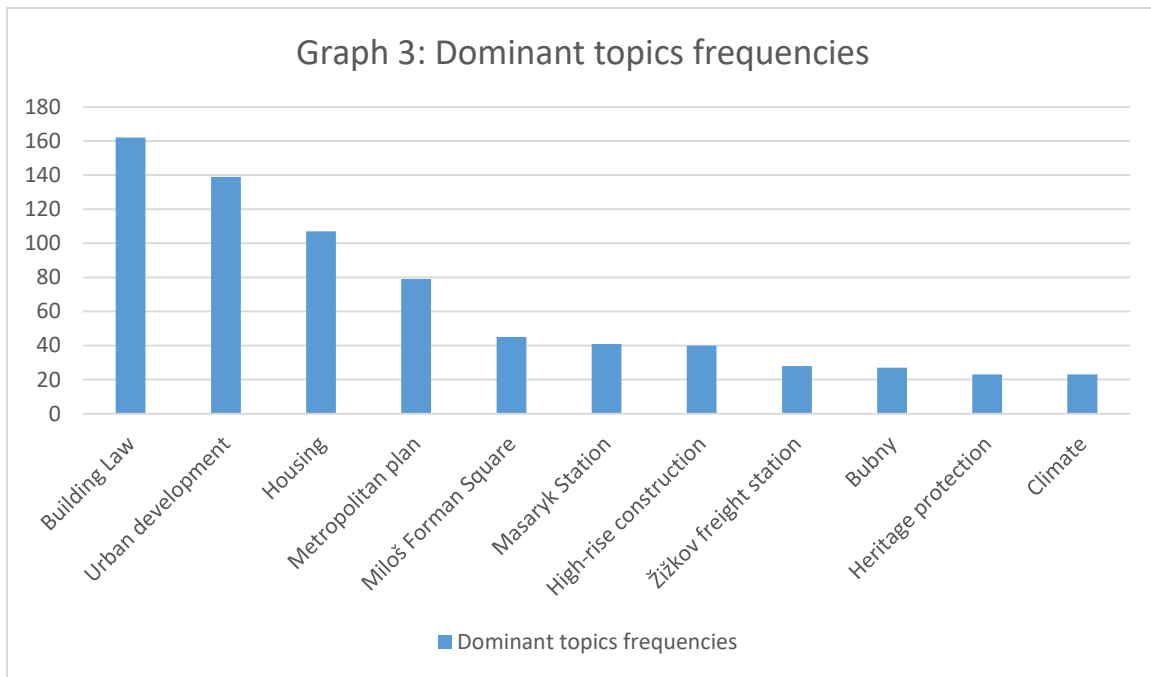
⁷⁰ Comparison of newly found ideological attributes in framing of dominant narratives is described in the analysis and conclusion. Analytically, these were being created when none of the theoretical attributes of Bourdieu and Boltanski fit to the nature of the narrative.

⁷¹ The findings, however, point rather to the fact that the performativity of the dominant ideology lies mainly in the formation of specific discursive coalitions of actors that are relatively resistant to the prevailing structural political settings.

8. Analysis

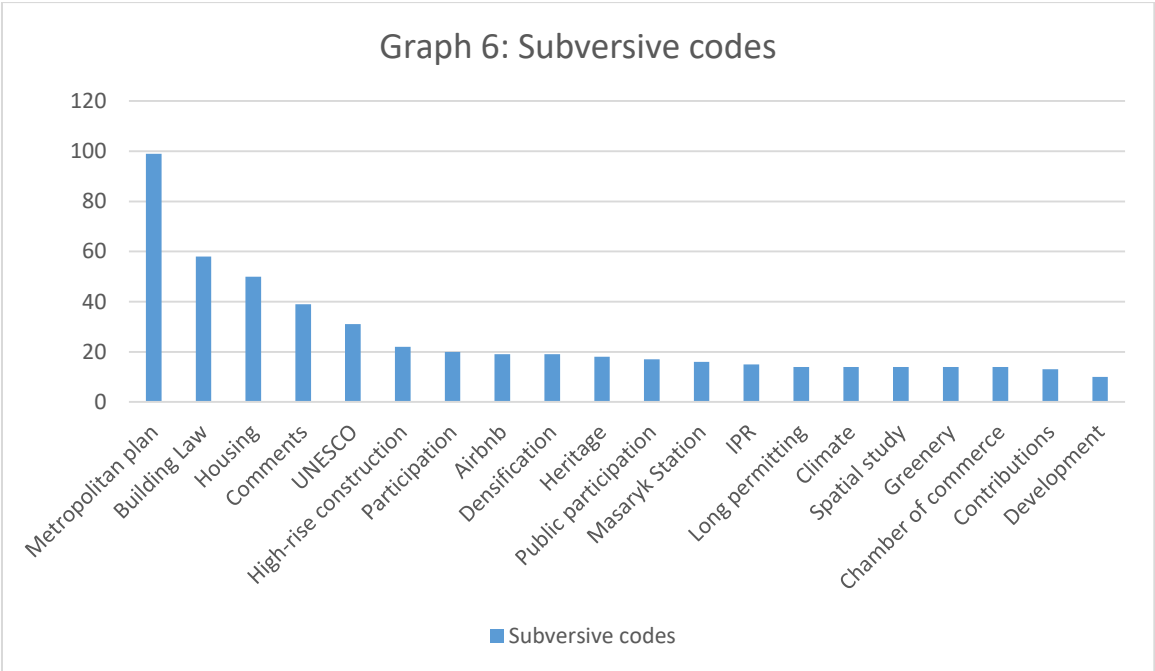
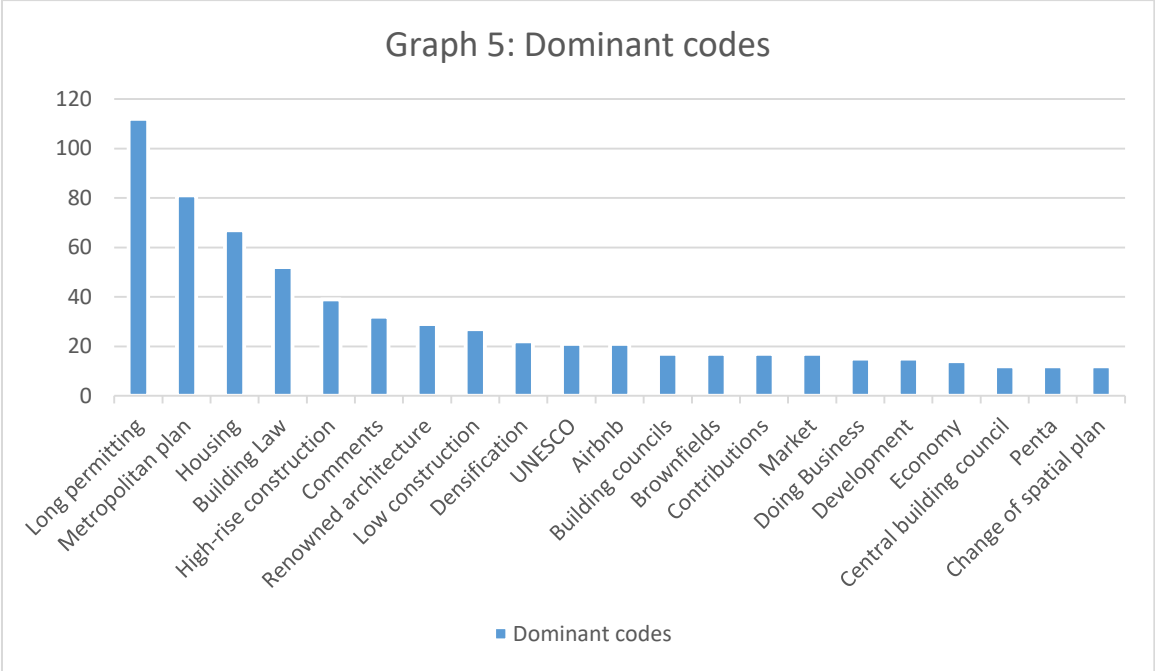
Within the data and the sets of codes, several central thematic segments emerged which mostly played discursive "games of meanings" in relation to the formation of ideological image and dominance within the field. I have attempted to account for virtually all of these themes in a more in-depth analysis, identifying in many of them and across them some significant actors who entered the discourse repeatedly and thus had a greater influence on its formation. I devote special space to a selection of these, which is both to show the roles and natures of individual actors, and also to demonstrate that structuring the analytical section by themes with 'interludes' in which I discuss actors, helps the reader to absorb the complexity of the field and the inter-actor links.

The themes can be divided according to typology - (1) the processes of regulatory frameworks (legislation – "Building Law", spatial planning – "Metropolitan plan", spatial studies or modifications to existing spatial plan, which I usually classify under the thematic tag "Urban development"); (2) more general broader development-related themes such as housing, heritage protection or climate change; and finally, (3) specific construction cases, with the most frequent ones being the transformations of the largest brownfields (Bubny, Žižkov freight station) or major construction projects in the centre of Prague (Masaryk Station, Miloš Forman Square). Looking at the frequency statistics, we do not see significant differences between dominant (Graph 3) and subversive (Graph 4) narratives. It is necessary to perceive the rather indicative nature of the frequencies collected in this way; the focus of the research lies on the interpretative level of specific narratives and on monitoring their performativity in terms of ideology. Of course, the corpus also included other themes and causes, some of which are reflected in the analysis, either in the analysis of domination or in the description of subversive strategies.



The coding of narratives was done on two levels (excluding the first dimension of thematic designation), the first of which tended to follow a micro-thematic dimension, hence fragments of text that carried specific meanings - e.g., concerned specific actors, institutions, or causes, or carried ideological meanings in connection with a field-specific theme (typically, this could be statistics on permitting rates, characteristics of architectural quality, the topic of developer contributions, etc.). Secondary coding then

directly tracked the ideological dimensions delineated by the input theory, leaving room also for the emergence of new categories, and within the counter-discursive messages I, on the other hand, tracked the characteristics of the strategies, or ideological features themselves. Here, greater differences are evident in the comparison of dominant and subversive narratives, but again, these are rather indicative statistics that serve more as a partial methodological tool to determine the meanings of the codes in question, but without a stronger research interpretation, which I leave mainly to the interpretation of the specific messages themselves.



Based on the frequencies in the codes, I tracked central narrative patterns in specific themes, as well as inter-thematic overlaps and discursive mechanisms. A significant aid in this process was the multilevel coding system, which allowed me to sort specific narrative tendencies into clusters and thus assign meanings and relevance to them within the analysis. Through the multilevel coding I was able to follow the narrative contents both from the perspective of the topic and the perspective of ideological attributes. Among the themes of the discourse, the basic *meta-narratives* that help to construct a field-specific form of dominant ideology appear alongside the theory-anchored premises. Thus, as I have already mentioned, analytically I attempt to trace both the modes of reproduction and legitimation,⁷² but also the characteristics of the ideology itself and possible counter-discursive frameworks that may also bear ideological features.

1. The Building Law

The topic of preparing a new construction law turned out to be the most repeated in the analyzed data. This is partly due to the legislative process, which consists of various phases that are glossed over and commented on by many actors. Although it is a national topic, the whole process was centralized within Prague, whether narratively, actor-wise, or content-wise. The central narrative, which occurs not only in connection with the new construction law but relatively across the identified topics (i.e., it becomes the central *meta-narrative*), is the length of permitting processes in Czechia.

Shortening permit procedures has long been the central motivation for adopting legislative measures, such as the amendment from 2018, which resulted in the exclusion of civil associations from permit processes. At one time, this amendment was referred to as the biggest restriction of civil rights since the Velvet Revolution.⁷³ In the context of hegemonic performativity, it represents an example of *discursive* and *social practice*. Repeated narratives about the fact that civic associations are one of the causes of long construction permits in Czechia were reflected in the final legislative

⁷² Within the analytical approach to dominance, I am working with the term “hegemonic performativity” in order to mark practice, that bears specific ideological attributes contributing to the creation of hegemony (dominance).

⁷³ <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/2173855-novela-stavebniho-zakona-ekologicti-aktiviste-dal-bojuji-proti-vyloucení-verejnosti>

adjustment.⁷⁴ The right to participate in administrative processes remained available only to citizens considered the so-called concerned property owners. In this case, the degree of civil rights was determined based on *ownership*, not *citizenship*. This represents a compelling ideological neoliberal turn in governance, as described by the theory. However, this work does not have data processed for the period of the 2018 amendment and only follows the subsequent preparation of the new Building Act as part of the so-called *recodification of building law*.⁷⁵

The performativity within which the hegemonic critique of long permitting both shapes the discursive image of the problem and inscribes itself in binding measures, such as legislation, represents some of the other aspects of ideological dominance set out by the theory. In the context of post-socialist space, these kinds of narratives can be seen as a projection of post-socialist hegemony, which relates to neoliberal notions of growth and development, here mirrored in the form of construction as a coveted positive goal. In doing so, the premise cuts across narratives, including subversive ones. It becomes a *normative, unconditional, commonly shared* assumption that defines the parameters of society's quality of life.⁷⁶ The pressing need to speed up building permits is discussed by dominant politicians, developers, officials, and architects, but also by activists and experts who usually appear more on the counter-narrative spectrum. From a hegemonic perspective, how long we build is a formative precondition for a *successful* and *competitive* society.

⁷⁴ Narratively, labeling citizens as the culprits of long permits is not the only reason for long permits. On the contrary, the analysis showed that blaming delays rather forms a particular *chain of screams*, where on the one hand, developers blame a range of actors led by the authorities and the overall *dysfunctional system*, while the authorities, on the other hand, blame developers, among others (see Orcígr, Jelínková, Bernard 2019). However, the whole dispute arises from a hegemonic vision of the need to build.

⁷⁵ Part of the analyzed corpus are narratives formed around the Constitutional Court's decision that excluding associations from administrative permit procedures is not unconstitutional. The Senate of the Constitutional Court then decided with the closest ratio of votes. The comments on the verdict showed the pitfalls of high expertise in planning and building permits. These were almost exclusively comments by lawyers who used alienated legal vocabulary in the spirit of the *performativity of hegemony*. This prevents the broader development of counter-discourse and preserves the status quo. It also points to the courts' vital role in hegemony's (re)production. Their decisions carry a specific reproductive and legitimizing function. If the court's decision were to the contrary, it would likely jeopardize or even stop the entire recodification process. On the other hand, the confirming decision was repeatedly used in favor of hegemonic arguments (e.g., by the Minister of Regional Development Dostálová).

⁷⁶ This is, after all, one manifestation of Harvey's (2007: 6) approach to the characterization of neoliberalism that I pointed out, which by its performative nature, makes us *neoliberals* in a latent and unnoticed way.

1. 1. *Doing Business*

The World Bank's *Doing Business* statistic⁷⁷ played a crucial role in shaping hegemonic narratives about long permitting processes.⁷⁸ The ranking showed that the Czech Republic was one of the countries with the longest permitting processes. The multiple use of the statistics as a supporting argument to push for faster construction through loosening the rules (which carries a number of environmental, social, and cultural risks) in the data analysed, and its repetitiveness, is fascinating.

Certain forms of *normative racism* have often accompanied references to the Czech Republic's poor position in this international comparison. Dominant actors or media themselves have dwelt on the shame that Czechia is at or below the level of the so-called "developing countries." This narratively evokes *underdevelopment*, low levels of *competitiveness*, and low quality of life. It has become a critical memento warning the country that it is falling short in global development.

The Czech Republic has never been in stellar company in the world ranking of building permits. However, this year has surpassed all expectations, coming just one place ahead of occupied Palestinian territories such as the Gaza Strip.

[Česko se ve světovém žebříčku, který hodnotí povolování staveb, nikdy nevyskytovalo v hvězdné společnosti. Letos však předčilo veškerá očekávání, když se ocitlo pouhou příčkou před okupovanými palestinskými územími, jako je Pásmo Gazy.]⁷⁹

"Both institutions, i.e., the Ministry of Regional Development and the Union of Municipalities, are aware that we cannot remain at 157th place in the world ranking in the complexity of construction procedures in the company of African countries."

[„Obě instituce, tedy MMR i Svaz měst a obcí, jsou si vědomy, že nemůžeme ve složitosti stavebního řízení zůstat ve společnosti afrických zemí na 157. místě světového žebříčku.“](Klára Dostálová)⁸⁰

⁷⁷ <https://archive.doingbusiness.org/en/doingbusiness>

⁷⁸ The fact that a central part of the dominant argumentative apparatus was the statistics of a global hegemonic institution confirms another important theoretical assumption - the global reach of the capital.

⁷⁹ „Nové pravidlo pro výstavbu: Nevyjádření do 60 dnů znamená souhlas“. 2018. *Ceskapozice.lidovky.cz*, 7th December 2018.

⁸⁰ „Ministryně Dostálová: Stavební zákon se stahovat nebude“. 2020. *Parlamentnilisty.cz*, 16th January 2020. Available at: <https://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/politika/politici-voicum/Ministryne-Dostalova-Stavebni-zakon-se-stahovat-nebude-610120>

The paradoxical hegemonic performative nature of *Doing Business* is underscored by a deeper analysis of it and how it has been used from hegemonic positions to advance specific goals. Indeed, statistics exhibits significant (and counter-discursively confronted) methodological gaps.⁸¹ Here, then, lies the number one hegemonic discursive performativity of *Doing Business*. The second crucial aspect is the story of the ranking itself. It was topped by a scandal which revealed that the data were manipulated to make some countries come out of the rankings better than others (i.e., with more pro-business oriented institutional and administrative conditions).⁸² This caused irreversible damage to the reputation of the statistics and led to the World Bank's decision to stop publishing it. For many years, the dominant actors used distorted and, as a result, completely irrelevant data that formed one of the strongest pillars of the hegemonic (re)production of the dominant ideology that demands the maximum possible acceleration of construction.

The memento shaped by the state's position in the rankings can be seen as an aspect of *post-socialist sentiment*, which, alongside the ultimate idea of development, can also be shaped by fear, that the neoliberal vision of development is not being fulfilled, and the Czech Republic remains in a society of "backward countries," not *competitive*, and in the spirit of *path dependency* theory, failing in the set path to a better tomorrow. Similar kinds of sentiments that emerged in the Czech environment for example in the context of the refugee crisis in 2015 (see, e.g., Čada and Frantová, 2017 for more), which were characterized by concrete feelings of *threat* and *cultural distance*, may also play a role.

1. 2. Construction as a primary pillar of the economy

The strength of narratives about the need to accelerate permitting as a matter of life and death is largely related to the claims of Stein (2019) and other authors who

⁸¹ It counted only the legally stipulated or only flatly estimated deadlines for all the partial permitting administrative procedures and procedures necessary for the initiation and subsequent approval of the construction (i.e., it did not provide a clear overview of the reality of permitting, but only statistics on deadlines). At the same time, this model was applied only to a specific selected model of construction - a warehouse on agricultural land. This is a very specific type of construction, which, moreover, has no connection with residential construction, which has generally been used as a hegemonic argument for speeding up construction in order to lower housing prices.

⁸² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/10/15/world-bank-had-scrap-its-popular-business-report-that-says-lot-about-politics-numbers/>

have drawn on Lefebvre's or Harvey's notion of the *secondary circulation of capital* (see, for example, Gottdiener 1993: 132), where urban development takes place as a "rational product of the process of capital accumulation" (Flanagan 1993: 89) and portrays the position of real estate and construction as a central pillar of the global economy. This was evident, for example, in narratives contextualized by the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic, where construction came to the fore as a priority tool to restart the economy, emphasized by a broad discursive coalition.

According to analysts, the construction sector is expected to be one of the main drivers of the economic recovery after the measures against the spread of the coronavirus end. (...) "The Czech Republic will need a budgetary stimulus and the construction sector could be one of its recipients," said Petr Dufek, an analyst at ČSOB.

[Právě stavebnictví má být podle analytiků jedním z hlavních tahounů oživení ekonomiky poté, co skončí opatření proti šíření koronaviru. (...) "Česko bude potřebovat rozpočtový impulz a stavebnictví by mohlo být jedním z jeho adresátů," říká analytik ČSOB Petr Dufek.]⁸³

The argument was used by state actors (starting with Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, who composed his highway projects into narratives), local governments, private investors, and actors in the construction industry. However, the neoliberal nature of the new construction law was predetermined long before the pandemic broke out by a memorandum concluded at the beginning of the process between the Ministry of Regional Development (MMR) and the Chamber of Commerce of the Czech Republic. The cooperation of the business association on preparation of legislation to de facto regulate those whom the association represents has become a precedent case of *neoliberalization* of public administration in Czechia. The assumption that primarily entrepreneurs in the construction and development sector have the best knowledge and ideas on how to amend laws to make it easier and faster to build is another example of neoliberal discursive practice. On the other hand, the gradual modifications of new versions of the Building Act, which were often also created under the pressure of produced counter-narratives (especially by local governments), contributed to the

⁸³ „NÁKAZA OCHROMILA SCHVALOVÁNÍ ZÁKONŮ“. 2020. Hospodářské noviny, 1st April 2020.

fact that the Chamber of Commerce eventually withdrew from the process of drafting the Building Act.

Actors I: Klára Dostálová - Minister of Regional Development

The narratives shaping the discursive image of the Building Act associated with the person of the Minister showed a significant performative level. It is not without interest that the actorial position of the then Minister Klára Dostálová (ANO⁸⁴) in the analyzed corpus focuses almost exclusively on the topic of Building Act, where she becomes the central hegemonic actor. It is *her topic* in which she shapes repetitive and unusually stable narratives concentrated around strong slogans. In the later stages, Dostálová innovated her campaign tools and created, for example, video series for social networks. In them, she presented herself as a *neutral actor* explaining the nature of the new legislation, which simultaneously represents a universal remedy for the widely *shared need* to speed up building permits.

However, it is worth mentioning the role of Prime Minister Babiš (ANO), who many times expressed the need to accelerate construction (also in connection with the covid-19) and actively participated in Dostálová's information tour to municipalities and towns. His oligarchic concept of politics and ownership of specific media also plays a particular role.⁸⁵

For several years, Klára Dostálová has built narratives on simplifying the system under the slogan "one office, one stamp, one building." It evokes straightforwardness and has a specific *chilling effect*, perhaps in response to the frequent complaints of developers and builders about long permitting processes. Cutting back on excessive bureaucracy does not need to be necessarily considered an ideological discursive practice. Still, the purpose of the structural

⁸⁴ The ANO movement was formed in 2011 by Andrej Babiš, a Czech businessman and owner of the agricultural concern Agrofert. In 2014, the movement took control of Prague City Hall and, in 2017, won the elections to the Chamber of Deputies. Babiš is often described in international political debate as an oligarch and populist who has faced several scandals, including allegations of abuse of EU subsidies.

⁸⁵ Although my analysis did not have the ambition or the tools to examine the influence of the Prime Minister's ownership of the media on their content, it did show that comments attributed to either Klára Dostálová or the Prime Minister himself appeared in the majority of media belonging to the Mafra group, which Babiš owns.

changes to the Building Act, i.e., to speed up construction driven by economic motivations (with the main benefit in the hands of the private sector), already is.⁸⁶ At the same time, the Building Act remained one of the relatively few topics that used the anti-activist sentiment characteristic for earlier years from time to time.⁸⁷

A specific feature of the approach of both the Minister and other actors who prepared the Building Act (representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, headed by its President Vladimír Dlouhý, or lawyers who drafted the text of the Act) is the dominant argument that the ideological essence of the new legislation is based on correct assumptions. However, MMR has never actually produced any official statistics or analysis of the causes of delays in the permitting process; these have only been produced as part of the counter-discursive practice of external actors such as NGOs, with partial data (but of a more quantitative nature) produced by Deloitte. In a way, this is a theory-backed hegemonic performativity of the dominant ideology, built on *normative* ideological assumptions without sufficient data and analytical verification.⁸⁸

The *self-referential normative* statements, which at the same time created the appearance of neutral and objective position of the MMR as a state institution, often focused on the timetable of the whole process, which was conceived as given and logical, without the assumption of changes (which of course gradually occurred). The close (even unrealistic) deadlines for the approval and application of the new law, which were also reflected in the extremely short comment periods and often only formal settlement of comments, largely responded to the hegemonic call for the absolute necessity to speed up permitting. Narratively, the later this happens, the closer Czech society is to economic death. De facto, this fulfills the theoretical assumption of *self-fulfilling prophecies*, whereby private actors shape the actions of the public administration through narratives, while in

⁸⁶ All the more so as the principle of simplifying the rules was to be accompanied by lacking the principles of protection of specific public interests, especially through integrating the public authorities concerned under the new system of a central building authority. In practice, this means that the assessment of the impact of buildings on the environment or cultural heritage would be carried out by officials in a completely new institution without the necessary training and experience.

⁸⁷ It was used, for example, by former Prime Minister Babiš. In the context of construction he was one of the most active critics of civic associations, often in relation to highway construction.

⁸⁸ In this context, Dostálová repeatedly mentioned that the premises of the law are based "on application practice."

the case of the Building Act they also shape shared discursive coalitions (and through the Chamber of Commerce, the Act itself).

The change in the law will ensure that deadlines are met, and stamps are reduced as much as possible. She said the new building law would be a compromise in the end, but it represents the last chance for a long time to relieve builders. "Now we have a historic chance to create the conditions for building to take place. When this critical time eases, and the economy restarts, we will need a good and swift building law. We need to continue discussing the law even as we deal with crisis measures to protect health," explains Minister Dostálová.

[Změna zákona zajistí dodržování lhůt i maximální redukci razítek. Nový stavební zákon bude podle ní ve výsledku kompromis, ale představuje nadlouho poslední šanci, jak stavebníkům ulevit. "Teď máme historickou šanci vytvořit podmínky pro to, aby se stavělo. Až tato kritická doba poleví a bude se znovu startovat ekonomika, bude potřeba dobrý a rychlý stavební zákon. V projednávání zákona musíme pokračovat i v době, kdy řešíme krizová opatření na ochranu zdraví," vysvětluje ministryně Dostálová.]⁸⁹

Dostálová presented the premises of the law as a given and universal prescription for the unsatisfactory situation in the construction industry. At certain moments, the narratives have a "savior complex" feel, holding strong hegemonic beliefs about the adequacy of the measures. Other hegemonic institutions at the level of public administration have often exhibited a similar self-referential nature framed by the creation of expert kinds of sentiments and claims to truth. Dostálová engaged slogans such as "historical chance" to create the conditions for construction. The basal role of the state is to create the conditions for restarting the economy through the most permissive rules. Through hegemonic optics, the state is reduced to a guardian of growth and open business opportunities. The chance to make the state a vehicle for developing the construction sector was supported by Dostálová's normative expressive statements about the "construction agony" or "paralysis" of construction. References to a *dysfunctional system* from the position of the dominant actor were frequent in Dostálová's work across the time period analyzed and became another hegemonic characteristic used also by other actors.

⁸⁹ „Nový stavební zákon jde do finále“. 2020. MF Dnes, 2nd April 2020.

1. 3. Pawns of Hegemony

In the whole story of the Building Act, a unique position, somewhat more associated with *discursive practice* (i.e., narrative activity with direct effects on practical legislative solutions), was occupied by Marcela Pavlová, a Deputy for the Management of the Construction and Public Investment Section of the MMR. She is a person who was somewhat in the background in the media, but from the perspective of ideological reproduction, she is a fascinating actor, as she stands behind most of the executive actions related to the creation of the law. In the sporadic media statements, she comes across with an official pragmatism that does not give many vents to emotional aspects and expected sentiments, perhaps all the more showing a hegemonic ability to withstand counter-discursive attacks. Pavlová's priority is to concentrate on her work, i.e., putting the ideological premises of the law into practice, the executive processing of the whole thing.

"If we put all the comments into one spreadsheet, it's a novel that's almost 900 pages long. We want to deal with the comments during March, and at the end of March and the beginning of April, we would like to submit the draft law to the government," said Pavlová, the deputy minister of the MMR.

[“Když jsme všechny připomínky dali do jedné tabulky, tak je to román, který má téměř 900 stránek. Připomínky chceme vypořádat během března a na přelomu března a dubna bychom návrh zákona chtěli předložit vládě,” uvedla náměstkyně MMR Pavlová.]⁹⁰

At the time of the quotation (the period of comments on the draft), the range of criticism of the Building Act was extensive and multilayered. Pavlová only dryly states that the comments will be dealt with within a month, and then the law will be submitted to the government. There is no time for discussion. This is an example of *discursive practice* in its executive form. The Deputy Minister does not address the controversy over the content of the law but strictly follows the formal official procedure that puts the hegemonic regulation into practice. Therefore, she is perhaps a less visible but all the more significant 'hegemonic pawn.'

⁹⁰ „Ministerstvo netuší, kdo napsal novelu stavebního zákona“. 2019. Náš region, 21st March 2019.

Legislative legal teams played a similar rather behind-the-scenes performative role in drafting the law. Government legislators usually draft legislation. In the case of the Construction Law, MMR outsourced the drafting (in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce) to external law firms. A more prominent role was played here by, for example, František Korbek or Stanislav Kadečka, who lent significant *cultural* and *symbolic capital* to the whole project despite the comparatively few media appearances. They often appeared at seminars and conferences, where their symbolic role was prominent. The stratification of the possession of capital (e.g., in the Minister - developer - law firm lawyer connection) of hegemonic discursive coalitions and their performative role reinforced the symbolic value of dominant narratives and their legitimacy in advocacy measures. At the same time, the actors' modes of argumentation do not differ significantly.

"Changes consisting in the integration and coordination of administrative processes have long been evaluated by the World Bank's Doing Business study as the most beneficial," explains Stanislav Kadečka, partner at KVB.

[“Změny spočívající v integraci a koordinaci administrativních procesů studie Světové banky Doing Business dlouhodobě vyhodnocuje jako nejpřínosnější,” vysvětluje partner advokátní kanceláře KVB Stanislav Kadečka.]⁹¹

The process of drafting the law also showed a certain actor *fluctuation of positions*. Depending on the changing content, actors left or re-entered the process, which was also reflected in the narratives. Methodologically, this points to the necessary reflection that hegemonic performativity does not only create binary oppositions but is a complex, multifaceted performative field. Counter-discursive narratives and binding legal comments have shaped the form of the law. Following the critique, parliamentary expert groups subsequently developed legislative amendments. Although the same hegemonic conviction framed the approaches to the amendments to loosen construction rules, there was relatively intense polarization and disputes between the ruling ANO and the opposition ODS, represented notably by Martin Kupka (later Minister of Transport in the new Fiala government). This shows

⁹¹ „Pro povolení stavby má stačit jediné razítko. Je to šance na zlevnění bytů“. 2019. Ekonom, 18th April 2019.

another example of the fact that ideological domination is practically never characterised by a homogeneous group of actors and diversifies at different levels.⁹²

Actors II: Spokespersons

The analysis revealed very specific and research-interesting actors - press spokespersons. Sometimes they become a tool in the hands of dominant ideology (either by institution or by specific actors). The spokesperson's personality is suppressed in media statements and becomes a medium that conveys information. At other times, spokespersons have a clear performative stake in reproducing particular narratives (backed by the *expert* and *neutral position* of the institution they represent, i.e., a specific *institutional symbolic capital*). There were also situations where, although a particular political figure, expert, or official, for example, usually spoke on a specific issue, in the case of controversies, they cleared the field and left the more problematic statements to the spokespersons.

The latter, by virtue of their position, do not bear political responsibility, are more *neutral* (which bears performative features), and have a certain range of expression and content. There is a shared preunderstanding of their position, which can invoke limited resources for expression in the terms of personal responsibility. The spokespersons perform tasks given by someone else.

For example, the IPR spokesperson Vácha (one of the most frequent in our dataset) frequently appeared in controversial positions. Still, he was usually able to withstand them, mainly thanks to the way he constructed narratives that carried a particular normative image of the *professional neutrality* of the institution that gave legitimacy to his statements. For example, the following statement shows a pragmatic justification for the absence of regulation for the so-called insulating greenery in the Metropolitan Plan, which he furthermore frames hegemonically with an economic explanation.

⁹² This is also reflected at the municipal level. In some cases, the local organizations of political parties in Prague's urban districts, through specific actors deviated from the narratives shaped by actors of the same parties at another level, for example when concerning local residents and particular causes. This demonstrates the greater flexibility of actor ideological pre-determination within political party affiliation at the local level and the aforementioned *heterogeneity of hegemony*.

"The Metropolitan Plan does not work with the concept of insulating green space. Our analyses have shown that, in most cases, the insulating greenery does not serve a positive function. They are becoming overgrown and impenetrable forests with a lot of undergrowth. Only some municipalities have the means to look after this green space. Maintaining one hectare of such an area costs CZK 150,000 to 200,000 annually."

[„Metropolitní plán skutečně nepracuje s pojmem izolační zeleň. Z našich analýz vyplynulo, že ve většině případů izolační zeleň neplní pozitivní funkci. Stávají se z ní zarostlé a neprostopné lesíky se spoustou podrostů. Málomterá městská část má totiž prostředky na to, aby se o tuto zeleň starala. Údržba jednoho hektaru takové plochy stojí 150 až 200 tisíc korun ročně.“](Marek Vácha, IPR)⁹³

His narratives were performative, often responding to criticism, sometimes with particular cackling character, intended to calm the agitated NIMBYs.⁹⁴ Controversy and ambiguity, however, can leave spokespeople in unenviable positions, such as when they lack sufficient background to answer trivial questions - for example, when journalists asked the MMR spokesperson on who is the author of the first version of the building law. As a rule, this happens with media and articles with a counter-hegemonic message.

"I'm sorry, but what do you mean, who specifically? This is more a question for the Chamber of Commerce and many other partners, unions, associations...," replied Vilém Frček, head of the Ministry's press department. (...) The Ministry does not see a problem with the fact that developers and construction companies such as Central Group and others are also involved in the Chamber of Commerce. According to the Ministry, this is not a conflict of interests. "After all, this is not the first time - even the new Civil Code was prepared externally. There is definitely no conflict of interest," Frček added. For the sake of completeness, let us add that the amendment to the Civil Code does not regulate the business on which construction companies make more than CZK 500 billion a year.

⁹³ „Zapomíná se na pražská sídliště? Arnika kritizuje Metropolitní plán, IPR ho hájí“. 2018. Blesk.cz, 12th June 2018. Available at: <http://www.blesk.cz/clanek/regiony-praha-praha-zpravy/548240/zapomina-se-na-prazska-sidliste-arnika-kritizuje-metropolitni-plan-ipr-ho-haji.html>

⁹⁴ NIMBY's role in the Prague context is ambiguous. Just as the term "not in my backyard" may have different interpretations, the analysis cannot fully gauge the prevailing motivations of anti-development narratives from discourse analysis. However, in terms of hegemony analysis, it is evident that NIMBY is often associated generally with urban activism that aims to harm and hinder development.

["Omlouvám se, ale jak to prosím myslíte, kdo konkrétně? To je spíše dotaz na Hospodářskou komoru a mnoho dalších partnerů, svazů, asociací...", odpověděl vedoucí tiskového oddělení ministerstva Vilém Frček. (...) Ministerstvo nevidí problém ani v tom, že jsou v Hospodářské komoře zapojeni i developeři a stavební firmy jako například Central Group a další. Střet zájmů to podle MMR není. "Koneckonců to není poprvé – i nový občanský zákoník byl připravován externě. O žádný střet zájmů se rozhodně nejedná," dodal Frček. Pro úplnost dodejme, že novela občanského zákoníku neupravuje byznys, na kterém stavební firmy utrží více než 500 miliard korun ročně.]⁹⁵

Spokesperson Frček has found himself in an unenviable position repeatedly, for example, in connection with the integration of the authorities concerned, which has been subject to massive criticism. He was supported in his defense by the spokesman of the Chamber of Commerce. In this way, he demonstrated the performativity of the discursive coalition on the MMR - Chamber of Commerce axis, where he defends the upcoming state legislation from the position of a private sector spokesperson.

In some situations, MMR spokesman used his own hegemonic inventiveness - for example, by normatively labeling the need for a "modern" law, the idea of modernity being to make the permitting as fast as possible. Similarly, the spokespersons played a dual role in the government quarter in Letňany, a relatively solitary idea of the then Prime Minister Babiš, and was subject to fairly harsh criticism, especially from Prague municipality. Ministry spokespeople were in a position where they had to stand up to the defense of an urbanistically irrational project. Another important figure is Vít Hoffman, the Municipality spokesman, who oversees Prague City Hall's press outputs and, in many cases, becomes the dominant (re)producer. For example, he played a significant role in the discursive devaluation of public comments on the Metropolitan Plan.

Spokespersons – as another example of pawns of hegemony – oscillate between the characteristics of 'black horses' (they have a strong and convincing *argumentative apparatus*, they have a position supported by the capital of their institution - often it can be a high degree of *symbolic capital*) and 'black Peters'

⁹⁵ „Ministerstvo netuší, kdo napsal novelu stavebního zákona“. 2019. Náš region, 21st March 2019.

(they are put in situations where they face unexpected questions or have to explain the controversies of their superiors).

1. 4. Counter-hegemonic discourses on the Building Law

Counter-hegemonic discourses have been produced by several groups of actors in the context of the Building Law and have evolved over time. They can be simplistically categorized as follows:

(a) State institutions, including some ministries (specifically representatives of the Ministry of Culture or the Ministry of Environment) or, for example, the Security Information Service (*Bezpečnostní informační služba*, BIS), which produced a strong anti-corruption narrative that was further reproduced by NGOs and expert organizations. Anti-corruption narratives generally occur in relatively lower frequency in the corpus. One can sense a gradual retreat from anti-corruption rhetoric, which has become quite prominent within post-socialist discursive genealogy. The rejection of corruption as a pillar of democracy has historically become an unconditional discursive tool, which has nevertheless been exploited in many populist or hegemonic ways. This can result in clientelistic ties or various forms of corruption taking on more latent forms related to *unrecognition*, the production of *neutrality*, and *normative performativity* in line with hegemonic characteristics. The involvement of the Chamber of Commerce in drafting the Building Law is one of the examples.

Despite its relatively lower frequency, we can include anti-corruption among the more general tendencies of counter-narratives that appeal to basal democratic or humanist values, such as the rule of law, historical cultural heritage, and so on. Eventually, anti-corruption narratives contributed to a large extent performatively to the fact that the so-called “fiction of consent”⁹⁶ was eventually deleted from the recodification of construction law. Similarly – mainly based on the strong counter-hegemonic performativity of subversive narratives – the integration of conservation authorities and firefighters, who give binding safety opinions and comments on

⁹⁶ „Fiction of consent“ was supposed to be a mechanism that should have prevented the long decision times of affected councils in permitting processes. If the council haven't decided within the binding time period, fiction of consent should have secured that the council's opinion would be considered as approving.

buildings, was omitted from the final form of the law (the argument of building safety proved to be *hegemonically resistant*).⁹⁷

The figure of the ombudsman played a minor role in the topic, but its *symbolic capital* is important, and brings significance to the shaped narratives. For example, it played a role in the case of Anna Šabatová's criticism of the participation of the Chamber of Commerce.

b) Local governments under the leadership of Prague, headed by Deputy Mayor for Urban Development Hlaváček and IPR director Boháč. In some cases, Mayor Hřib also commented on the topic in the context of Prague.⁹⁸ At the core of the counter-narratives was the removal of competencies from local governments in spatial planning. This de facto raises the question of how hegemony spills over between topics and points to its fluidity (could we perhaps speak, in a Baumanist vein, of the *liquid hegemony*?). At the heart of this question, it should be taken into account that Prague's strong initiative in opposition to the new building law was essentially due to the struggle of otherwise dominant actors to maintain their competencies and, thus, their sphere of influence at the local level. It, therefore, means that hegemony is diversified in spheres of governance and systemic competencies rather than fluid. This refers to the role of the state, which sets the conditions for the formation of the dimensions of hegemony, thus classified by diversifying public administration.

"The state must have the right to stop or suspend a zoning plan if you are doing something illegal or violating the rules. We're saying that if the state limits itself to retrospective review, no one will take that authority away from them. But cities must have a tool to develop according to the wishes of municipal politicians," Ondřej Boháč, director of Prague's Institute of Planning and Development, told HN.

["Stát musí mít právo zastavit nebo pozastavit platnost územního plánu, pokud děláte něco nezákonného nebo v rozporu s pravidly. My říkáme, že když se stát omezí jen na zpětný dohled, nikdo mu tuto pravomoc brát nebude. Ale města musí

⁹⁷ This means, that these authorities defended their right to give binding comments to related construction projects.

⁹⁸ Mainly in connection with Hlaváček's agenda within the Prague Council - this points to Hlaváček's strong influence through his combination of capitals towards the Mayor.

mít nástroj, aby se mohla rozvíjet podle představ komunálních politiků," uvedl v rozhovoru pro HN ředitel pražského Institutu plánování a rozvoje Ondřej Boháč.]⁹⁹

c) NGOs and professional organizations, where a platform (*discursive coalition*) around the association of environmental organizations Green Circle (*Zelený kruh*) played an important role, and continuously commented on the law and organized various events on the topic. Petra Kolínská from the Green Circle (formerly Prague Deputy Mayor for Urban Development) regularly commented on the law. The counter-narratives produced tend to follow the substantive aspects of the law rather than responding to the dominant narratives. On the other hand, many dominant narratives were based on substantive principles, i.e., direct responses to dominant slogans or *Doing Business* statistics were also produced.

One of the specifics of Kolínská's counter-narratives was the use of post-socialist sentiments in the sense of using the socialist regime as a bogeyman (this was also evident when she was a Deputy Mayor in the context of the discussion to Metropolitan Plan). This points to situations where *zombie socialism* works both ways, not just within dominant narratives, which refers to a deeper permeation of post-socialist attributes across society.

Quickly and centrally permitting low-quality construction without regard for the will of local government and the environment - this is how we imagine the decision-making of the pre-Velvet Revolution regime. However, the newly drafted construction law wants to return us to a similar state.

[Rychle a centralizovaně povolovat nekvalitní výstavbu bez ohledu na vůli samosprávy a životní prostředí – tak si představujeme rozhodování předlistopadového režimu. Do podobného stavu nás ale chce vrátit nově připravovaný stavební zákon.](Petra Kolínská, Green Circle)¹⁰⁰

The discursive coalition around the Green Circle also included lawyers and representatives of the non-profit environmental sector. Most of the comments on the Constitutional Court's decision on the 2018 amendment to the Building Act, which excluded civil associations from the decision-making process (discussed in the

⁹⁹ „BRZDOU JE ROZTRŽIŠTĚNOST STAVEBNÍCH ÚŘADŮ“. 2020. Hospodářské noviny, 18th March 2020.

¹⁰⁰ „Návrh stavebního zákona nás vrací do doby ignorace veřejných zájmů“. 2019. Deník Referendum, 3rd July 2019. Available at: <http://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/29821-navrh-stavebniho-zakona-nas-vraci-do-doby-ignorace-verejnych-zajmu>

footnote in the first chapter of the Analysis), also came from its ranks. The platform also produced counter-narratives highlighting the lack of data on the causes of long permitting, which functioned performatively, and some political actors took up the topic.

"Currently, we do not have reliable and sufficiently detailed statistical data on construction procedures. We cannot do without them if we want to make the construction procedure process more efficient. The proposed amendment to the Statute will ensure that the city will be able to start collecting this data and take the first step towards this goal," adds Tomáš Murňák (Pirates), Prague City Councillor.

[“Aktuálně nedisponujeme spolehlivými a dostatečně detailními statistickými údaji o stavebních řízeních. Bez těch se neobejdeme, pokud chceme zefektivnit proces stavebního řízení jako takový. Navrhovaná změna Statutu zajistí, že město bude moci zahájit sběr těchto dat a udělat první krok k tomuto cíli,” dodává Tomáš Murňák (Piráti), zastupitel hlavního města Prahy.]¹⁰¹

In the context of the protection of historical cultural heritage, the local organization of International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) was one of the most active counter-hegemonic actors. For example, its president Girsá's commentary in the otherwise rather hegemonically performative *Hospodářské noviny* returns to anti-corruption narratives and the BIS report, as well as cultural-historical value schemes.

By abolishing the institute of binding opinions and subordinating monument care to the decision-making of the central building authority, the amendment will effectively put an end to the independent activity of the monument care authorities. (...) The planned change would thus seriously endanger our cultural heritage, and the amendment should therefore be withdrawn and professionally revised.

[Zrušením institutu závazných stanovisek a podřízením památkové péče rozhodování centrálního stavebního úřadu novela fakticky ukončí nezávislou činnost orgánů památkové péče. (...) Chystaná změna by tak vážně ohrozila naše kulturní dědictví, a novela by proto měla být stažena a odborně přepracována.](Václav Girsá)¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ „Piráti požadují po ministryni Dostálové data o stavebním řízení, aby zrychlilo povolování staveb“. 2020. *Parlamentnilisty.cz*, 20th July 2020. Available at: <https://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/politika/politici-volicum/Pirati-pozaduji-po-ministryni-Dostalove-data-o-stavebnim-rizeni-aby-zrychlilo-povolovani-staveb-631148>

¹⁰² „Nové stavební předpisy korupci nezamezčí“. 2019. *Hospodářské noviny*, 22nd March 2019.

In the case of Girsá and some other preservationists (e.g., Richard Biegel), the role of holding a relatively high degree of cultural and symbolic capital is evident. Most of the discursively active conservationists are university teachers with significant academic degrees. They often speak from expert positions (which are sometimes hegemonically undermined by the perception of heritage protection as conservatism).

Similarly, the dialectical nature of UNESCO's symbolic capital operates in counter-narratives for a wider range of issues. On the one hand, it is the status of Prague, which is under the organization's protection, while at the same time, UNESCO is actively commenting on the situation in Prague, and its demands play a significant role.

Just as the hegemonic sphere had its specific "spokespersons" from the legal sphere, the non-governmental sphere collaborated with lawyers who formed counter-narratives against the new legislation. This includes, for example, Petr Svoboda, who participated in drafting the reservations of both the Green Circle and ICOMOS, and in both cases also acted as a discursive counter-hegemonic actor. His specificity is also his ability to frame politics openly by talking about the neoliberal nature of specific measures, which is rare in the hegemonic space. Among other things, the performativity of the dominant ideology causes counter-hegemonic actors not to label it as *neoliberal* usually but to focus on specific aspects and manifestations.

Actors III: SAR and Dušan Kunovský

The public expert debate is dominated by the hegemonic need to speed up permitting processes, among other things, to address the unsatisfactory housing situation. The data analyzed portray the crucial influence of private actors in shaping this central *meta-narrative*, which permeates de facto across issues. Among the most active actors are the director of Prague's largest residential developer, Central Group, Dušan Kunovský, and his think tank, the Association for Architecture and Development (*Sdružení pro architekturu a rozvoj*, SAR).¹⁰³ It

¹⁰³ <https://www.arch-rozvoj.cz/>; Incidentally, in certain informal counter-discursive practices, the nickname SARS was used for the association. This points to the nature of counter-discourses in the Czech environment, which also work with sarcasm and irony.

represents one of the perfect examples of hegemonic performativity, especially concerning *discursive* and *social practice*.

SAR's self-representation is based on high expertise in the social field, which gives relevance and legitimacy to ideological (but *expertly framed*) premises, which then enter the narrative field in a significant way and impact policies and systems. The association comprises renowned architects and urban planners, all of whom hold large amounts of cultural, economic, or symbolic capital. The composition of the group is consistent with the dominant narrative of *architecture as a universal value* (see pp. 145), which tends to be used as a supportive means to facilitate private development. The prominent names in contemporary Czech architecture give the association a strong legitimacy, which, combined with professional PR and the ability to use economic capital to shape discourse, makes the Association one of the most powerful dominant actors with the ability to shape narratives and agenda setting.

SAR conferences ("summits"), usually held every six months, play an essential role in this process. In addition to members of the association, they are usually attended by political leaders at the state and local government level (typically the Minister of Regional Development, the Mayor of Prague, influential Prague councilors, or heads of Prague political clubs), senior state and municipal officials, and private developers or members of professions affiliated with the field. Inviting a globally recognized name in architecture and urban planning is also a common strategy. A respected global architect adds legitimacy to the event and increases its *symbolic capital*. A frequent model is to have a media interview with the personality. This draws attention to the summit itself and its outcomes - which are usually strongly hegemonic. The economic, social, and symbolic power of SAR allows for extensive media coverage, with the narratives formed usually promoting hegemonic goals. As a result, SAR also has a strong capacity to form discursive coalitions.

In terms of performativity, the professional framing of SAR actions and activities is one of the basic premises. Hegemonic performativity can shape an expert image that gives legitimacy to particular interests.

Changes in standards and the admission of high-rise landmarks in the draft Metropolitan plan have raised the question of what the capital city will one day look like. Experts at a conference at the mayor's residence on Wednesday tried to give an answer.

[Změny norem a přípuštění výškových dominant v návrhu Metropolitního plánu vyvolaly otázku, jak bude jednou hlavní město vypadat. Odpověď se pokusili dát odborníci na středěční konferenci v primátorské rezidenci.]¹⁰⁴

The ability of ideological domination, according to the theory, is the concealment of the hegemonic nature of narratives in the form of *naturally occurring discourses*. The labeling of a dominantly ideological plenary at a SAR conference as expert (however much participants have the structural preconditions to be so labeled) is one typical example. *Experts* are convened and invited by a private think-tank that primarily promotes particular private interests. The neutral dimension of *unrecognition* in the determination of the circle of relevant experts within SAR narratives is also manifested in the ability to delineate this circle, and, thus de facto, decide on the *provision of access* and the categorization of actors into those who are relevant to the topic and those who are not (see the "field of actors" on the pp. 83). In addition, in the following narrative, we can also notice a further use of appellative metaphors ("construction paralysis"):

Only the cooperation of all development actors - the state, the city, and private investors - will bring the country and Prague out of the current construction paralysis, participants of today's Architecture and Development Summit agreed.

[Ze současné stavební paralyzy vyvede zemi a Prahu jen spolupráce všech aktérů rozvoje – státu, města a soukromých investorů, shodli se účastníci dnešního Summitu architektury a rozvoje.]¹⁰⁵

In observing the transformations of the narrative of the need to build, we see the changing life cycle of specific content details. The strength of the appeal

¹⁰⁴ „Regulace nemá plíživě zvýšit zástavbu“. 2018. Právo, 31st May 2018.

¹⁰⁵ „Summit architektury a rozvoje: Výnos z daní by měl směřovat městům a obcím, ve kterých se staví“. 2019. Hypoindex.cz, 26th September 2019. Available at: <https://www.hypoindex.cz/tiskove-zpravy/summit-architektury-a-rozvoje-vynos-z-dani-by-mel-smerovat-mestum-a-obcim-ve-kterych-se-stavi/>

increased in analogy with the decreasing number of dwellings built and permitted. The SAR played a crucial role in shaping either the narrative or its appeal power.

"In reality, the permitting of apartment buildings has recently been extended to an incredible ten years or more. The actual implementation is just the real icing on the cake and takes about one and a half years," says Dušan Kunovský, owner of the Central Group development company and one of the association's founding members. The association has published its own study, which estimates that if the situation does not fundamentally improve, the number of missing new flats in 2030 could increase from the current 22,000 to roughly 50,000.

[“V realitě se povolování bytového domu prodloužilo v poslední době na neskutečných deset let a více. Přitom vlastní realizace je jen skutečnou třešinkou na dortu a trvá asi jeden a půl roku,” tvrdí majitel developerské firmy Central Group Dušan Kunovský, jeden ze zakládajících členů sdružení. Sdružení vydalo vlastní studii, v níž odhaduje, že pokud se situace zásadně nezlepší, počet chybějících nových bytů v roce 2030 se může zvýšit ze současných 22 tisíc zhruba na 50 tisíc.]¹⁰⁶

With the help of SAR, Dušan Kunovský was able to create a serious and urgent social problem out of a specific number of built and permitted flats. In some cases, the MMR (represented mainly by Klára Dostálová) reproduced these misleading data;¹⁰⁷ in others, it based its estimates on more conservative calculations. The permitting period became one of Kunovský's specialties, on which he regularly commented, thus supporting his hegemonic position through escalating pressure. With the figure of the minister, they also complemented each other in shaping post-socialist narratives within a fluid discursive coalition. In the spirit of anti-communist pro-development sentiments, these portray a certain 'scandalous' nature of the fact that building permits take too long.

"When the socialist period came, construction was permitted within a year, and then it took five years to build. And today, almost 32 years after the revolution, it is exactly the opposite."

¹⁰⁶ Prahu sužuje nedostatek nových bytů. A bude ještě hůř“. 2018. Ekonom, 31st May 2018.

¹⁰⁷ According to Deloitte's analyses, the average permitting time for apartment buildings in Prague in the selected period was around five to seven years, depending on when the entire permitting process is calculated. Other data and analyses, which are part of the data corpus in relative frequency, speak of an average permitting time of 4 to 5 years in different periods.

[„Když přišlo období socialismu, stavby se povolovaly do roka a pět let se potom stavělo. No a dnes, téměř 32 let od revoluce, je to přesně naopak.“](Klára Dostálová)¹⁰⁸

The Central Group eventually came up with four specific requirements for the new building law to speed up the permitting process. It is not without interest that, in addition to some of the measures promoted in general terms, the company advocated the "depoliticization of building authorities" through a state-controlled apparatus of building authorities. Through their ideological nature, the normative legislative claims obviously have a supremely political charge. The demand for *depoliticization* represents another performative example of a dominant ideology that emerges from the process of *unrecognition*, the formation of *neutrality*, and the impression of *naturally occurring discourses*.

Another of Kunovský's themes was a certain teasing of the state in relation to development taxes. For Kunovský, the fact that developers pay taxes repeatedly became an argument for the social responsibility of developers, which was further manifested in discussions of, for example, developers' contributions to public infrastructure or subsidized housing.¹⁰⁹

Central Group does not participate in any public procurement or receive any public subsidies and pays hundreds of millions in taxes to the Czech state every year. It also contributes many tens of millions of crowns each year to charitable causes.

[Central Group se neúčastní žádných veřejných zakázek ani není příjemcem žádných veřejných dotací a každoročně platí českému státu stamilionové částky na daních. Mnoha desítkami milionů korun každý rok také přispívá na obecně prospěšné účely.]¹¹⁰

As part of this approach, the Central Group has long proclaimed that the levying of development taxes is a huge opportunity for the state, which it squanders mainly because it does not allow developers to build to the extent they would like.

¹⁰⁸ „Dalších pět let stavební agónie si už nemůžeme dovolit“. 2021. Info.cz, 11th February 2021. Available at: <https://www.info.cz/nazory/dalsich-pet-let-stavebni-agonie-si-uz-nemuzeme-dovolit>

¹⁰⁹ Moreover, Kunovský's narratives show a strong normative conviction that it is the municipalities that should build the infrastructure for newly built development projects.

¹¹⁰ „Central Group: Čtyři klíčové principy pro nový stavební zákon“. 2021. Retrend.cz, 31st January 2021. Available at: <https://retrend.cz/novinky/vystavba-a-remodeling/central-group-13/>

"New construction is of great economic interest to the state, it generates tens of billions of crowns a year."

[„Nová výstavba je ve velkém ekonomickém zájmu státu, získává z ní mnoho desítky miliard korun ročně.”](Dušan Kunovský)¹¹¹

Part of Kunovský's argumentation is the belief that VAT is supposed to be a tool for building affordable housing from which the state should draw. The contribution of private developers to the public task of providing affordable housing is thus largely fulfilled by the fact that they pay taxes on commercial construction. This can be seen as an entirely neoliberal approach. At the same time, from a position of *expert framing* and the strong capital base (in the Bourdieu sense) thus formed, SAR (like other developers) produces its own data analysis that further supports the narratives and objectives produced.

2. Affordable housing

The growth rate of property prices in Prague was one of the fastest in the EU at the end of the second decade of the 21st century. This was also reflected in the affordability of housing relative to real wages.¹¹² Housing has become a major issue for virtually all political parties, both before the 2018 local elections and four years later. Narratives about the need to speed up building permits as the only central solution to the housing crisis were heard across the spectrum, often through developers' statements or economists' analyses.

Their analytical approaches to housing focus almost exclusively on the market parameters of housing and conceive of it as a commodity that only responds to market events and its broader economic context. The commodification of housing represented within the shaped media or expert discourses is one of the most powerful reproductive and legitimizing factors of ideological domination. A hegemonic feature of the commodifying approach to housing is the *normalization (neutralization)* of such a

¹¹¹ Summit architektury a rozvoje: Výnos z daní by měl směřovat městům a obcím, ve kterých se staví“. 2019. Hypoindex.cz, 26th September 2019. Available at: <https://www.hypoindex.cz/tiskove-zpravy/summit-architektury-a-rozvoje-vynos-z-dani-by-mel-smerovat-mestum-a-obcim-ve-kterych-se-stavi/>

¹¹² According to data from the Czech Statistical Council, housing prices rose by 200% between 2000 and 2017. In 2017, prices in Czechia rose the fastest in the EU (Eurostat).

conception of housing through the nature of discourses and is also part of the mechanisms of *unrecognition*. One of the dominant basal arguments is shaped by explaining the housing shortage by high demand. Similar principles underlie the general application of the economic verbal apparatus to housing. From the position of dominant ideology, we will not talk about housing but about "sector," "segment," etc. The economization of language and the choice of classification or terms used in this area represent a crucial reproductive element. This is also reflected in the approach to the problem of investment housing. The language of the dominant actors focuses purely on the economical parameters of housing, from which they form *neutral* statements.

"Many of them want to keep their funds in tangible assets. So we are not only dependent on those who want to use the flats for their own living, the flats are also bought for investment, and then they will be rented out."

[„Řada z nich chce mít uloženy prostředky v materiálních aktivech. Takže my nejsme závislí jenom na těch, kdo chtějí byty využívat pro vlastní bydlení, byty se kupují i na investici a následně se budou pronajímat,“](Luděk Sekyra, developer)¹¹³

The market is conceived monolithically. It is something that is determinative, to which everything must be subordinated. In certain types of dominant narratives (we are talking about developers, economists, and financial actors), it becomes the self-regulating alpha and omega. In reality, the ultimacy of economic arguments as a completely prioritized sphere, which is superior even to such parameters as public health or the war situation, refers to classical theoretical approaches to the characteristics of capitalism, which is practically indestructible by external influences. This was also shown by the reactions to the impact of the covid-19 pandemic, which, in addition to encouraging economic recovery, also emphasized greater resilience to external influences rather than internal structural problems within the economic system, which are much more vulnerable to it.

In connection with the pandemic, the repetitiveness of narratives about the need to build at any cost and as quickly as possible (including the discursive insistence to continue working on construction projects despite the pandemic crisis) was also intertwined with the topic of Airbnb and investment housing. The covid-19 pandemic

¹¹³ „Praha: město, kde se o dostupném bydlení zatím hlavně mluví“. 2020. A2larm.cz, 30th October 2020. Available at: <https://a2larm.cz/2020/10/praha-mesto-kde-se-o-dostupnem-bydleni-zatim-hlavne-mluvi/>

had a specific impact on this sector, causing hundreds of apartments rented on Airbnb to appear on the mainstream rental market at substandard prices at the time, as the decline in tourism caused them to go unused. However, as the normative and hegemonically performative assessment of the situation by the spokesperson Hejda of the real estate agency Re/Max also shows, this primarily affected those "investors" for whom Airbnb is a source of mortgage repayment (i.e., the smaller ones). This indicates that Airbnb has become the most profitable business for companies that provide apartments for short-term rentals in bulk. The *normalization* and *neutralization* of such disposal of apartments is an example of the *performativity of hegemony*.

"There is a second group of owners of these apartments, and they are people who are not existentially dependent on the income from Airbnb. They will survive the current situation. They can afford to leave the properties unoccupied for a while. When the situation calms down, they will be the first to have the apartments occupied again," Hejda adds.

[„Existuje totiž ještě druhá skupina vlastníků těchto bytů a to jsou lidé, kteří na příjmech z Airbnb nejsou existenciálně závislí. Ti současnou situaci přečkají. Mohou si dovolit nechat nemovitosti chvíli neobsazené. V momentě, kdy se situace uklidní, budou pak první, kteří budou mít byty opět obsazené," dodává Hejda.]¹¹⁴

Airbnb otherwise appears in the data as a rather shared undesirable phenomenon, especially in the context of the touristification of Prague (rather than a problem for affordable housing). Political actors have defined themselves against it across the spectrum. However, in terms of hegemony, it is not the critique as such that is at issue, but the target. For the most part, the critique did not attack hegemonic premises related to the free disposal of property (*'we can't tell landlords how to dispose of their flats'*) but rather focused on practical impacts such as noise or pollution in houses and the transformation of services in the center of Prague.

The influence of hegemonic private actors on the discursive development of the topic of housing showed similar characteristics to those of building legislation (indeed, the topics were strongly interconnected through the dominant premise of slow construction). Central Group produced normative analyses on the rising costs of developers and the continuing low supply of housing while being a performative agent

¹¹⁴ „BYTY Z AIRBNB MOHOU CENY NÁJMŮ SRAZIT JEN DOČASNĚ“. 2020. Hospodářské noviny, 1st April 2020.

in maintaining the hegemonic status quo in terms of the market framing of the housing topic. The discursive commodification of housing is also an interesting example (apart from those mentioned earlier) of the normative *provision of access*.

Data from the Central Group show that the sale prices of new flats in the capital have doubled in the last six years. Those who bought an apartment here in 2015 can therefore congratulate themselves on a great investment, according to Michaela Tomášková, the executive director of Central Group.

[Z dat společnosti Central Group tedy vyplývá, že za posledních necelých šest let stouply prodejní ceny nových bytů v hlavním městě na dvojnásobek. Ten, kdo si tu v roce 2015 pořídil byt, si tudíž podle výkonné ředitelky Central Group Michaely Tomáškové může gratulovat ke skvělé investici.]¹¹⁵

In the same article, IPR clearly statistically states that Prague is experiencing the most significant construction boom in the last ten years. Yet prices continued to rise. The “illogical” behavior of the market, which as a result tends to gradually raise prices on the basis of various arguments and then keep them at the highest level for as long as possible, is a historically repeated practice that is counter-discursively reflected.

Dominant ideology has shown some of its specific characteristics on the subject of housing, such as the ability to shape ideological opposition to certain kinds of solutions that carried significant *zombie socialist* sentiments and thus de facto sabotaged them. One example was the relatively well-known case of the Prague electricity meters. What was it about? As with permitting processes, there is a lot of unavailable data on the housing issue – for example, we don’t know the share of the investment flats in the general housing stock.¹¹⁶ The Pirate Party at one time presented the intention to map the occupancy of flats by measuring data from electricity meters, which proved to be a significant ideological trigger within the coalition, which bore the precise characteristics of *zombie socialism* and hegemonic preservation of the status

¹¹⁵ „Příjmy Pražanů už na byt v metropoli nestačí. Metr čtvereční stojí 110 tisíc korun“. 2020. Aktuálně.cz, 18th November 2020. Available at: <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/ekonomika/vyvoj-cen-bytu-v-praze/r~958c1a6427eb11ebaabd0cc47ab5f122/>

¹¹⁶ Through hegemonic economic rationality, the rising prices of flats make it possible to profit from the ownership of a flat only through the year-on-year increase in its value, regardless of whether there is a tenant living there.

quo. An eloquent narrative on the subject comes from the then head of United Forces for Prague (*Spojené síly pro Prahu*)¹¹⁷, Jiří Pospíšil:

"If the Pirates accept our arguments as acceptable, that is, if our coalition does not promote the Communist Party's agenda, we will consider this resolved. On the other hand, I must say that we are not prepared to compromise on this matter. If the Pirates continue to insist on spiking privacy and interfering with property, they will have to find another partner."

[*"Pokud Piráti uznají naše argumenty za přijatelné, to znamená, že naše koalice nebude prosazovat program komunistické strany, budeme to tím považovat za vyřešené. Na druhou stranu musím říct, že v této věci nejsme připraveni na kompromis. Pokud budou Piráti dál trvat na špiclování soukromí a zasahování do vlastnictví, tak si budou muset najít jiného partnera,"*](Jiří Pospíšil)¹¹⁸

Another specificity is the long-established way of presenting new projects, which is usually uncritical, and the city institutions fail in their mediation role. For example, one of the exhibitions on housing at the Centre for Architecture and Urban Planning (CAMP) at the IPR was counter-discursively framed by an emphasis on a physical, "glossy" form that presents new Prague residential projects but approaches them in a completely uncritical manner, de facto creating only strong PR for private developers and their plans. The specificity of this is that important actors, whether it was Mayor Hřib, Deputy Mayor Hlaváček, or IPR Director Boháč, repeatedly expressed themselves in the sense that the city must demand more from developers, not to continue the practice of giving developers de facto free land value through increasing construction capacities in the zoning plan. However, the presentation and the practice often fell short, as commented in following counter-discursive narrative.

"We are observing the procedural helplessness of contemporary urban planning, in which citizen participation is often merely an effort to sway public opinion that what has been negotiated with developers is the only possible and correct way. This creates neighborhoods in which, for example, increasingly unnecessary office space dominates over housing, and housing itself does not even come close to the

¹¹⁷ One of the Prague City Hall coalition parties after the 2018 elections.

¹¹⁸ „Praha: město, kde se o dostupném bydlení zatím hlavně mluví“. 2020. A2larm.cz, 30th October 2020. Available at: <https://a2larm.cz/2020/10/praha-mesto-kde-se-o-dostupnem-bydleni-zatim-hlavne-mluvi/>

forms of affordable housing - on the contrary, it only deepens the spatial segregation of Prague's inhabitants."

[“Sledujeme procesní bezradnost současného městského urbanismu, ve kterém je participace občanů často pouhou snahou uchlácholit veřejné mínění, že to, co bylo vyjednáno s developery, je jediná možná a správná cesta. Vznikají tak čtvrti, v nichž například stále méně potřebné kancelářské prostory převládají nad bydlením, a bydlení samotné se navíc formám dostupného bydlení ani zdaleka nepřiblíží – naopak jen prohloubí prostorovou segregaci obyvatel Prahy.”](Michal Lehečka, NGO AutoMat)¹¹⁹

The excerpt points to an interesting hegemonic characteristic - a certain ability to shape specific discursive frameworks (for example in the cases of public hearings or presentations) that are not in line with practice and are rather of a certain obscuring nature. In this way - as some alibi for dysfunctional practice - hegemonic references to good foreign practice (a topic I will discuss further below), calls for a stronger position of local government vis-à-vis the private sector, or the inability to fulfill the role of IPR as an urban professional mediator within the field at all, which maintains a sufficient critical distance, also work performatively. In conceptual terms, we might call this a kind of "executive incompetence" that becomes the nature of hegemony and also shapes a form of *cognitive dissonance* in which structural conditions (heavily mentally entrenched under the influence of zombie socialism) make it impossible to implement measures on which there is consensus among the city's major actors, but structural constraints present too great barrier. In this context, we can also speak, for example, of a certain *self-censorship of practice*, which causes actors not to resort to certain solutions (or rather not even to talk about them) because they count in advance that they will not be structurally permeable. The other option is too much compromise, which remains particularly advantageous for the private sector.

From a discursive perspective, the city actors themselves conceived of the housing problem as a serious one. However, in the counter-discursive context, the *Prague Housing Development Strategy* (Hl. m. Praha, 2021), which sets out the basic areas of the city's struggle against unaffordable housing, was rather criticized as insufficient and still dominantlly perceives the private development sector as the main tool to be used for further provision of housing in Prague. A separate problem is the

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

performativity of hegemony - it is not dependent on city documents or strategies, but rather depends on partial actor practices, which in the period under review focused primarily on private development projects. They do not bring affordable housing.

I would like to dwell on the interesting example of the participation of Prague's political representatives at the EXPO REAL real estate fair in Munich in 2019 and the performative role of such events. We have already seen the performative power of industry conferences, such as the summit organized by SAR. Representatives of Prague, including Deputy Mayor Hlaváček, regularly visit real estate fairs to promote the Czech capital as an ideal investment opportunity worth building in. They actively market themselves to the private sector, which is becoming an indispensable lifeblood of Prague's development. Prague offers and promotes brownfields as its asset and potential. It compares itself with metropolises that do not have such a large amount of building land inside the city; it wants to "*open the way to the metropolis*" for investors again. The fair is a place where councilors meet investors. The meeting is an *unconditional* and *natural* necessity and a reaction to the trend of urbanization. The newly formed conjunction of Prague's leadership and foreign investment is intended to make Prague a "*modern city of the 21st century*". It is a specificity that reveals the arenas that largely predetermine the urban development of cities. By drawing attention to the fairs, I do not want to develop a counter-ideological critique, but show how hegemony performatively works. Here, the real estate fair stands in the position of a place that ultimately becomes the alpha and omega of the future (while still being hegemonically a *neutral place*).

The aim is to present Prague as a vibrant center of the whole region, where it is worth working, living, and investing. Brownfields and other unused areas, of which Prague has a large number compared to Western metropolises, will require extensive investment to create modern districts with 21st-century parameters in the coming years.

[Cílem je představit Prahu jako pulsující centrum celého regionu, kde se vyplatí pracovat, žít a investovat. Brownfieldy i další nevyužité plochy, kterých má Praha ve srovnání se západními metropolemi velké množství, budou vyžadovat v příštích

letech rozsáhlé investice, aby na nich mohly vzniknout moderní čtvrti s parametry 21. století.]¹²⁰

Actors IV: Petr Hlaváček - Deputy Mayor for Territorial Development

The Deputy Mayor for Urban Development has a major role in city planning. He becomes the *agenda setter* in spatial development and planning issues, submits proposals for approval by the City Council, and determines the city's development visions. The Institute of Planning and Development (IPR), a key city institution that prepares most of the documents, spatial studies, and Prague's spatial plan, also theoretically falls under his control.

Architect Petr Hlaváček held this position in Mayor Hřib's Council from 2018 to 2022, and then also in the new coalition led by the incoming mayor Svoboda (ODS), where Hlaváček replaced the political jersey for the STAN movement. Hřib's coalition, led by the Pirate Party with the participation of the Praha sobě movement and the United Forces for Prague (Spojené síly pro Prahu) coalition, of which Hlaváček was also a part at the time, was considered a "coalition of change."¹²¹ It replaced the ANO movement associated with the former scandalized Prime Minister Andrej Babiš in the city's leadership, which was led by Mayor Adriana Krnáčová. The ANO government built on previous years of conservative-right governments, especially ODS and then TOP 09, during whose reign the idea of a new master plan for Prague, the so-called Metropolitan Plan, was born.

This coalition's change was to end the clientelistic ties of politicians, informal backroom deals, and corruption, and was thus discursively framed before and after the elections. Hlaváček's actor profile is specific in the party political field. In the long term, he has tended to adopt a more politically conservative posture,

¹²⁰ „Praha se otevírá zahraničním investorům“. 2019. Cfoworld.cz, 2nd October 2019. Available at: <https://cfoworld.cz/aktuality/praha-se-otevira-zahranicnim-investorum-5013>

¹²¹ The Pirate Party was founded in an environment of IT innovators to increase governance transparency and limit lobby groups' influence. It has gradually gained public support, including being hailed as an active opposition party in the Prague City Council from 2014 to 2018, which led to its entry into the Chamber of Deputies. Let me remind us the other members of the former coalition - movement Praha sobě represents the civic platform of the active liberal middle class united around the mayor of Prague 7, Jan Čížinský. The liberal-conservative TOP 09, the Christian Democrats, and STAN formed the United Forces for Prague coalition.

emphasizing the professional parameters of self-presentation. He uses his capital spectrum, which is built on high *professional*, *academic*, and *symbolic* capital. Hlaváček's specificity is powerful *site-specific social capital*, formed by ties to a wide range of actors in the field. This has given him strong political support (even from the opposition) and a significantly stronger performative position than his predecessor Petra Kolínská (Green Party). Hlaváček shaped his discursive profile on the image of a committed democrat with a strong professional vision, which he wants to implement in his political position.

From the moment Hlaváček announced his candidacy, there was virtually no doubt that he would become Deputy Mayor for Urban Development if the election were successful. He had all the prerequisites and history to do so. His historically relatively good relations with ANO (although his political entities tended to refuse cooperation with ANO) probably played a role, especially in the context of the Metropolitan Plan, which was being developed during his time as director of the IPR, while ANO had Mayor Krnáčová at City Hall, who supported the idea of the plan and was a stronger ally than the then Deputy Mayor Kolínská. In a way, this is a relatively rare indication of *meritocracy* as a feature of hegemony, which the analysis otherwise does not show much of. While there is criticism of professional ability in the data (in the case of the building law or the context of the Metropolitan Plan and its preparatory team of young, inexperienced architects), there is rarely such consistent recognition of ability and merit in the narratives as there was in the case of Hlaváček.

The deputies also elected deputy mayors. As expected, Petr Hlaváček, an architect, became the first deputy for the United Forces, and Petr Hlubuček (STAN) became the deputy for the environment and infrastructure. (...) The only deputy supported by part of the opposition was Hlaváček, for whom the ANO deputies voted.

[Zastupitelé zvolili také náměstký primátora. Podle očekávání se za Spojené síly stal prvním náměstkem s gescí územního rozvoje architekt Petr Hlaváček a náměstkem pro životní prostředí a infrastrukturu Petr Hlubuček (STAN). (...) Jediný

náměstek, kterého podpořila i část opozice, byl Hlaváček, pro kterého hlasovali zastupitelé za ANO.]¹²²

From the perspective of research on the dominant ideology's performativity, Hlaváček is a very interesting actor. He became a significant *agenda setter*, while his ideological position was very flexible, and in some cases, he introduced themes into the post-socialist space that disrupted the expected hegemonic positions. The mode of his narratives evolved and changed over time. It exhibits dominant features primarily in expert framing and unconditional notions of development. One of the main goals of his tenure as a deputy was to get the development of Prague moving, often framed as a solution to the housing crisis. This was manifested in his active approach to kick-starting construction on brownfield sites, where he introduced new spatial planning tools, especially so-called zoning (spatial) studies. He followed his predecessor Kolínská in using the slogan "agreement in the territory" as a task for spatial planning.¹²³

However, he did not stay with private development alone. He became one of the essential actors who brought into the public debate the topics of alternatives to the private housing market (such as municipal or cooperative housing or *baugruppen*) or the vital issue of developer contributions to public infrastructure. He was not the first actor to raise these themes. Still, his capital spectrum (high symbolic and cultural capital combined with social and economic institutional capital) made the themes more entrenched in the public debate, which was quite unique in the context of the theories outlining the predispositions of the post-socialist city. The unwarranted *meritocratic respect* for his person is well illustrated by the topic of affordable housing, in which he was quite dominant despite the fact that the topic was also under the purview of two other councilors (Hana Marvanová from the same coalition and Adam Zábanský from the Pirate Party).¹²⁴ The broader scope of the topics of his narratives, however, still does

¹²² „Praha má nového primátora: Zastupitelé zvolili Zdeňka Hřibu, opozice ho nepodpořila“. 2018. Blesk.cz, 15th November 2018.

¹²³ From the perspective of hegemonic power, the practice of reaching such an agreement, which usually means an agreement with the private sector, i.e., an agreement on the bilateral (actor-incomplete) public administration-investors axis, is, of course, important.

¹²⁴ There was a specific division of roles between the three councilors. Hana Marvanová discursively occupied the topic of Airbnb primarily, Adam Zábanský was responsible for the management of municipal apartments and social housing, and Hlaváček was mainly responsible for development agendas related to housing and urban construction. Both Marvanová and Zábanský showed the

not deviate too much from certain boundaries and horizons set by the dominant practice.

"We need to unblock construction. My ideal goal is for Prague to build twice as many apartments a year within ten years - ten thousand - and two thousand of those should be initiated by the city. The primary thing is multiplicity - different types of construction, cooperative flats, company flats, and *baugruppe*. It must be said, however, that the private sector will continue to have a major influence in the future, that's just the way it is. But more flats will mean lower prices. I have assessed the fact that under the previous leadership of the town hall and Matěj Stropnický, no construction was carried out, as a wrong, harmful and anti-human practice," Hlaváček repeats an opinion he expresses quite often in the media.

[*"Musíme odblokovat výstavbu. Můj ideální cíl do deseti let je, aby Praha stavěla dvakrát víc bytů ročně – tedy deset tisíc, a z toho by dva tisíce měly být iniciovány městem. Primární je přitom mnohohodnovost – různé typy výstavby, družstevní byty, podnikové byty i baugruppe. Je však nutné říct, že i v budoucnu bude zásadní vliv soukromého sektoru, tak to prostě je. Ale více bytů bude znamenat snížení cen. To, že se za minulého vedení radnice a Matěje Stropnického nestavělo, jsem vyhodnotil jako chybný, škodlivý a protilidský postup," opakuje Hlaváček názor, který v médiích vyslovuje poměrně často.*]¹²⁵

Hlaváček's founding of the so-called Prague Development Company (*Pražská developerská společnost*) has a specific ideological dimension. The company aims to make Prague a builder and gradually increase the number of municipal housing units by preparing municipal land and construction on it. In the market context, this is a functional instrument that will create new flats that will not necessarily depend on market mechanisms, while simultaneously creating competition for privately owned apartments. On the other hand, from the perspective of the performativity of ideology, we must perceive the vocabulary and context that accompanies the theme of the municipal developer. It is still a "developer." It still comes from the unregulated performativity of the market that shapes and deepens the crisis; it is a kind of concession, a unit of alibi to the fact

discursive influence of Hlaváček's agendas, which were inscribed in their narratives, especially concerning the acceleration of the construction of new housing as a central paradigm.

¹²⁵ „Praha: město, kde se o dostupném bydlení zatím hlavně mluví“. 2020. A2larm.cz, 30th October 2020. Available at: <https://a2larm.cz/2020/10/praha-mesto-kde-se-o-dostupnem-bydleni-zatim-hlavne-mluvi/>

that the public administration is unable to address unaffordable housing because the sector is dominated by market actors.

2. 1. Developer Contributions

The data portray Petr Hlaváček as a bearer of a specific feature of dominance described in theory - the *progressive appearance of conservatism*. He repeatedly expressed the conservative nature of his politics, which he perceived as a value, and linked through various discursive practices to his expert background and innovative agenda-setting within the field. In doing so, he aptly fulfilled the assumptions of our entry theory, where the progressive appearance of revised conservatism becomes one part of dominance. Conservatism is an enlightened, evolved, modern, liberal, and conciliatory approach to a turbulent field of conflict. Hlaváček has often positioned himself as a *peacemaker* with a conciliatory approach, bringing an ideal vision through his combination of capitals combined with (again, grounded in theory) "economic humanism." This was evident, for example, in his approach to the subject of developer contingencies.

Negotiating with investors for contributions to the city and explaining construction plans to the public. This is the way to avoid shaky disputes over the further development of Prague, according to future councilor for territorial development Petr Hlaváček (United Forces for Prague, nominated by TOP 09). "A significant part of conflicts arise from misunderstandings," Hlaváček says.

[Vyjednávání s investory o příspěvcích ve prospěch města a vysvětlování stavebních záměrů veřejnosti. To je cesta, jak se podle budoucího radního pro územní rozvoj Petra Hlaváčka (Spojené síly pro Prahu, nominovaný za TOP 09) vyhnout třaskavým sporům o další rozvoj Prahy. "Významná část konfliktů vzniká z nedorozumění," říká Hlaváček.]¹²⁶

The deputy's use of terms such as 'sensible construction,' the pressure to speed up construction, and the articulation of the causes of delays that can be caused by listening too much to everyone, are hegemonic in his narratives. While the democratic

¹²⁶ „Prioritou jsou brownfieldy a územní plán“. 2018. Pražský deník, 29th October 2018.

debate is one of his central discursive values, it is necessary to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant comments and actors.¹²⁷

Hlaváček has begun to make extensive use of the tool of *spatial studies*, which are intended to determine a more detailed degree of regulation for large problematic areas and are supposed to be the result of a broad social consensus. However, discussing them has de facto confirmed both their hegemonic nature and the dominantly ideological position of central actors and institutions based on the distribution of power within the field. The preparation process of spatial studies usually started with the most powerful actors (developers - land owners), and only when the principles of detailed regulation were practically finished and agreed upon, were they presented and "explained" to the public. This is a power-driven "top-down" way of planning, influenced largely by the post-revolutionary privatization and the set political culture, in which the city's actor position focuses primarily on "saving the possible." The director of IPR, Boháč, quite aptly describes planning studies as a tool that "reassures the public" - a mechanism that allows a specific agreement with a private developer to be codified in a legitimate way.

"The city shouldn't over-value architecture. But it should keep an eye on the volume of the buildings, their use, the parterre of the houses, the landmarks, and especially the public spaces. This is precisely what the spatial study provides. It sets out the basic development volumes, thus reassuring the municipality and the public that nothing beyond the presented should be built there. There is no danger that the public will be shocked by some unexpected development."

„Město by nemělo příliš hodnotit architekturu. Ale mělo by si hlídat objem zástavby, její využití, parter domů, dominanty a zejména veřejná prostranství. To přesně zajišťuje územní studie. Ta udává základní objemy výstavby, tím pádem uklidňuje samosprávu a veřejnost, že nic nad rámec toho, co je představeno, by tam nemělo

¹²⁷ An interesting indication of intrahegemonic conflict is the relations between political groups. While there is necessarily a certain hegemonic performativity across parties and actors within the party and institutional politics, depending on the political agenda, there are some cases of disputes in which one party is more hegemonically performative. Previously, the Greens played the role of the hegemonically weaker party in the municipal coalition. After the elections, it was partly the Pirates, although a Pirate mayor led the City Council. This may point to the fact that de facto hegemony at some moments requires some problematic actors, be they political parties or activists. Sometimes there is even a discursive overlap.

vzniknout. Nehrozí, že by veřejnost šokovala nějaká neočekávaná výstavba.”
(Ondřej Boháč)¹²⁸

The theme of developer contributions was, in some cases, framed by positive international practice. However, from dominant positions, this occurred relatively infrequently and at a relatively low level of detail within the data analyzed. Vienna, Munich, or Copenhagen and their practices (based on strong demands towards private developers, including high shares of subsidized housing in new projects) usually stood in the positions of some air-locks, which are indeed supposed to set the direction. Still, the Prague situation is so different and complicated that we cannot actually try to do this effectively in practice (there are some hegemonic *self-censoring elements* at work here, especially in the field of practice).

The office of Deputy Mayor Hlaváček eventually developed a *methodology of contributions* (approved by the City Council in 2022), which represented a compromise between conservative approaches (partly proposed by developers - e.g., Dušan Kunovský) and the demand for a stricter stance on the issue of contributions (advocated by, e.g., municipal districts and civic organizations).

Actors V: Developers Association

The Association of Developers of the Czech Republic (*Asociace developerů ČR*) plays a similar role to SAR in development lobbying. It brings together most major development companies operating in the Czech Republic and operates on a similar principle as the SAR. Its slightly weaker position in comparison is that it fails to frame its issues in terms of architecture and related "cultural values" in a professional manner, and presents itself much more openly as an interest association of developers. In discourses, it figures as an independent actor that pursues hegemonic goals, not necessarily using the cultural and symbolic capital of prominent figures in the field. However, similarly to SAR, the Association can present its objectives in significant media outlets, which in some cases base

¹²⁸ „Návrh věží Jiříčné vznikl bez dohody s městem, říká ředitel IPR Boháč“. 2019. Idnes.cz, 6th July 2019. Available at: https://www.idnes.cz/praha/zpravy/zizkov-ipr-praha-rozhovor-vez-eva-jiricna.A190703_134523_praha-zpravy_knn

entire articles on statements or content produced by the Association, which becomes an *expert* and *neutral* actor.

Start of construction of 250 new flats. And building permits issued for only about 370 more apartments. In terms of housing construction, the balance sheet of developers in Prague for the first quarter of this year is trivial. "Although there has been recent information that the number of new flats sold in Prague this year is rising and that the housing crisis has been averted, nothing is true," warns Tomáš Kadeřábek, director of the Association of Developers.

[Začátek výstavby domů s 250 novými byty. A vydaná stavební povolení jen zhruba na 370 bytů dalších. Bilance developerů v Praze za první kvartál letošního roku, co se výstavby bydlení týče, je tristní. "Ačkoli se v poslední době objevily informace o tom, že v letošním roce stoupá počet prodaných nových bytů v Praze, a že tedy bytová krize je zažehnána, nic není dále pravda," varuje ředitel Asociace developerů Tomáš Kadeřábek.]¹²⁹

The narratives are shaped by sentiments about the critical situation of developers who "lament the declining number of flats." The numerical expressions of the volumes of flats built and permits issued and the deficit compared to the need are emphasized, and based on the situation thus grasped, the actors draw desirable solutions. They include the adoption of the Metropolitan Plan and the acceleration of the process of making modifications to the current spatial plan.

A specific actor in the development field is represented, for example, by the developer EKOSPOL and its director Evžen Korec. Although he is not a member of the Developers' association, he nevertheless displays similar characteristics and discursive practices. The difference is its relatively stronger focus on the more peripheral parts of the city (where the company usually implements projects)¹³⁰ and its slightly more conservative nature in the sense of a more outdated, "nineties" presentation style. However, the premises presented are part

¹²⁹ „Prahu sužuje nedostatek nových bytů. A bude ještě hůř“. 2018. Ekonom, 31st May 2018.

¹³⁰ This, by the way, led to an interesting paradox when Korec criticized the otherwise more liberal Metropolitan Plan in terms of regulations, mainly because its principle was densification and an attempt to limit the expansion of Prague in the outskirts, where EKOSPOL owns a number of plots. This shows the power of personal motivations and personal interests, which are stronger than any ideological convictions, especially in the case of developers.

of a pro-development discursive coalition using similar means and themes, including its own analytical outputs.

"The obstacles that block housing construction in the capital city still remain. The blocked process of permitting new buildings has still not been set in motion, and the same is true for the lack of land suitable for large residential projects. These are practically dismantled, and the preparation of new sites is stalling. Until these barriers are removed, we will not see any major growth in the residential market," Korec says.

[„Překážky, které blokují bytovou výstavbu v hlavním městě, stále přetrvávají. Zablokovaný proces povolování nových staveb se stále nepodařilo rozhybat a stejné je to i s nedostatkem pozemků vhodných pro velké rezidenční projekty. Ty jsou prakticky rozebrané a příprava nových lokalit vázne. Dokud se tyto bariéry nepodaří odstranit, tak se většího růstu rezidenčního trhu nedočkáme,“ tvrdí Korec.]¹³¹

3. Metropolitan Plan

The new Prague spatial plan, the so-called Metropolitan Plan, and its preparation process created central issues with long-term validity and topicality in the period under review. It reached its discursive peak mostly in connection with specific phases of its preparation, especially in the summer of 2018, when it was undergoing so-called joint negotiations.¹³² At that time, the public was, for the first time, "officially" presented with a draft of the new spatial plan, and feedback in the form of binding comments was also collected. The first round of discussion of the new draft master plan serves primarily to obtain feedback from the so-called affected public authorities¹³³, municipal districts, important authorities, and other institutions. However, civic associations, non-profit organizations, and specific active residents also formulated comments.

¹³¹ „Developeři loni v Praze prodali 5124 nových bytů, meziročně o 15 procent více“. 2020. Retrend.cz, 17th January 2020. Available at: <https://retrend.cz/novinky/rezidencni-bydleni-a-hotely/developeri-loni-v-praze-prodali-5124-novych-bytu-mezirocne-o-15-procent-vice/>

¹³² Following pressure from civil society organisations, some working versions were presented earlier.

¹³³ We have already heard about them in connection with the building law. They play an essential role, for example, in heritage or environmental protection. They include ministries and important authorities, but also, for example, health authorities and fire brigades.

Waves of dominant and counter-hegemonic narratives accompanied the whole process. At first glance, the discursive clashes may seem paradoxical when we realize that they concern a technical and abstract document whose meaning is not actually understood by the majority of the population. However, it is precisely the *abstraction*, the *alienation*, the very complex technical language, the high degree of expertise, but at the same time, the de facto vagueness and ambiguity about meaning (and the production of meanings) that shows the hegemonic nature of the Metropolitan Plan. As an alienated expert document, it becomes a great vehicle for the (re)production of ideology. It can operate in seclusion, behind the scenes, and its strong expert framing represents a performative capacity to obscure ideological substance.

From the perspective of discursive practice, it is essential that in the Czech legal system, the spatial plan is a document that determines the rules, vision, and concept of the city's development, has a binding nature, and building authorities must follow it when permitting buildings. Therefore, it arouses strong emotions. Once it is approved in some form, it sets the rules for the city's development for decades to come.¹³⁴

The Metropolitan plan is what Henri Lefebvre (1991: 33) called a *representation of space* - a verbalized description of space that provides ideas and concrete definitions. The understanding of space within *representations* is conceived through mental abstractions. These spatial conceptualizations are not given and unchanging. They are always constructed in some way and represent a constellation of power, knowledge, and spatiality through which the dominant social order is materially inscribed in space (Gregory 1994: 403). In Lefebvre's conception, the (re)production of the spatial plan as a representation of space is mainly influenced by geographers, urban planners, architects, or 'social engineers' (Butler 2003: 174).¹³⁵ The expert dimension of the master plan thus falls within our theoretical framework.

The framing of the preparation of the Metropolitan Plan as yet another remedy for the unsatisfactory situation of construction fitted into a powerful package of hegemonic narratives that advocate building as intensively as possible.

¹³⁴ The current zoning plan has been in force since 2000 and it can be assumed that the Metropolitan Plan will be in force in Prague for a similar period of time.

¹³⁵ Similar to the Metropolitan Plan, the spatial studies mentioned earlier are *representations of space*. The principle of their preparation and the distribution of influence of the actors are similar.

What can unblock the situation on the Prague market? High hopes are pinned on the Metropolitan Plan, which should clearly define the conditions for construction in the metropolis. The problem is, however, that it will not come into force just like that - construction will start to be governed by it in five years at the earliest. "There is no doubt that the current plan has to work for a few more years. Until the Metropolitan Plan is in force, construction must continue, and this can only be done on the basis of the current plan," warns one of the document's authors, architect Roman Koucký.

[Co může situaci na pražském trhu odblokovat? Velké naděje se upínají k Metropolitnímu plánu, který má jasně stanovit podmínky výstavby v metropoli. Problémem ovšem je, že v platnost jen tak nevstoupí – výstavba se jím začne řídit nejdříve za pět let. "O tom, že současný plán musí ještě několik let fungovat, není pochyb. Do platnosti Metropolitního plánu se musí neustále stavět a to lze jen na základě současného plánu," upozorňuje jeden z autorů dokumentu, architekt Roman Koucký.]¹³⁶

At the technical level of the Metropolitan Plan, the principle of freeing up the development lies in an innovative methodology that aims to abandon the original socialist principle of functional planning,¹³⁷ and to move to new regulatory principles based on the physical structural division of the city, the delineation of areas (locations) with a description of their character, height regulation based on the principle of a square grid with a maximum height, abandoning the traditional division according to the dominant function, and other tools. The resulting mechanism represents - at least according to counter-hegemonic claims - a significant weakening of the regulatory operation of the spatial plan and increased flexibility of development rules.

Actors VI: Roman Koucký - former head of the Metropolitan Plan office

The figure of the ideologist of the Metropolitan Plan, the architect Koucký, can be characterized as proto- or stereotypical of certain features of the architects' environment, as we can perceive them from the position of social sciences. Perhaps because, as social scientists, we often deal with "softer" and

¹³⁶ „Prahu sužuje nedostatek nových bytů. A bude ještě hůř“. 2018. Ekonom, 31st May 2018.

¹³⁷ The spatial plan's central and relatively strict role is sometimes referred to as one of the characteristic features of post-socialist countries and their earlier central planning (see, e.g., Horak 2007: 135).

more socially sensitive topics that require a certain degree of social imagination, we can perceive distinctions in the field of architecture from our positions. I daresay that we can observe a higher degree of individualistic claims in the area (see, e.g., Lokšová and Pomyjová 2020: 44), which are related to the parameters of success based on the formation of strong architectural personalities who can make decisions, and promote their solutions. Pressure for innovation is created, and high competition and institutionally anchored competitiveness prevail. Winning and beating one's competitors is an architect's de facto necessary goal.

Roman Koucký represents an almost ideal-typical personality (and I admit here a certain degree of normativity) of an architect who has a dialectical relationship with his field of expertise. He is its product, and at the same time, he participates significantly in its formation. His position is based on a high degree of symbolic capital, which is generated both by the numerous realizations of important architectural and urban projects and through the personal attributes of the architect as a sophisticated thinker who, in his senior academic position, is also a visionary teacher who is followed by younger disciples.¹³⁸ The significant degree of loyalty to Koucký, shaped by power relations and the performative qualities of the various kinds of capital owned within the field of architects and urban planners (where Koucký, through his combination of capital, occupies one of the central positions),¹³⁹ was also manifested in the affair when the then Deputy Mayor of Urban Development, Petra Kolínská, tried to remove Koucký from his position as head of the Metropolitan Plan office (see pp. 149 for more).

Discursively, Koucký is an interesting character. He doesn't get into open disputes too much and usually expresses himself in "safe" spaces that don't threaten the personality of the architectural authority he is building, giving

¹³⁸ In a way, the caste system in architecture, which divides meritorious and young architects, also becomes a tool for reproducing hegemony through a *meritocratic* system in which young architects follow their role models.

¹³⁹ Koucký is a member of the (somewhat informal) group of architects and artists called the *Golden Eagles* (Zlatí orlí), which was founded in the 1980s. After the revolution, it gradually became very prominent, and its members collected important professional awards and rose to high positions. At the end of the 2010s, actors coming from the environment around the Golden Eagles became one of the central (re)producers of the territorial development agenda in Prague. In addition to Koucký, they include Petr Hlaváček, or another influential figure, SAR member Jiří Plos. In the person of Roman Koucký, the group of these architects and urban planners gained a central influence on the creation of the Prague Metropolitan Plan. In the person of Petr Hlaváček, it de facto gained influence on everything else related to development and planning in the city.

freedom to his opinions and ideas. In them, Koucký manifests himself as a purely neoliberal architect who emphasizes urban development's architectural and physical (structural) parameters. He is a typical representative of a strong architectural ego that promotes its way of innovation. His opinion is mostly *universal* and *professionally valid*. His narratives are characterized by *developmentalism*, post-socialist sentiments related to urban planning, and pro-development rhetoric. One of his most famous media pronouncements is characterized by these qualities:

Roman Koucký, the head of the Metropolitan Plan office, also criticized Prague's inclusion on the UNESCO list, saying that Prague's removal from the list would be helpful: "More tourists would come to the city to see why Prague disappeared from the list. And we could then attract them to new houses."

[Kriticky se ohledně zápisu Prahy na seznamu UNESCO vyjádřil i vedoucí kanceláře Metropolitního plánu Roman Koucký, podle něhož by Praze vyškrtnutí ze seznamu pomohlo: „Do města by totiž přijelo více turistů podívat se, proč Praha ze seznamu zmizela. A my bychom je pak mohli lákat i na nové domy.”]¹⁴⁰

The narrative connects the *developmental* idea of building and "new architectural value," which was often tangible, especially through architects in pro-development sentiments. It also shows antipathy to the conservatism of historic preservation, which is de facto backward-looking and blocks the path of progressive development. Historical heritage and UNESCO's protection of Prague have relatively often spoken into the public debate and, in many cases, represented a similar block to development. UNESCO has long criticized, for example, the continued construction of high-rise buildings in Pankrác, which have disturbed Prague's historic skyline, but it has also been critical of the Metropolitan Plan and its (neo)liberal concept of regulation.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ „Přijde Praha o historické památky? Nový stavební zákon zásadně ohrožuje jejich ochranu“. 2019. Blisty.cz, 10th December 2019. Available at: <https://blisty.cz/art/98036-prijde-praha-o-historicke-pamatky-novy-stavebni-zakon-zasadne-ohrozuje-jejich-ochranu.html>

¹⁴¹ Ondřej Boháč, the director of the IPR, gradually emerged from his hegemonic position into the discussion on protecting the historical cultural heritage. In his narratives, he tried to balance the development visions of Prague's political and urban management and the requirements of UNESCO. The outputs of both the IPR and the Municipality eventually spoke with relative frequency about how Prague succeeded in meeting UNESCO's requirements and was praised by the international organization. Conversely, the most frequent counter-narrative was about the "disgrace" that Prague faces if it fails to meet UNESCO requirements as a result of excessive and unconceptual development.

From the position of a capital-intensive architect, in the context of the technical field of planning, Koucký was mostly unable to break out of a specific *golden tower* of architecture that discursively participates in (re)production processes, which mainly manifested itself in an inability to mediate the role of planning and to seek tools that would help make it a humanistic rather than a technical discipline. Koucký has not been able to break out of the *performative alienation* of planning, especially through his personality traits and the nature of the architectural field described above, which from a hegemonic perspective, is hierarchically "superior" to the ordinary inhabitants of the city. The following statements show a misunderstanding of the possibilities and abilities of the city's inhabitants to participate professionally in planning, which in turn provides a hegemonic alibi for the solutions promoted.

"The most important thing to say is that these people should study the plan, they shouldn't listen to the rumors, they shouldn't be concerned that someone is telling them it's wrong, and they should find out for themselves. That's the most important thing."

[„Nejdůležitější je říct, že ti lidé mají studovat ten plán, nemají poslouchat pomluvy, nemají se zabývat tím, že jim někdo říká, že je to špatně, a že si to mají zjistit sami. To je nejdůležitější.“](Roman Koucký)¹⁴²

"The pocket edition of the plan - the text part of it - a reader can handle in a week," thinks Koucký.

[„Kapesní vydání plánu – jeho textovou část – čtenář zvládne za týden,“ myslí si Koucký.]¹⁴³

Koucký thus co-constructs an ideological and power *provision of access* in which performative capital and habitual redistribution of actors within the field occurs, where access (still limited) is only given to those with professional erudition or those who find enough time to build up a sufficient amount of site-specific capital. At the same time, it is in the interest of hegemonic actors to maintain the status quo of high expertise in planning and development visions, as the process of alienation also helps to maintain hegemony itself.

¹⁴² „Veřejnost projednala návrh Metropolitního plánu“. 2018. Praha.tv, 27th June 2018.

¹⁴³ „Sporný metropolitní plán k připomínkám“. 2018. Právo, 28th June 2018.

Part of the explanation of the principles of the plan and its rules included frequent references to simply 'commenting in the comments.' The normativity of the bureaucratic preparatory process of the Metropolitan Plan thus carries, in addition to the formalistic level (see the following statements from the *joint meeting* on the Metropolitan Plan), the expectation that criticism can always be formulated at a professional level in the form of comments.

The following emotional tuning of the statements refers to Koucký's typical characteristic of becoming a volatile and relational aggressive figure in moments of more difficult conflicts, who also uses the tools of ridicule or contempt (thus drawing significantly on his position of power and ownership of capital).

"I don't think you've read it quite accurately - I want to add 'which doesn't surprise me' - but I won't."

[„Myslím, že jste to přečet ne úplně přesně – chce se mi dodat „což mě nepřekvapuje“ – ale nedodám to.“](Roman Koucký)¹⁴⁴

"It's the color purple, so maybe you'll find it."

[„Je to fialová barva, tak možná, že ji najdete.“](Roman Koucký)¹⁴⁵

Koucký's volatility and aggressiveness were evident, for example, at the so-called *joint meeting* (společné jednání) on the Metropolitan Plan - an official discussion of the draft plan with all the actors, which took place on a personal basis in the presence of the authors and the most important political actors. This is a statutory part of the preparation of the spatial plan, which in terms of hegemony analysis, is an example of a *neutral site* of reproduction. Koucký "makes a fool" of the questioner by making fun of his ability to recognize colors in response to a question after a specific regulation. Koucký declared at the meeting (which is designed to discuss the plan and clarify its functions) that he "*will not answer any specific questions.*" Thus, he de facto completely denied the nature of the meeting, and the whole meeting was conducted in the spirit of building a power structure, with the dominant actors presenting their vision and

¹⁴⁴ *Joint meeting* (společné jednání) on the Metropolitan plan, 27th June 2018, Praha.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

the relevant counter-narratives being seen as the product of non-erudition, ideological activism, and the anti-development lobby.

This also points to a certain purely formal role of events such as joint negotiations, which are part of the legal process of land-use planning. The exercise of hegemony takes place in a certain continuity in which it gains strength, and legal processes then play a rather insignificant role as links in the mechanisms of *discursive* and *social* practice.

3. 1. Counter-narratives to the Metropolitan Plan

None of the topics analyzed has seen such a volume of counter-narratives as the Metropolitan Plan. These were generated not only from the positions of civic organizations or various experts, but also from most of the city districts and the Deputy Mayor for Territorial Development.

The aforementioned Arnika, which led a strong opposition campaign and formed a civic-expert discursive coalition, was a continuously strong counter-discursive actor within civic organizations. In the period of the first round of discussion of the proposal in 2018, the counter-hegemonic strategy consisted of a relatively strong expressiveness and a focus on central themes.¹⁴⁶

Arnika has gradually sparked a significant discussion about the function and possible risks of the designation of "buildable areas" (*zastavitelná území*) in the plan, especially related to the protection of greenery. The dispute between Arnika and IPR gradually escalated to IPR threatening the NGO with legal action and accusations of creating disinformation. To date, it has not been clear which side of the dispute was right on the issue of buildability. However, the arguments were taken up by other actors, including some city districts and the expert team of the Czech University of Agriculture (ČZU), which the then Deputy Mayor Petra Kolínská commissioned to comment on the plan.¹⁴⁷ During the period of the harshest criticism surrounding the

¹⁴⁶ Typically, these included the protection of green spaces in the city, the designation of amenity areas, the regulation of high-rise development, the protection of public spaces, and others. An anti-hegemonic conception of urban planning regulation unites them and places sustainability in the broad sense (i.e., environmental and social) at the forefront.

¹⁴⁷ Kolínská's position was paradoxical. The preparation of the plan fell under her authority and responsibility. However, the disagreement between Kolínská and IPR, which refused to obey her on the

joint negotiations, IPR spokesperson Vácha played an important role in averting counter-narratives.

According to Institute of Planning and Development (IPR) spokesperson Marek Vácha, the plan's drafters around architect Roman Koucký are working with the terms "building block" and "non-building block." Stromovka, for example, is a non-building block in a buildable area. "If someone wanted to build there, they would have to change the zoning plan," Vácha argued. According to the ČZU, Stromovka should not belong to the buildable area at all, and it cannot be solved by parallel nomenclature. Vácha countered that the terminology is based on the Prague Building Regulations (*Pražské stavební předpisy, PSP* – note by author).

[Zpracovatelé plánu kolem architekta Romana Kouckého v Institutu plánování a rozvoje (IPR) podle jeho mluvčího Marka Váchy pracují s pojmy stavební a nestavební blok. Třeba Stromovka je nestavebním blokem v zastavitelném území. "Pokud by tam někdo chtěl stavět, musel by změnit územní plán," argumentoval Vácha. Podle ČZU by Stromovka do zastavitelného území patřit vůbec neměla, což nelze řešit paralelním názvoslovím. Vácha oponoval, že terminologie vychází z Pražských stavebních předpisů.]¹⁴⁸

Significant criticism was also developed by other civic organizations and most of the city districts, which disagreed either with the setting of specific regulations in their territories or their surroundings, or with the more general principles of the plan in terms of method.

"We definitely reject the new 100-meter high towers on Budějovická Street and Pankrác Plain, where the authors of the plan did not respect the height level of 70 meters set by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee," said Mayor Petr Štěpánek (Trojkoalice, SZ).

["Rozhodně odmítáme nové stometrové věžáky na Budějovické a na Pankrácké pláni, kde autoři plánu nerespektovali výškovou hladinu 70 metrů stanovenou Výborem pro světové dědictví UNESCO," uvedl starosta Petr Štěpánek (Trojkoalice, SZ)]¹⁴⁹

plan, resulted in creating a detailed set of fundamental comments on the plan. In the end, both the Deputy Mayor and the ČZU agreed with Arnika on the question of the definition of buildability.

¹⁴⁸ „Metropolitní plán čelí připomínkám“. 2018. Právo, 26th June 2018.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

Apart from purely technical comments (often not even of a counter-ideological nature), the counter-narratives also included criticisms of the authorial team of primarily young architects led by Koucký. In a way, this illustrates the above-described idea of the world of architects, where strong male egos rule and subliminally also points to the meritocratic principle, where loyalty opens the door to career advancement. Some counter-narratives were highly emotional, while others remained factual and technically exact. Nevertheless, the normative hegemonic assumption of construction as an unconditional necessity speaks for most of them.

IPR in this period largely operated on the responsive principle of responding to criticism. In doing so, it used its role as the expert institution that de facto understands planning in Prague best and has the mandate to set the rules. The IPR built its position on normative institution-building with the ultimate truth, whose task is to *set the record straight*, which has also become a characteristic of many of the participatory meetings organized by the IPR. In this way, the Institute has long built a hierarchical division of actors within the field, with actors owning a hegemonically corresponding capital (in the Bourdieu sense) profile at the top.

The counter-argumentation against the Metropolitan Plan was gradually taken over by the then Deputy Mayor for Urban Development Kolínská. In doing so, she also showed that hegemonic power is not necessarily linked to an executive political position, but derives from the discursive coalitions formed, which, in conjunction with the performativity of capitals, create a power field.

Actors VII: Petra Kolínská - former Deputy Mayor for Territorial Development

The Green Party was in charge of territorial development in the city council during the reign of Mayor Krnáčová (ANO). In the context of the preparation of the Metropolitan Plan (and some other cases), IPR refused to obey Kolínská and followed the guidance of Roman Koucký and the then director Hlaváček in the preparation of the new plan. The disputes culminated in an unsuccessful attempt to dismiss Koucký, and then the dismissal of Hlaváček in 2016. Since the related rebellion of IPR employees, who defined themselves against political interventions in the management of the institution and defended the two

architects, Petra Kolínská has faced even more limited opportunities to assert her demands and found herself under significant pressure, which was also reflected in her narratives, which often took the form of cautious criticism, guarding a certain edge. However, they show that she was not one of the private sector's allies.¹⁵⁰

In the case of the debate around the Metropolitan Plan, dominance was shaped by the figures of architects shielded within the field by a powerful institution and the support of other hegemonically powerful actors. However, also thanks to Kolínská's role, a counter-discursive coalition was formed concerning the Metropolitan Plan, and the deputy became a (re)producer of some counter-narratives. A schizophrenic situation arose for Kolínská in other topics as well. For example, the issue of the so-called changes (*změny územního plánu*) to the current spatial plan became, in the later period of Deputy Mayor Hlaváček, a discursively rather prestigious issue, bringing construction, housing, and the *values of architecture* back to Prague, and Hlaváček and his team built one of their successes on the acceleration of the clearance of the changes. In the time of Deputy Mayor Kolínská, on the other hand, it was more about desperately warding off the worst "threats" and putting out fires fanned by the demands of developers. The changes to the zoning plan are another example of Lefebvrian *representations of space* that have the same level of alienated abstraction as the Metropolitan Plan or spatial studies, and are thus performative within the framework of hegemonic (re)production.

The overall political situation, brought about by the participation of the Green Party in the ANO-led Council, played a role. Periodically, this led to internal coalition contradictions. The Mayor herself enforced some hegemonic decisions despite the Deputy Mayor. The pressure on this position was enormous, both by external hegemonic and internal political actors. Despite several contradictory claims, Kolínská within the period in her political function, discursively performed mainly as a "public defender", however, in the context of various pressures:

"Building belongs in the city. This is not an argument about whether to build or not to build. The argument is about whether quality or quantity is important. Whether

¹⁵⁰ She was one of the few political representatives, for example, not to receive invitations to SAR summits.

the project, besides making money, will also bring something beneficial to the whole community, to the public. Whether the developers have a free hand, or whether the city will set rules to ensure sufficient amenities, green space, and transport infrastructure."

[„Stavění do města patří. Nejde o spor, zda stavět, či nestavět. Spor se vede o to, zda je důležitá kvalita, nebo kvantita. Zda kromě toho, že projekt vydělá peníze, přinese také něco prospěšného celé obci, veřejnosti. Zda budou mít developeři volnou ruku, nebo bude město nastavovat pravidla, která zajistí dostatek občanské vybavenosti, zeleně a dopravní infrastruktury.“](Petra Kolínská)¹⁵¹

Part of the hegemonic discursive strategy in the context of the Metropolitan Plan later became the downplaying of the comments submitted, especially those submitted more than once and by citizens. This led to a discursive weakening of the criticism and to an upsurge of negative NIMBY sentiments that portrayed the city's residents, who - in the words of Roman Koucký - had to find the time to study the plan for a week, as insane people whose aim was to block the process. In the following related narrative, we see the performativity of the symbolic capital of the IPR director Boháč, thanks to which the entire devaluation of the comments is neutralized, and the TV moderator also takes up the negatively mocking undertone. We observe the hegemonic (re)production process in action.

Ondřej BOHÁČ, Director, Institute of Planning and Development of the Capital City of Prague

Some people were able to generate an incredible amount of comments, only 100 people, which is a quarter of a percent, submitted half of all the comments.

Eva ŠELEPOVÁ, moderator

The record holder is one of the residents of Prague 6, because, according to the Institute of Development Planning, she alone generated 8,000 comments.

[Ondřej BOHÁČ, ředitel, Institut plánování a rozvoje hl. m. Prahy

Byli lidé, kteří byli schopni vygenerovat neuvěřitelné množství připomínek, jenom 100 lidí z nich, což je čtvrtina procenta, podalo polovinu úplně všech připomínek.

Eva ŠELEPOVÁ, redaktorka

¹⁵¹ „Stála u zrodu Metropolitního plánu, teď ho zpochybňuje“. 2018. Pražský deník, 27th June 2018.

Rekordmankou je jedna z obyvaterek Prahy 6, podle Institutu plánování rozvoje totiž jen ona vygenerovala 8 tisíc připomínek.]¹⁵²

4. High-rise construction

The issue of high-rise buildings is intertwined with the debate around the principles of regulation of the Metropolitan Plan, but in the long term, it has a life of its own. From hegemonic positions, it is usually framed in terms such as "competitiveness" or "renowned architecture," becoming (like the ability to build) a parameter of a country's maturity and degree of modernity.

According to Kunovský, the metropolis desperately needs modern and iconic architecture that is sensitively set against the existing buildings in the area. "Prague cannot just be an open-air museum for tourists, but must be a city for life," Kunovský stressed.

[Metropole podle Kunovského nezbytně potřebuje moderní a ikonickou architekturu citlivě zasazenou vůči stávajícím stavbám v okolí. "Praha nemůže být jen skanzenem pro turisty, ale musí být městem pro život," zdůraznil Kunovský.]¹⁵³

Prague's growth in height is hegemonically inevitable, often associated with urbanization and unaffordable housing. In some cases, this normativity is supported by other arguments, which may include supposedly positive public attitudes towards high-rise development resulting from SAR research or expert framing. The architectural dimensions of high-rise construction in Prague and their consideration in public debate are becoming rather by-products of hegemonic ideas focused on economic growth through development and the real estate market. The topic is being taken up by the private sector, for whom taller buildings mean more profit. As elsewhere, the foreign practice also plays a role, as the following statement shows. Normatively, it says that other world capital cities have managed high-rise construction without difficulty (leaving aside the impact that high-rise construction has had on housing prices in the British capital), so there is no reason why Prague should not.

¹⁵² „Události v regionech – Praha (Příprava metropolitního plánu Prahy)“. 2019. Česká televize, 7th October 2019.

¹⁵³ „Potřebuje Praha výškové budovy? Podle architektů ano“. 2018. E15, 25th June 2018.

Today, few people can imagine London without skyscrapers and Norman Foster's "cucumber" in close proximity to historical monuments. According to Jiříčná, Prague can bear tall buildings, just as it endured tall towers and churches in the Middle Ages.

[Dnes už si Londýn bez mrakodrapů a "okurky" Normana Fostera v těsné blízkosti historických památek umí málokdo představit. Praha podle Jiříčné snese vysoké budovy, stejně jako snesla ve středověku vysoké věže a kostely.]¹⁵⁴

The mentioned architect Eva Jiříčná, by the way, is a typical example of both the performative behavior of SAR, which uses her fame to acquire symbolic capital for its agenda (all the quoted statements in this chapter are outputs of the SAR conference), and the (re)production performativity of Jiříčná herself. Discursively, she takes on the aura of a kind elderly lady with a stellar past and an award from the British Queen, but at the same time, she is strongly neoliberal and has always sided with high-rise construction. She promotes her interests by designing high-rise buildings in Prague. It is not without context that it is for the Central Group development projects and Dušan Kunovský, the founder of SAR. It certainly cannot be said that the performativity of hegemony necessarily drives all expert framing of high-rise construction. But it is the precisely hegemonic performance that can twist even well-intentioned theoretical framing to its dominant advantage.

5. Densification

Similarly, the debate on the so-called densification of the city, which is one of the basic principles of the Metropolitan Plan and has become a central urban planning paradigm in recent years, is being promoted:

The Institute of Planning and Development of the City of Prague (IPR) has long been trying to prevent the metropolis from expanding into the landscape on the city's periphery. "Instead, the emerging Metropolitan Plan advocates that new buildings be built in transformation areas," says IPR director Ondřej Boháč. That is, on the site of the original rail tracks and old factories. "Their biggest advantage is their location in the wider city center," says Zdenka Klapalová, president of the Association for Real Estate Market Development.

¹⁵⁴ „Potřebuje Praha výškové budovy? Podle architektů ano“. 2018. E15, 25th June 2018.

[Institut plánování a rozvoje hlavního města Prahy (IPR) se dlouhodobě snaží zamezit rozrůstání metropole do krajiny na periferii města. "Namísto toho vznikající Metropolitní plán prosazuje, aby se nové budovy stavěly v transformačních územích," přibližuje plány ředitel IPR Ondřej Boháč. Tedy na místě původních kolejíšť a starých továren. "Jejich největší výhodou je jednoznačně umístění v širším centru města," říká Zdenka Klapalová, prezidentka Asociace pro rozvoj trhu nemovitostí.]¹⁵⁵

The key to understanding the hegemonic nature of the debate on densification is the way it is framed, the range of actors involved, and the spatial and material situation in post-socialist Prague. In the discussion on densification, counter-narratives rarely define themselves against densification as an urban principle.¹⁵⁶ Criticism falls primarily on how the densification process is carried out, especially under Deputy Mayor Hlaváček in cooperation with the IPR. The redevelopment of Prague's brownfields has taken place as a discussion between private developers (who own most of the land) and the city, with little or no formal public participation. At least, that is how the counter-criticism was formulated. Within the specific space of Prague, otherwise sound urban planning concepts, such as the city of short distances or densification, become hostages in the grip of hegemony, which serves much more as an alibi, as a maximum negotiated by the public administration against the dominant private land owners (developers), who, precisely through their ownership (which is often the result of massive privatizations and unfavourable sell-offs of public property), gain the greatest power in determining the fate of Prague's brownfields and building plots.

Urban densification is a delicate process that requires balancing negative externalities such as increased traffic, rising property prices, environmental and climate aspects of new construction, or the provision of amenities and accessible services. Such an approach requires conceptual urban planning and policy work by the city. Prague attempted to do so under the leadership of Deputy Hlaváček, but the hegemonic element present was the priority motivation to allow the metanarratively required construction of private projects on private land as soon as possible. That

¹⁵⁵ „Rozvoj Prahy bude směřovat především dovnitř města“. 2018. MF Dnes, 18th June 2018.

¹⁵⁶ On the contrary, relatively hegemonic actors within the analyzed corpus, such as Ondřej Prokop, a Prague councilor and a relatively important figure in Prague's ANO, or Petr Zeman, the former head of the Prague Municipality's Committee for Territorial Development, argued against densification.

reduced the City's role to minimizing damage. Densification and new construction are almost always associated with *gentrification* in Prague. Karlín is a typical example. Once an industrial district, it has undergone a transformation that has given rise to new office spaces with the associated change of services. The original apartment buildings have undergone reconstruction, and the dramatic increase in prices has gradually displaced many of the original inhabitants. Several traditional pubs have disappeared and been replaced by bars and restaurants with a more global range of products. However, a similar process can be observed in many other Prague districts.

Former industrial sites are also gaining new uses. An example of the successful revival of these sites is the Karlín area, where a number of factories have been preserved thanks to the fact that other uses have been found for the buildings.

[Nové využití získávají také bývalé průmyslové areály. Příkladem povedeného oživení těchto lokalit je třeba oblast Karlína, kde se podařilo zachovat řadu továren díky tomu, že se pro budovy našlo jiné využití.]¹⁵⁷

The discursive characteristic of densification also includes *environmental gentrification*, in which the "green" dimensions of newly planned developments serve as a hegemonic argumentative apparatus. Such a hegemonic discursive spectrum may include ecological certifications of new buildings, the emphasis on emerging bicycle infrastructure or parks, or green spaces in streets or courtyards. Moreover, the problem is that the creation of the proclaimed green elements is not guaranteed in any way, because the regulatory instruments on brownfields in Prague, usually represented by the *spatial study*, have limited capacity in this respect.

Again, foreign examples are used as an argument in the discussion of densification. Vienna is a typical representative. Whoever uses the Austrian capital as an example, it is used as "better" city than Prague and the desired destination for the Czech capital. The topic may be affordable housing and developer contributions, climate and transport policies, or hectare density. However, the ability of the Austrian metropolis to benefit significantly from private development in terms of increasing subsidized or municipal housing stock is also emphasized somewhat less. For Prague, low density is primarily an economic argument:

¹⁵⁷ „Rozvoj Prahy bude směřovat především dovnitř města“. 2018. MF Dnes, 18th June 2018.

Prague is a very sparse city. It has an average density of only 24 inhabitants per hectare, which is low compared to other cities such as Vienna (41) or Milan (73). And according to Roman Koucký, the creator of the Metropolitan Plan, it is actually a wonder that Prague can function economically at this density and not yet go bankrupt.

[Praha je velmi řídké město. Má v průměru hustotu jen 24 obyvatel na hektar, což je ve srovnání s jinými městy jako Vídeň (41) nebo Milán (73) málo. A například podle tvůrce Metropolitního plánu Romana Kouckého je vlastně s podivem, že Praha dokáže při této hustotě ekonomicky fungovat a ještě nezkrachovala.]¹⁵⁸

Actors IIX: Ondřej Boháč - Director of the Institute of Planning and Development (IPR)

Boháč is one of the most discursively active actors in the dataset, regularly providing interviews and statements. Through the lens of dominant ideology analysis, at first glance, he does not make a strong impression. Perhaps all the more interesting is the relatively passive manner of his actorial (re)production performativity. It contains hegemonic premises less visibly, implicit within the content of the message, and framed by a democratic humanist ethos.

Like Petr Hlaváček, Boháč shapes his discursive image on the impression of "reasonableness," conciliation, and empathy, on the discursive attempt to conceive problems *rationally* and to solve them in the same way. He discursively shapes the values of his personality. His membership in the Scouts¹⁵⁹ and the fact that he is a bell-ringer at the Týn Cathedral in Old Town Square (which evokes cultural and historical sentiment and an impression of *belonging to the place*) are repeatedly emphasized in the media. The formation of a noble humanist value mix in conjunction with his personality gives the performativity of hegemonic patterns a new charge. The performativity of hegemony, like the capitalist system, takes specific cultural values and usurps them for its own benefit. The connection reinforces the process of *unrecognition* and the impression of *naturally occurring discourses* and *neutrality*. In Boháč's case, in

¹⁵⁸ „Hustý město“. 2018. Euro, 18th June 2018.

¹⁵⁹ Czech youth organization, which is famous for its emphasis on humanistic values, honesty, health and ecology.

our data - alongside the common belief in necessary construction as a solution to problems - this is strongly manifested in two themes: urban densification and the role of local governments in spatial planning (concerning the new building law).

Boháč puts himself in the role of an understanding actor who is above the fray, has the experience, and has the task of finding a new trust between the city's governing institutions, the private sector, and the public. The discursive 'value' motivations for specific actions refer to the element of *selflessness* set out by the theory, which is also present in some other political or non-political dominant actors. The theme of finding trust and opening up dialogues was also evident in the debate on the Metropolitan Plan.

“So, first of all, I guess it needs to be said that we're glad that people are commenting on the plan. It's a standard part of the process, and we're glad they're involved in discussing such an important document for Prague.”

[“Tak, primárně asi je potřeba říci, že my jsme rádi, že lidé připomínají ten plán. Je to standardní součást toho procesu a jsme rádi, že se zapojí do toho projednání takhle důležitého dokumentu pro Prahu.”](Ondřej Boháč)¹⁶⁰

Densification became the dominant theme for Boháč. In the context of comparing Prague with positive foreign urban planning practices, the director repeatedly mentions the low hectare density of Prague and its economic impact on the sustainable functioning of the city.¹⁶¹ The problem is that, as with other topics, densification is a complex problem that can manifest itself differently from the perspective of healthy urbanism. We should densify brownfield sites in a different way and with different parameters than, for example, a solitary plot of land adjacent to a conservation area. However, technical urban planning considerations play a minor role compared to the fact that in the context of hegemonic performativity, densification serves primarily as a generally produced alibi for permitting private development projects that provide minimal benefit to the city and its residents.

¹⁶⁰ „Události v regionech - Praha (Metropolitní plán Prahy)“. 2018. Česká televize, 26th June 2018.

¹⁶¹ In the context of hectare density, it should be noted that there are differences in the density of administrative boundaries - Prague has a number of former villages within its administrative boundaries, separated by large undeveloped land and fields.

In conjunction with a discursively presented personal value framework, Boháč's narratives further employ similar sentiments, for example, in Prague's historic preservation context. The IPR director repeatedly develops a discourse on urban densification in a sensitive way that protects Prague's historical value but rejects some actors' conservatism. This is where the aforementioned bringing of "world architecture" to Prague is manifested, which for Boháč forms part of the argumentative apparatus (he defines himself against soulless architecture, architecture is a *value*). However, even in the context of projects by renowned architects, in some cases, he has expressed himself in a counter-discursive manner (e.g., in the case of the change of the spatial plan in Žižkov for Eva Jiřičná's towers project for the Central Group), as well as at other times he emphasizes the need to address the public benefits of new projects, which makes him a hegemonically inconsistent actor, such as it is the case of Deputy Mayor Hlaváček and some other actors.

Boháč narratively contributed to hegemonic polarization and the production of binary oppositions between development actors in the context of monuments. The binary division of the "professional public" (with Boháč representing the right side - the side that is in favor of "healthy development") de facto replicates the hegemonic principles of *provision of access* that the dominant actors in the field reproduce.

“On the issue of Prague's city center, the problem is not the attitude of UNESCO, but the lack of consensus on how it should be developed. One group of experts rejects any change, while the other advocates a living and developing city,” said Ondřej Boháč, director of the Prague Institute of Planning and Development (IPR).

[„V otázce centra Prahy není problém v postoji organizace UNESCO, ale v chybějící shodě na tom, jak by se mělo rozvíjet. Jedna skupina odborníků odmítá jakoukoliv změnu, druhá prosazuje životné a vyvíjející se město,“ řekl ředitel pražského Institutu plánování a rozvoje (IPR) Ondřej Boháč.]¹⁶²

Boháč's relationship with UNESCO is problematic and in line with the hegemonic approach produced by IPR. On the one hand, UNESCO represents

¹⁶² „Šéf pražského institutu rozvoje: Chybí shoda na rozvoji Prahy“. 2019. Nasregion.cz, 28th October 2019. Available at: <https://nasregion.cz/praha/sef-prazskeho-institutu-rozvoje-chybi-shoda-na-rozvoji-prahy>

the cultural-historical sentiments that Boháč often works with and which shape his *attachment to place* (Altmann, Low 1992), i.e., to a large extent, also legitimizes his position as IPR director. At the same time, however, there is a necessary confrontation with dominant development narratives. In the context of the rather critical report of the 2019 UNESCO monitoring mission to Prague, Boháč asks "*why UNESCO does not address mass tourism,*" which is the real problem of Prague and the one the metropolis needs the most help to solve. Implicitly, this also means that Prague, on the other hand, does not need someone from a conservationist position to fit into its development policies.

In the context of the Building Act, Boháč has become one of the main mediators of local governments' counter-discourses against the new legislation, which was supposed to take away municipal competencies in spatial planning. He thus undermined the dominant discourse led by the MMR and Minister Dostálová. However, as I have already indicated, part of this initiative was an effort to maintain the structural power division of competencies in spatial planning, which practically makes sense, but at the same time shows the spillover of dominance between the different levels of public administration, as well as the efforts of dominant actors to strengthen their position within their level and thus maintain their sphere of influence.

Boháč has also come to represent those parameters of domination that refer to a dysfunctional system. In the context of Prague's local government, this was quite often manifested. Councillor Hana Marvanová repeatedly complained about the competencies of Prague in the context of Airbnb; Deputy Hlaváček complained about the limited intervention possibilities of the local government in regulatory mechanisms of planning and negotiations with developers, etc. Thus, sometimes slightly paradoxical narratives become part of the complex hegemonic system, where the political leadership laments that it cannot adequately address the situation (typically reinforcing the hegemonic division of actor positions).

"But we are also experiencing a great frustration: our local government has extremely limited options to solve all these problems. The city's statement towards investors is not binding; they can throw it in the trash," Boháč complains.

[„Ale my také zažíváme velkou frustraci: naše samospráva má krajně omezené možnosti, jak všechny ty problémy řešit. Vyjádření města směrem k investorům není závazné, můžou ho hodit do koše,“ stěžuje si Boháč.]¹⁶³

In other cases - such as the lengthy building permits - developers (and consequently virtually all the actors involved) complain about a dysfunctional administrative decision-making and planning system that prevents them from building. In some cases, this is also linked to the inappropriate *provision of access* by unwanted actors (typically associations or certain public institutions), which delays the processes. However, references to a dysfunctional system are - quite logically - also used in the counter-narratives of subversive actors. For us, this may imply that reference to the system is a particular ideological feature, and that hegemony (as I have suggested here several times) is often performative outside the systemic structural axes established, for example, by law or established official procedures.

We must emphasize that the IPR and its performative role is far from being constituted only by the person of Director Boháč. The institution has hundreds of employees in various positions and thematically divided departments. A relatively significant performative role lies in how public events, panels, and presentations are moderated at CAMP and in the institution's expert staff range. Many of them, at lower levels, become (re)producers of the aforementioned hegemonic premises and principles.

6. Cases

The discourse around urban development in Prague is multi-layered. The theoretical, conceptual, or technical discussions and parameters have their concrete performative form in specific construction cases. Development is actorically practiced and performed, but it is also discursively described. The discourse has a fundamental impact on the reality of the solution and, as a result, is inscribed in the physical and social form of the city. Within the corpus analyzed, there were local and city-wide cases. However, we see the most frequent discursive representation in transformation

¹⁶³ „Praha: město, kde se o dostupném bydlení zatím hlavně mluví“. 2020. A2Iarm.cz, 30th October 2020. Available at: <https://a2Iarm.cz/2020/10/praha-mesto-kde-se-o-dostupnem-bydleni-zatim-hlavne-mluvi/>

sites and brownfields. The selected cases correspond to the coding and thematic frequencies of occurrences, and further deepen some of the previously described characteristics of ideological domination and its (re)production. Causes of Prague's development are produced and further narrativized in large numbers each year. However, the following four cases describe and further illustrate the most important principles of the phenomena under investigation. Quite possibly this is because, in real terms, the most discussed cases in the period under review were the ones that had a pivotal influence on the development of the debate and its content - all of which are still being addressed today, either in the ongoing planning debate or in the context of the construction of their next phases.

6. 1. *Bubny-Zátory*

The transformation of a brownfield in Prague's Holešovice - one of the central residential districts of Prague - has become a pilot example of a new approach to "unblocking" construction under the new leadership of Deputy Mayor Hlaváček. The area around the former railway station represents the most extensive and quite possibly the most valuable transformation area in Prague, which, like most land, has been gradually affected by extensive privatization. From the beginning, the city management must take into account the ownership division of the area and the existing guarantees set out in the spatial plan in its planning concept. Historically, the various solution options culminated in a draft spatial study published in the fall of 2019 to serve as the basis for the spatial plan amendment. It lays out a specific plan for a new neighborhood for 25,000 people.

Across narratives, the discussion around the study was significantly framed by specific technical details, from transportation solutions to public space, and density to climate considerations. From dominant positions, the narratives are shaped by sentiments of a 'modern' and 'competitive' city that is 'developing' (a central hegemonic characteristic of *modernity*). Framing by new public buildings that add prestige to the neighborhood also played a significant role.

"The aim is to create a new urban district that meets the demands of the 21st century, sufficiently equipped with schools, kindergartens, medical and social care facilities, and opportunities for leisure activities and work," the IPR promotional

materials state. In the leaflet, we also read that a new philharmonic hall (near today's Vltavská metro) and a Holocaust memorial (near today's Bubny railway station) should be built in Bubny. Emphasis is placed on the quality of public space, sufficient green space, and overall adaptation to climate change. In practice, this should mean the economical use of rainwater or the obligation to build green roofs.

[„Cílem je vytvořit novou městskou čtvrť odpovídající nárokům 21. století, dostatečně vybavenou školami, školkami, zařízeními lékařské a sociální péče, příležitostmi pro volnočasové aktivity a práci,“ stojí v propagačních materiálech IPRu. V letáku se také dočteme, že v Bubnech by měla stát nová filharmonie (u dnešní Vltavské) a památník holokaustu (u dnešního nádraží Bubny). Důraz se klade na kvalitu veřejného prostoru, dostatek zeleně a celkovou adaptaci na klimatické změny. V praxi by to mělo znamenat hospodárné nakládání s dešťovou vodou nebo povinnost stavět zelené střechy.]¹⁶⁴

The hegemonic treatment of the conceptual parameters of the "living neighborhood for people," which is an "opportunity," shows a specific latency and unobserved performativity of the dominant ideology, which discursively (again, in the hegemonic form of *neutrality* and *naturalness* as part of the process of *unrecognition*) presents an urbanistically functional healthy city. Still, a closer look at the expert documents raises uncertainties. The presentation slogans were counter-discursively challenged by a coalition of NGOs and a group of local residents with expert (and partly political) backgrounds. The legal position of the spatial study, which is not binding, is another problem that illustrates the hegemonic *discursive practice*, and what the spatial plan ultimately determines is crucial. Counter-discourses work with an unconditional hegemonic notion of development and focus on its specific dimensions, notably high density, the enforceability of blue-green infrastructure climate measures, transport solutions, or the form of public spaces. A significant chapter was the planned giant shopping center, which in counter-discourses, threatens the functional commercial parterre in the rest of the neighborhood (forming a hard-to-beat competition). A hegemonic specificity for virtually all of Prague's brownfields is the normative assumption that the proportion of housing in new neighborhoods will in itself bring

¹⁶⁴ „V Praze vznikne nová čtvrť. Bude se v ní dobře žít, nebo poslouží hlavně developerům?“. 2019. A2larm.cz, 2nd October 2019. Available at: <https://a2larm.cz/2019/10/v-praze-vznikne-nova-ctvrt-bude-se-v-ni-dobre-zit-nebo-poslouzi-hlavne-developerum/>

about alleviation of the deepening housing crisis and is discursively presented as a victory.

"We have a great opportunity to create a functional neighborhood that responds to the city's current needs - especially the housing shortage. Housing should therefore make up at least 60% of the total, which we managed to write into the study's brief," Hlaváček adds.

[„Máme skvělou příležitost vytvořit funkční čtvrť, která reaguje na aktuální potřeby města – zejména nedostatek bydlení. Bydlení by proto mělo tvořit alespoň 60 %, což se nám podařilo propsat do zadání studie,“ dodává Hlaváček.]¹⁶⁵

Contextually unique was the participatory program for the public in Bubny, which included, among other things, information stands, public walks in the area, and information materials. The process was also narratively praised by representatives of the aforementioned counter-discursive coalition, but only up to the settlement phase, which, on the contrary, proved to be a formalistic element of the whole process and received discursive criticism. Public participation in the case of Bubny portrays a particular hegemonic dimension, based on the discursive and practical development of specific value assumptions concerning the new neighborhood, but which de facto function from the outset as a kind of obscuring element that distracts attention from the fundamental principles of regulation, and which in the end does not play a role, as the settlement process proved.¹⁶⁶

In the case of Bubny, there has been a hegemonic process of erosion of trust between various power-wielding actors, which even some hegemonic actors - such as the director of IPR Boháč - otherwise refer to themselves as a negative aspect of Prague planning. The well-managed process of the presentation of the study was radically degraded by the settlement phase, which was practically not publicly commented on. The dominant narratives further develop the specific positive values of the study ("there will be more green space", "we respect the monuments in the area"), but do not point out the persistent problems and specific questions within the actor

¹⁶⁵ „Praha už ví, jak budou vypadat nové Bubny, stavět se začne do 5 let“. 2019. Praha7.cz, 11th June 2019. Available at: <https://www.praha7.cz/praha-uz-vi-jak-budou-vypadat-nove-bubny-stavet-se-zacne-do-5-let/>

¹⁶⁶ Settlement protocols were placed in an almost untraceable place on the municipality's website, and objections to the settlement method were referred to in the sense that it was still possible to comment on the spatial plan change itself.

practice are answered rather by reference to the follow-up process. The hegemonic opposition to the critique of participation also consisted in some cases of the fact that the study was consulted "beyond the law" (the law does not require public consultation for spatial studies), which acts as a universal alibi against not only procedural but also substantive criticism.

The thwarted participation process became the counter-discursive core of the topic, from which the substantive critique of the revised draft study was derived. This was, in some cases, framed by an anti-capitalist sentiment that otherwise - in the spirit of the identified *self-censoring* performative elements of hegemony - does not occur very often.

The ideological concept of the Institute of Planning and Development is based on the belief in the flexibility of rules, deregulation, and the invisible hand of the market that will make everything happen.

[Ideologická koncepce Institutu plánování a rozvoje vychází z víry ve flexibilitu pravidel, deregulaci a neviditelnou ruku trhu, která vše zařídí.]¹⁶⁷

6. 2. *Žižkov Freight Station (Nákladové nádraží Žižkov)*

In February 2021, the discussion of the so-called baseline study and regulatory masterplan for this important area on the border of the popular residential districts of Žižkov and Malešice took place. As in the case of Bubny, there have historically been many discussions about the future use of the former freight station and adjacent land. Several studies in different variants were made, but none of them were implemented. The dilapidated historic building has been used as a cultural venue, at the site was also once an autonomous center, and various companies have had warehouse space there for a long time. Over the years, the land in the area has been sold off to various developers. A baseline study for a change in the spatial plan to enable the resulting transformation was created at the IPR and published in 2021. However, again, the study was only produced following discussions with investors, and only the final product was presented to the public.

¹⁶⁷ „Nová čtvrť Holešovice-Bubny: dostupné bydlení pro Pražany, nebo další zisky miliardářům?“. 2021. A2larm.cz, 1st February 2021. Available at: <https://a2larm.cz/2021/02/nova-ctvrt-holesovice-bubny-dostupne-bydleni-pro-prazany-nebo-dalsi-zisky-miliardarum/>

Although IPR prepared events to acquaint the public with the plans, the actual discussion of the so-called master plan took place in a rather unfortunate hybrid form during the period of the covid-19, and its "participatory" dimension gave a rather tragicomic impression, where both emotional and very factual questions were mixed with the cluelessness of the presenters, who were unable to respond to the criticism. The case of the freight station showed a typical feature of the *discursive practice* of urban institutions, which focuses on prioritizing the needs of investors without specific strong visions and demands of the city.¹⁶⁸ Public involvement was carried out in a rather formal way. The city is once again in a position where it is teetering on the edge of how much compromise it will make in relation to both the public and investors (and itself).

"But the good news is that at least some participation has taken place (and will continue to take place) within the limits of what is possible, and moreover, we are significantly further along in terms of finding an agreement in the area because we are already negotiating directly with developers about their participation in the construction of nurseries, schools, parks, and the like," the municipal councilor for urban development wrote to the *Pražský deník*.

[„Ale dobrá zpráva je, že v rámci možností alespoň nějaká participace probíhala (a bude probíhat), a navíc jsme významně dále z hlediska hledání dohody v území, protože s developery již přímo jednáme o jejich spoluúčasti na výstavbě školek, školy, parků a podobně,“ napsal Pražskému deníku magistrátní radní pro územní rozvoj.]¹⁶⁹

However, as the quote also shows, the brownfield has become one of the pilot areas where developers should systematically participate in public investments through contracts and put the *methodology of contributions* into practice. This is progress compared to the preparation of other transition areas. Still, on the other hand, the amount of contributions in total does not by far reach the actual public costs, and the distribution of the finances leaves the emergence of subsidized housing basically

¹⁶⁸ Here, of course, it depends on the point of view. One view may be that the city articulates its visions and demands sufficiently; another (which I present here) may identify in it the performative nature of the dominant ideology, which through the processes described - unrecognition, naturally occurring discourses, normativity, neutrality, expert framing, etc. - functions as a powerfully (re)productive neoliberal practice.

¹⁶⁹ „Co vyroste na nákladovém nádraží? Žižkovští zatím luští plánovací „newspeak“. 2021. Denik.cz, 8th February 2021. Available at: https://prazsky.denik.cz/zpravy_region/nakladove-nadrazi-zizkov-zmena-uzemni-plan-participace-newspeak-developeri.html

neglected. Thus, only unaffordable, expensive housing will be built for the most part. Deputy Hlaváček became the producer of some misleading statements that reinforced the process of *unrecognition* and *selflessness* - for example, when he claimed that the Prague administration would only allow the change of the zoning plan if it collected enough funds in contributions.

In the case of Žižkov, participation has also become a kind of procedural alibi that justifies the public administration's approach to negotiating the conditions in the area, although, in the overall context, the negotiation of developers' compensation is progress. The approach to collecting public comments and the settlement process was very formalistic, as in the case of Bubny, which fulfills the character and culture of participation as a "forced evil". Participation is done in a top-down manner, and the resulting role of IPR is more likely to mean cheap promo for private investors and the "appeasement" of the public, which has also been discussed. The formalistic nature of the dominant actors' approach to participation was evidenced by the extremely short comment period. It is hypothesized that a certain site-specific form of public participation in Prague can be linked to the post-socialist character of social space, in which a number of theoretical characteristics (privatization, zombie socialism, culture and imagination of housing, the role of public administration, etc.) have a performative role that shapes the actual capacity for participation.

Unpleasant confrontations between Prague residents, IPR experts, and politicians make visible not only the shortcomings in the way IPR organizes public participation in neighborhood planning. But these should be noted by an institution that is more used to presenting and promoting than opening up discussion. It is painful to witness moments when residents horrified that in a few years they will be living in a neighborhood changed beyond recognition, and sour or concerned city representatives convinced that they have done the best possible job torpedoed by ill-informed people, are pitted against each other.

[Nepříjemné konfrontace obyvatel Prahy, odborníků z IPRu a politiků tak zviditelňují nejen nedostatky v tom, jak IPR organizuje zapojení veřejnosti do plánování čtvrtí. Ty by ale instituce, která je zvyklá spíš prezentovat a propagovat než otevírat diskuzi, měla vzít na vědomí. Je bolestivé přihlížet momentům, kdy proti sobě stojí obyvatelé zděšení z toho, že budou za pár let žít ve čtvrti změněné

k nepoznání, a nakvašení nebo dotčení zástupci města přesvědčení o tom, že odvedli nejlepší možnou práci, kterou špatně informovaní lidé torpédují.]¹⁷⁰

While the typical dominant narrative is that local government is doing its best, it is still not even halfway to the good foreign practice that dominant public administration actors often shield themselves with. Again, part of the performativity of hegemony here is the otherwise implicit normative assumption of development as an unconditional necessity that will also serve as a (putative) solution to the housing crisis. As in Bubny, creating new housing without any other characteristic (i.e., housing by private developers) is hegemonically discursively presented as a success. An interesting performative role was played by the design of a 70-meter tower adjacent to the station building, which did not have a clear function in the study's design. It was more a particular performative element of the normative value conception of architecture as part of hegemony that I have already described.

Counter-discursively, a discursive coalition formed within the data analyzed (which, incidentally, only falls within the one month around the study's discussion), consisting of residents in conjunction with NGOs, and which gradually succeeded in negotiating some specific changes in the planned regulation. Some representatives of the Prague 3 municipality played an important role. For example, the representative for the Greens, Matěj Žaloudek, discursively postulates some distinctive specifics (which further reveal the hegemonic nature of the negotiation according to our theory):¹⁷¹

"Everything is presented in a planning 'newspeak' that a non-expert can hardly understand. It cannot be assumed that it is in the power of individuals to follow the whole process only through documents posted on the official notice board."

[„Vše je představeno v územně plánovacím 'newspeaku', ve kterém se laik sotva může vyznat. Nelze přece předpokládat, že je v silách jednotlivců celý proces

¹⁷⁰ „Bude tam jen to, co nadiktoval developer?“ Žižkovští chtějí ovlivnit vývoj své čtvrti“. 2021. A2larm.cz, 19th February 2021. Available at: <https://a2larm.cz/2021/02/bude-tam-jen-to-co-nadiktoval-developer-zizkovsti-chteji-ovlivnit-vyvoj-sve-ctvrti/>

¹⁷¹ The specificity of the clash between the two actor positions in the field (Žaloudek and Deputy Hlaváček) was the inclusion of political affiliation in the mutual accusations of previous inaction. Hlaváček criticized the Green Deputy Kolínská for not commissioning the preparation of the spatial study (and thus delegitimizing Žaloudek's position), while on the level of the municipal district Prague 3, there was criticism of the previous leadership of Mayor Hujová from Hlaváček's TOP 09.

sledovat pouze prostřednictvím dokumentů vyvěšovaných na úřední desku.“](Matěj Michalk Žaloudek, Green Party, Prague 3)¹⁷²

Within the counter-narratives, terms such as ensuring a 'social mix' for the healthy functioning of new neighborhood appear in the data, emerging in response to low (or zero) regulation of price levels of new housing. As elsewhere, green space and its lack of definition becomes a universal counter-value. A significant discursive role was played by creating a new street, the so-called Jarovska Avenue (Jarovská třída), which is supposed to increase the share of car traffic in the neighborhood. This became a strong counter-narrative, especially from the residents in the area.

Individual automobile traffic is another specific example of a hegemonic normative idea of the functioning of the city, which has historically been inscribed in urban planning in the USA, for example, and Prague, in particular, has largely adopted Western assumptions about car ownership as a manifestation of individual freedom under capitalism. This idea has also taken root in some structural frameworks, for example, in the form of parking minimums in new developments. For the time being, the newly planned districts in Prague also necessarily produce new roads and new car loads.¹⁷³

6. 3. Masaryk railway station (*Masarykovo nádraží*)

The case of the construction project in the heart of Prague near the historical building of Masaryk Station illustrates the weak negotiating position of the public administration vis-à-vis the private sector and the related influence of dominant actors on the shaping of urban space. It is an example of the hegemonic interplay of procedural circumstances, political negotiations and constellations, and the dominant influence of private actors.

The unused land near the station was once bought out of state hands by Penta, a company famous for several scandals (including mentions in connection with the murder of journalist Ján Kuciak in Slovakia and corruption cases). The company built

¹⁷² „Co vyroste na nákladovém nádraží? Žižkovští zatím luští plánovací „newspeak“. 2021. Denik.cz, 8th February 2021. Available at: https://prazsky.denik.cz/zpravy_region/nakladove-nadrazi-zizkov-zmena-uzemni-plan-participace-newspeak-developeri.html

¹⁷³ The issue of parking or, for example, the completion of Prague's motorway ring roads are generally becoming hegemonically strong in the context of transport construction solutions.

a new headquarters in the Florentinum project near the concerned land (which, incidentally, also houses the Havel & Partners law firm that drafted the new Building Act). Subsequently, Penta published a plan for the Central Business District project (based on a design by architect Zaha Hadid), which included several buildings on both sides of the North-South arterial road (so-called *magistrála*), the busiest automobile thoroughfare in the city and a relic of socialist planning sometimes referred to as a "scar" on the face of Prague. The framing of the entire project in the name of a renowned (and strongly neoliberal) architectural studio is one of the hallmarks of the case. The emphasis on the *architectural value* of the project functioned as hegemonic tinsel and a decisive contribution to the debate on bringing world architecture to Prague, reinforcing the position of the project itself.¹⁷⁴

The entire project underwent an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), in which some civic associations also participated and submitted comments. This should have guaranteed their participation (based on the applicable legislative rules) in the subsequent procedures. However, the project was phased in the spirit of the *salami slicing* method, with the first phase in close proximity to the station getting a new name and several minor changes to the parameters. That resulted in the project not officially following the EIA, and thus also excluding the public and NGOs from the follow-up procedure. Only the legal parties to the proceedings (companies and institutions that own neighboring properties) were notified in writing by the construction authority of the commencement of the planning procedure. This sparked an intense public debate in which civil associations and some experts pointed out procedural fouls and initiated legal action to enforce their right to participate in the process. Arnika sued the authorities' procedure in court, which even issued an interim order that the project could not start until it had decided. However, the building authority managed to expeditiously permit the project, which made the court's decision a mere formal opinion without legal force. The ombudsman Křeček subsequently commented critically on the case, and city officials, including IPR director Boháč and Mayor Hřib, also expressed reservations.

¹⁷⁴ The reality, however, is that Jakub Cígler architects prepared the documentation for the zoning procedure, and the real Zaha Hadid's contribution is thus only speculation, which had mainly a discursive and symbolic effect.

Under the leadership of Deputy Mayor Hlaváček, Prague decided to resolve the situation by concluding a memorandum with Penta, which guaranteed the investor that the municipality, as a party to the proceedings, would not appeal against the procedure, thus enabling its implementation. In exchange for this, the city negotiated some guarantees from the investor, such as the organization of an architectural competition for the project's next phases, a mandatory housing share (again presented as a success), or contributions to the related public space improvements. In the context of a multi-billion investment, however, this was again more of a sop and a public justification of the situation:

"Unfortunately, the city lost crucial bargaining power in 2017 when it negotiated the coefficients for development in the area. The previous coalition had much more ability to pressure the developer and set demands. Unfortunately, this did not happen. For our part, we managed to negotiate the maximum."

[„Město bohužel ztratilo zásadní vyjednávací možnosti už v roce 2017, kdy se jednalo o koeficientech pro výstavbu v této oblasti. Minulá koalice měla mnohem větší možnosti tlačit na developera a určovat si požadavky. To se bohužel nestalo. Za nás se podařilo vyjednat maximum.“](Zdeněk Hřib, Mayor of Prague)¹⁷⁵

The political situation at the Prague 1 City Hall played a role. After the 2018 elections, a progressive coalition led by human rights attorney Pavel Čížinský was formed there in cooperation with the Pirate Party and the Green Party. It represented a significant opposing force to Penta's plans. At the beginning of 2020, a political upheaval occurred at the town hall, which caused Čížinský's dismissal and the return of the former mayor Petr Hejma (STAN, formerly ODS), to the leadership of the district. Penta applied for a zoning permit just a few days after the change in the political division of power at the town hall.

"After long negotiations, we reached an agreement on which the investor will provide funds for the development of the district. At the same time, we will gain a pleasant public space and leave an example of quality modern architecture for future generations," says Hejma. The municipal district also denies that its building authority acted incorrectly in considering the zoning decision.

¹⁷⁵ „Plán Penty proráží odpor“. 2020. MF Dnes, 18th May 2020.

[„Po dlouhém jednání se nám podařilo dosáhnout dohody, na základě které poskytne investor finanční prostředky do rozvoje městské části. Zároveň získáme příjemný veřejný prostor a budoucím generacím zanecháme ukázkou kvalitní moderní architektury," říká Hejma. Městská část zároveň odmítá, že by její stavební úřad při projednávání územního rozhodnutí postupoval nesprávně.]¹⁷⁶

The entire process indicates a confluence of behind-the-scenes connections that resulted in the project. Compared to other cases, it makes the practices of the wild period of transformation in the 1990s seem a little more reminiscent. It was accompanied by non-transparency, bypassing legal procedures and the public, and represents a specific example of a performative hegemonic practice that creates bureaucratic and procedural loops in which the power interplay of actor-capitals gradually displaces hierarchically inferior actors.

Penta has built its narratives on emphasizing its contribution to the cultivation of public spaces and social accountability. The spatial layout illustrates the division of roles - on the north side of the station, an office building is being built with the discursively presented stamp of a famous architect, while on the south side, Penta is building a billion-crown hotel. The state-owned railway company (with state funds) will create a link between the two in the form of a track re-roofing.

Prominent city officials have resorted to the use of discursive tactics of referring to the specifics of the permitting system, about which they cannot do anything from their positions. Another option was advocating a necessary compromise based on the need to resolve the dismal state of the area with an essential investment. The normative role of the official language, which evaluates the legal assumptions of the permitting process and represents the ultimate truth that defines the situation, has played an important role. This constituted a discursive and procedural block to the actions of city officials, who resorted to drafting a memorandum that could guarantee "at least something."

The discursive and procedural practice of oppositional actors was bound to the hegemonic order and the official technical vocabulary, and although, in some cases, discursive relevance was attributed to it, the decisions of the building authorities played the most important role. At some moments, spokespersons re-entered the case with

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

their specific attributes. The civil associations learned about the zoning procedure only through informal ties within the discursive coalition formed with opposing district councilors. This illustrates the nature of the whole case, in which a particular set of hegemonic actor-relationships was formed that ultimately enabled the project to be implemented, while at the same time being able to generate the necessary defensive discursive mechanisms that highlighted the legality (and therefore democratic nature) of the process and the social benefits of the project.

A specific discursive role in the case (as in some other Prague cases) was played by the Czech Television investigative program *Nedej se!*, which has long been one of the subversive media voices. The format of the investigative television reportage shows a specific example of *counter-hegemonic practice*, which allows for the inclusion of non-verbal performative elements - for example, when in the program about the case, the reporter chases the fleeing Deputy Hlaváček in the premises of the town hall, jumps into the moving elevator behind him and asks him for a statement.

6. 4. *Miloš Forman Square (Náměstí Miloše Formana)*

A rather minor case related to the reconstruction of the brutalist InterContinental Hotel and the revitalization of the surrounding land on the Vltava River embankment in the center of Prague has become a picture of a real discursive battle. The hotel and adjacent land were bought in 2018 by the investment group R2G, associated with the Czech software firm Avast. Subsequently, the company presented a plan for the reconstruction and revitalization of the surrounding area under the name *Staroměstská brána* (The Old Town gate). Part of the project was also the intention to build a glass building called “brandstore” with the sale of luxury goods on the so-called piazzetta (square in front of the hotel).

The data showed the development of discourses over time and the project's interconnection with the broader context of urban planning. In 2018, narratives emerged in connection with the Metropolitan Plan, which proposed to develop the piazza. In the data, a specific actor appears to be the then mayor of Prague 1, Oldřich Lomecký (TOP 09), who was later indicted in a case of sales of municipal flats. Lomecký first appeared as a local patriot who publicly spoke out against the development of the piazzetta (he even had his picture taken wearing a T-shirt with the

words "stop the construction" on it). However, both the district and Lomecký soon took the position that it was "impossible" not to build on the piazza, and it was only a question of what capacity of the development could be negotiated. Hegemonic performativity was manifested in the inevitability of the situation. If it is "impossible" not to stop construction, it is not possible mainly because of pressure from dominant actors.

Subsequently, the new owner of R2G came up with a comprehensive reconstruction plan involving opening part of the previously inaccessible outdoor spaces of the hotel to the public. The reward for this "public service" was to be a glass brandstore building. The fundamental problem with the brandstore project was that the rules of the current zoning plan did not allow the square to be built on. Nevertheless, key authorities agreed to the project, which the investor discursively emphasized (and purely procedurally, in the end, it does not matter what kind of debate the project has, as long as it meets the official requirements). However, the performativity of the official machinery has led to a discursive uproar in the media and at various public events.

The case formed a subversive discursive coalition. This included political actors (the Čížinský brothers - Jan, mayor of Prague 7, and Pavel, mayor and later councilor of Prague 1), active local residents with the expert help of lawyers and the support of prominent personalities, as well as non-profit organizations such as Klub Za starou Prahu or Arnika. The latter came into conflict with the investor when the media described the project as a "black building," based on Arnika's press release. Pavel Čížinský used a similar discursive approach, which resulted in the investor suing the politician (Arnika was only threatened through a pre-litigation notice). Here again, the lawsuits functioned as part of a hegemonic practice.¹⁷⁷

The case is interesting for its specific actor linkages, which were often used from hegemonic positions as a tool to delegitimize subversive positions. The Čížinský brothers acted out the motivations of their attachment to place, which they repeatedly developed discursively. In contrast, from dominant positions, the place attachment of political counteractors was used to accuse them of a non-conceptual NIMBY approach.

¹⁷⁷ Subversive actors use legal tools and lawsuits in a similar way. Thus, it is not a purely hegemonic tool, but rather a meta-ideological tool of actorial practice.

The performative positions of the two brothers, and subsequently especially Jan, led to the fact that the Prague municipality eventually took a negative opinion to the project.

"Both politicians (Pavel is an ex-mayor of the central city district, and Jan is one of the municipal leaders) grew up in the neighboring Maisel Street; they used to kick a ball around in today's Forman Square and ride scooters. Their mother still lives in an apartment overlooking the site."

[„Oba politici (Pavel je exstarosta centrální městské části a Jan jeden z magistrátních lídrů) vyrůstali v sousední Maiselově ulici, na dnešním Formanově náměstí si kopali s míčem, jezdili na koloběžkách. V bytě s výhledem na inkriminované místo dodnes bydlí jejich matka.“]¹⁷⁸

The case has been strongly counter-discursively reported by the media from the Borgis group, in particular *Právo* and *Novinky.cz*. The reason for this was again portrayed from hegemonic positions - the property ties of the editor-in-chief of *Právo* Porybný in the locality. It depicts the specifics of ownership in central Prague (the locality is a few hundred meters from Old Town Square), where otherwise quite privileged actors with high possession of capitals are, in reality, put in the position of neighborhood defenders. In this case, NIMBY becomes a strange, more resistant coalition that is a bit more difficult to label. This is because it has the reach of influential media, the ability to make arguments, and solid political positions and connections. Again, this demonstrates the ability to overlay the performativity of hegemony. The framing of NIMBY was mainly resorted to by the representatives of the investor; the city institutions, which otherwise do not go far for the NIMBY label and related sentiments, not only refrained from it here, but eventually the pressure of the local subversive (but capital-powerful) actors caused the IPR to be tasked with correcting the mistakes made by the Department of Urban Development and (also procedurally) opposing the construction.

The investor attempted to gain public support by commissioning a "public opinion poll" from STEM/MARK agency. Although the results were positive for the project, R2G discursively failed to defend the relevance; on the contrary, opponents of the construction repeatedly pointed to the biased, distorting concept of the survey,

¹⁷⁸ „Kocourkov, nebo spíš Palermo? Občané se bouří proti „černé“ stavbě u hotelu“. 2021. *Denik.cz*, 18th February 2021. Available at: https://prazsky.denik.cz/zpravy_region/staromestska-brana-obcane-prahy-1-stavba-hotel-intercontinental-parizska.html

which de facto could not even provide other than a good picture of public opinion on the project.¹⁷⁹ The survey was one of the few opportunities for public participation. Municipal institutions played a passive role in moderating the process. One of the exceptions (apart from the counter-discursive role of the Čížinský brothers) was the mayor of Prague 1, Hejma. He became a relatively strong ally of the investor and subsequently organized a participation meeting with him. The meeting was literally called "Participation" and represented the typical hegemonic top-down approach of presenting the plan and answering questions without expecting anything more. Under Mayor Hejma, Prague 1 became more overtly hegemonic in its participation than some of the IPR public meetings.

R2G framed its advocacy for the project with a rather diverse set of tools. In their narratives, company representatives repeatedly stressed that this is a "Czech" and "family-owned" company, and that the goodwill to improve a valuable area of Prague with huge investments deserves public support.¹⁸⁰ Prague's "commercial prestige" would rise thanks to the project. The brandstore was presented as a necessity if the area around the InterContinental was to be improved. The revitalization was led as an unprecedented *selfless* approach by a private investor to a public space that should be rewarded. After all, the investor "has to get something out of it." The company framed the gradual increase in pressure against the project as an "encroachment on private property."

"In a crisis I would expect support for an investor, we want to spend 2.5 billion"

[„V krizi bych čekal podporu pro investora, chceme utratit 2,5 miliardy“](Oldřich Šlemr, R2G)¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Part of the survey included, for example, the question, "are you satisfied with the current appearance of the square?" The survey was conducted among 1,000 respondents, with only 2.3% of respondents living in Prague 1. The vast majority of respondents admitted to having marginal or no information about the project, and the questionnaire only made decisions based on a comparison of two identical views of the current and proposed situation. On a like/dislike basis, almost 60% of respondents liked the project.

¹⁸⁰ The emphasis on Czech ownership represents a mix of post-socialist sentiments and the specifics of "Czechness." It draws on a not entirely unique nationalistic tuning of land administration, which presents a public consensus that we do not want to sell off land to foreign owners. Czech ownership is a significant advantage that strengthens not only the Czech economy but, in a way, also the *national identity* - InterContinental remains in Czech hands. On the contrary, the company's presentation as "family" arouses sentiments and sympathies in the style of "what is small is nice." At the same time, it is a demarcation against the expectedly negatively perceived large investment companies.

¹⁸¹ „Pražští radní odmítli plánovanou stavbu u hotelu InterContinental. Podle developera je to protiprávní“. 2021. Ihned.cz, 8th February 2021. Available at: <https://domaci.ihned.cz/c1-66879940-prazsti-radni-odmitli-stavbu-hotelu-intercontinental-podle-developera-jde-protipravni-jednani>

While the hotel was undergoing renovations at the time of this writing, the fate of the brandstore had not been decided. However, the Ministry of Regional Development's rejection stood in its way.

As we have seen, discursive framing of various aspects of urban development in Prague gets various forms and shapes; however, specific ideologic features can be observed in them and contribute to reproduction of a certain dominant narratives. Conclusions can not be one sided, however, from my perspective, the findings show an interestingly broad scale of such cases, that communicate very well with the selected theoretical approaches, and thus, in practice, construct a specific ideology, that is able to reach dominance and reproduce itself within the field of actors. I present a summary of this process in the following final chapter.

9. Conclusion

The dissertation is devoted to uncovering the patterns of *dominant ideology* and its *reproduction* and *legitimization* in the planning and development of Prague. Through its theoretical and methodological approach, it significantly expands the existing field of knowledge in the study of post-socialist cities, contributing to the debate on the conceptualization of post-socialism (see, e.g., Tuvikene, 2016; Hirt, 2012; Chelcea and Druță, 2016; Gallinat, 2022; Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008; in the planning context Tsenkova, 2014; Hirt, 2015; Wiest, 2013, and many others) and the way "Western" theoretical concepts are used in the field (e.g. Soaita, 2019; Ferenčuhová and Gentile, 2016; Ouředníček, 2016; Rusiłowicz, 2015, and others). It extends the ways in which Pierre Bourdieu's concepts have been applied in urban studies so far (see, e.g., Mace, 2017; Savage, 2011, 2020, 2021; Mosselsson, 2020; Barton and Monfroy, 2010; Centner, 2008; Marom, 2014; Rérat and Lees, 2011; Wacquant, 2018, 2023, and others) as well as approaches to the role of ideology and domination in urban planning and development (e.g. Sager, 2015; Freund, 2014; Xue, 2022; Metzger et al, 2020; Grossi and Pianezzi, 2017; Goodfellow and Jackman, 2020, and others). It also emphasizes the importance of *discourse* in the context of reproducing and legitimizing dominant ideology (e.g., Hall 1973, et al. 1978, 1988, 2007; Voloshinov, 1973; Chomsky and Herman, 1988; Gottdiener, 1985; Steger and McNevin, 2013; Zanutto, 2020 and others).

Above all, however, it crucially develops and applies Bourdieu and Boltanski's (1976; Susen, 2014) approach to the conceptualisation of domination, which it applies to a specifically delineated research field, and demonstrates the specific parameters of dominant ideology through a discursive analysis that is set within the international debate on the use of the method in urban studies (see Lees, 2004; Jacobs, 2006; Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995, and others). In doing so, it creates a unique and previously unpublished concept that makes specific contributions to all of the areas listed above in terms of theory, research methodology, and data analysis.

I believe that the study has shown concrete features of the dominant ideology within the spatial development of Prague. The features are based on a specific fusion of neoliberal and post-socialist phenomena, which are further accompanied by

ideologically more difficult-to-trace elements that illustrate the theory's assumptions of the nature of ideological dominance. Its hegemonic manifestations, modes of legitimation, and (re)production do not form one monolithic whole, but exhibit specific characteristics that manifest themselves both in specific general principles, and also diversified in particular contexts and themes. Individual narratives are formed within each topic, which further form discourses that may exhibit specific hegemonic features, often forming various discursive coalitions. As a rule, we also find counter-hegemonic narratives and discourses that significantly impact the discursive units formed. The overall delineated field is thus shaped by a living discursive space in which diversification into sub-discursive fields occurs. Within these, specific narratives and discourses emerge, which have different life cycles and are transformed and shaped over time.

However, it is not only the narratives that shape the discourses that are part of the shaped discursive fields. Other actorial practices complement the complexity, manifested in particular in the form of *discursive* and *social practices*, i.e., e.g., policies adopted, measures, professional outputs, but also actorial ties, the degree of actors' disposable capital, and the interconnections between these dimensions. This has been shown in the example of central themes, especially concerning the new building law, but also in the context of housing affordability or the preparation of the Metropolitan Plan. This means, among other things, that discourse becomes dialectically performative in relation to urban (i.e., *physical*) space. It responds to what is happening in the space, activating actors within the field, while having a major impact on its form. Counter-narratives, which exhibit identical ideological features in many cases, also impact discursive and social practice formation. Data has also showed significant actorial flexibility, causing some actors to occur in sometimes hegemonic, other times rather counter-hegemonic positions. Therefore, it is important to note, that the discourse is a complex field that doesn't create only two binary sides of a conflict, but actors are distributed on a scale that is not unchanging.

Within discourses, central narratives emerge that have substantial intersubjective overlaps and shape the nature of the discourse as a whole. I refer to them as *metanarratives*. The analysis has shown that the normative hegemonic premise of *construction as unconditional need* shapes the primary metanarrative with a relatively strong formative function for sub-discourses. It is characterized by a high

degree of hegemonic performativity reflected in sub-themes and discourses, accelerated mainly by private developers and partially adopted by major political actors. However, it is also projected into counter-narrative frameworks, making the idea of unconditional development a universal necessity that becomes an implicit and relatively often *inescapable* assumption. The *Doing Business* statistics published by the World Bank played an important role in shaping it and became a normative argument, but soon disappeared under scandalous circumstances that revealed inconsistencies in the data. The tragic demise of the statistic was not commented on further by hegemonic actors, and the *developmental* character of the narratives did not change in any significant way (only that they gradually stopped relying on the statistic - one of the few data supports for the metanarrative of under-construction and long permitting, which, moreover, turned out to be distorting and unreliable).¹⁸²

Statements by dominant actors exhibit performative characteristics of the dominant ideology set out by the theory, which is based on general ideological features. Usually, they are infused with a greater number of specific characteristics, often based on *normativity*, particular forms of *intersubjectivity* (they emerge and are performative in relation to other actors), the formation of *neutrality* in the form of spaces and narratives, *self-referentiality*, and the construction of *authenticity*, which further reinforce the process of *unrecognition*. Combined with other ideological elements, performative capacities of domination are formed - distortion of reality, use of expert backgrounds, the capture of public institutions, including the state as instruments to promote hegemonic goals, reproduction of verbal and argumentative apparatuses including the marginalization of alternatives (especially in relation to practices in the form of measures taken), as well as a form of reflexivity and ability to form compromises that nevertheless further promote hegemonic goals. In the context of the specificities of the post-socialist city, the data show specific relics of *zombie socialism* that additionally portray dominant capacities to exploit history. The data also showed (albeit to a limited extent) particular instances of meritocratic principles, conservatism as a positive value of reconciliation and reason, or the creation of binary oppositions, especially concerning the discursive opponents of dominant actors. Beyond the

¹⁸² Yet statistics still figure as a data basis for argumentation in some important cases - for example, in the recommendations of the Government's National Economic Council (NERV) from 2024 in the context of acceleration of permitting and the housing crisis (<https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/NERV/aktuality/navrhy-NERV.pdf>, pp. 29)

theoretical assumptions, the data show the relative frequency of the use of normative references to a dysfunctional system, often concerning the metanarrative of construction, and the associated calls for change to support the hegemonic goal of increasing the amount of (preferably private) construction.

The actor field reflects the theoretical portrayal of the post-revolutionary social order, in which economic managerialism gradually took over (Eyal, Szelényi, Townsley, 1998). At the same time, the democratic values of former socialist dissent remain present more in the form of justification of the hegemonic attributes of governance. Yet the performativity of hegemony is not only related to the practices of the most visible actors - 'hegemonic pawns,' usually grouped among high-ranking officials, professional staff of public institutions, or - in the context of the discourses produced - press spokespersons, play an important role.

Development associations and think tanks have played an essential performative role in the context of the central metanarrative of construction, in some cases supplemented by solitary statements or analyses of individual developers supported by economic analysts and financial actors. The interplay of the possession of specific capitals, coupled with the performative characteristics of ideological dominance, allowed these actors to maximize their influence on the discursive field they shaped and to (re)produce within it specific hegemonic premises and assertions that support specific goals, especially in the context of increasing private profit through construction.

At the same time, expert narrative and actor framing endorses the process of legitimizing and reforming narratives as *naturally occurring discourses* that, in some cases, fulfill the assumptions of *self-fulfilling prophecies* and/or *selflessness* (especially in relation to addressing housing unaffordability) as characteristics of the dominant ideology. The range of argumentation is not limited to metanarratives, but is also capable of shaping and responding to sub-themes that serve to reinforce hegemonic positions. This includes the formation of *discursive alliances* and performativity through public institutions. The latter further reinforce the dominant ideology's hegemonic nature by taking *neutral positions* and creating *neutral places* where dominant premises are further reproduced and legitimized using theoretically described mechanisms. Interestingly, in some cases, the hegemonic position of the dominant

ideology proves resistant to the political sphere (hegemonic actors may pursue particular goals despite political leadership or structural rules).

In the specific field of spatial development - at least in the case of Prague - further specific metanarratives and hegemonic values are produced, further strengthening the dominant targets' performative capacities. These include specific architectural or technical premises, such as forming a normative value image of architecture with an emphasis on bringing representative and renowned architecture to the Czech metropolis as a pretext for private construction, or developmental planning principles that are reflected in the rules of construction. The dominant ideology shapes and reproduces architecture as a universally desirable cultural value that reinforces the role and power of specific architects within the field. It also reflects the particular characteristics of the sub-field of architects, within which there are specific hierarchical rules and normative deterministic and individualistic assumptions for 'success.'

At the same time, the most potent actors exhibit capacities to reinforce and (re)produce hierarchical positions through narrative and discursive practices (e.g., in the context of the spatial plan as a *representation of space*). Architecture becomes a *golden tower* that has a normative expert mandate for decision-making within the field; the importance of *symbolic capitals*, not only actorial, but also institutional, plays a vital role here. At the same time, the technical and expert dimension of the field becomes a means of diversifying the actors who are *provided access* to the field and the possibility of discursively influencing it. The high degree of technical abstraction constitutes an instrument of *alienation* and, at the same time, reinforces the maintenance of the status quo.

Concrete urban principles emerge in dominant narratives and discourses, which in some cases become 'hostages' of hegemony in relation to the pursuit of hegemonic goals, while at the same time becoming *metanarratives*. Specifically, this is the case, for example, of the principle of densification, the focus of the city of short distances, or the theme of high-rise construction. In a dominantly market-based urban development environment, they reinforce negative processes such as gentrification and displacement, while at the same time, in a dominantly *privatist* culture, they further (re)produce, reinforce and legitimize the hegemonic goals of market actors. In addition, they can promote further undesirable urban phenomena, such as increases in

individual car traffic, the disappearance or poor quality of public spaces, or the distortion of the system of services and public amenities. This also represents a certain manifestation of the post-revolutionary division of forces, largely influenced by privatization. Land ownership becomes part of the power apparatus of the private sector, which, in a neo-liberalized system of governance (further conditioned and accelerated by the post-socialist environment), represents the ultimate decisive force.

The construction of dominance is significantly shaped by the specifics of the linguistic use of language, which is built on the creation of dominant slogans that either refer to specific topics and have a technical-operational character (e.g., "one office, one stamp, one building"), or have a more general meaning in relation to the reproduction and legitimization (or neutralization) of the political-economic system, e.g., through words such as *competitiveness*, *the housing market*, etc. At other times they build on the values of consensus and democracy, which have the capacity to discursively conceal domination. This is also reflected in the role of participation, which, rather than the role of seeking social consensus, is a formalistic *self-affirmation* of hegemonic inputs that further deepens the processes of natural discourse formation and neutrality.

In the discursive field under study, the economy and its growth becomes a priority area to which dominant narratives refer as a *universally accepted value*. The use of *anti-socialist* sentiments is site-specific, with the former communist regime becoming a universal bogeyman with a performative role in relation to non-market solutions. At the same time, however, it also inscribes itself in counter-narratives and thus becomes a universal force of negative sentiment in the post-socialist space.

The produced counter-discourses also exhibit specific performative features, varying within the field according to context and theme, showing different intensities and varying degrees of ideological elements or strategies employed. The totality of the themes represents a complex field with a range of actors and related narratives, always containing a counter-narrative spectrum. Its influence and significance are largely influenced by the combination of capitals of the actors involved within the discursive coalitions, but sometimes chance or one specific actor may also play a role. "Subversive" actors can have different characteristics. Most often, they are recruited from active citizens or NGOs (the specificity is that we do not identify strong social movements within Prague, but discourses and activist practices are rather diversified

and scattered in sub-themes). However, it is not uncommon for politicians, experts of various professions, commentators and journalists, specific officials, and in some cases, also developers to bring counter-narratives to particular topics. Thus, for some sub-topics, hegemonic positions overlap based on the objectives pursued, and hegemony emerges as a fluid element that is not tied to a stable range of actors or not even necessarily positions of power. The constant presence of discursive opposition also marks the other character of hegemony, which de facto requires the existence of an opposing force as a means of self-affirmation and definition.

Some counter-narratives show a tendency towards expressiveness and emotionality, often stemming from specific frustrations, and expressiveness can be intentional or unintentional. It is often the case that the performativity of the hegemonic order is inscribed in the counter-narratives. This can be seen especially in more technical issues, such as spatial planning, where counter-narratives necessarily adopt the dominant vocabulary ('newspeak') and hegemonic argumentative apparatus, while at other times, they adopt economic premises that, in some cases, actually support different goals. For example, within the complex discursive field, there is a relatively widely accepted consensus on the unconditionality of development. Counter-discursively, this can sometimes mean trying to gain legitimacy in the debate and increase the relevance of counter-hegemonic arguments. At the same time, the premise of development as a universal social principle represents a typical element of the reproduction of neoliberal ideology through *value internalization*. Subversive actors only rarely label the political-economic system (whether as neoliberal or any other). Counter-discourses tend to have a weaker political coloration, and primarily focus on the specific parameters of the issues under discussion, hence relying on the universal values of democracy. This can be seen as a manifestation of the post-socialist environment, but also another aspect of hegemonic performativity that shapes specific self-censorship mechanisms, and further reinforces the element of *unrecognition*. Socialism as an auto-censoring hegemonic memento in this particular environment also becomes an element of a certain executive blocking. It shapes indications of *cognitive dissonances*, whereby hegemonically and counter-discursively postulated good practice becomes unattainable due to an unchanging distribution of forces and entrenched ideas about the possible limits of regulation.

A substantial component of hegemonic narratives, moreover, is the demand for systemic "depoliticization" within the framework of *neutralization* and *selfless* nature, which would allow the system to function "properly," i.e., to be optimized to best suit the metanarrative goals of maximizing construction. The conservatism of hegemony is also manifested in sentiments of *attachment to place*, an emphasis on rationality in decision-making, and discursive distance-building, sometimes associated with a cultural-historical or humanistic ethos. This illustrates the hegemonic ability to capture particular cultural values and use them to one's advantage.

Thus, to summarize in the context of the research questions the conclusions that I consider most significant - the discursive mechanisms of ideological domination and its (re)production and legitimation are based on the specific characteristics of the dominant ideology that manifest themselves in particular topics, and mostly fulfill the theoretical assumptions that I base on. At the same time, the data show some additional examples of these mechanisms that are neglected by the initial theory and may relate to specific features of the hegemonic order in post-socialist Prague. At the core of this is the notion of unconditional and necessary development, which is inevitably placed on the shoulders of private development companies, which, moreover, themselves become the central (re)producers of hegemonic discursive premises through which they reinforce their position of power within the field. The distribution of power is conditioned by the possession of specific capitals, the ability to enter into strategic alliances, and the ability to choose adequate practices that will legitimize and further strengthen the actor's position. Except for the above mentioned, the process is further strengthened through expert framing, alienation of the topic, neutral appearance, naturality of the dogma, specific attributes tied to a post-socialist space, and so on.

I believe that one of the roles and powers of the social sciences is to see "beyond the horizon," to use the sociological imagination, and to reveal what we consider "given" or unchangeable. Prague's spatial development is dominated by specific entrenched ideas that shape it in the future towards further strengthening the positions of hegemonic actors and increasing spatial inequalities. Although in recent years (especially in the area of governance), we have observed concrete practices that can be considered forms of "reform capitalism" that represent a gradual shift towards particularly sustainable solutions, we are still within the framework of a hegemonic

order that continues to benefit the wealthiest. Efforts towards inclusive and ecologically and socially sustainable cities must be underpinned by the ability to set priorities and solutions that benefit all, and that allow for a genuine and effective response to the challenges facing contemporary cities, including the deepening climate crisis, unaffordable housing, gentrification, and other negative phenomena that are direct consequences of global neoliberal capitalism.

The inability to acknowledge the reality of the power distribution in post-socialist Prague and to take clear visions and firm positions needs to be broken down from the position of science, showing its true nature, which has the ability to hegemonically obscure the essence of things, which often consists in the promotion of individual goals rather than a selfless effort to cultivate environment and space. The social internalization of hegemonic values (often perpetuated even in academic settings, where it often exhibits the same elements as those I have described in this text) must not stand in the way of not only knowledge, but more importantly, the pursuit of a society in which everyone has a legitimate place, and which is capable of creating the kinds of places to live that will enable its healthy survival into the future. Until we fully realize and acknowledge the true nature of the hegemonic order, which inevitably leads to the gradual self-destruction of humanity, we will hardly succeed.

Summary

The main aim and purpose of the thesis is to trace the processes of reproduction and legitimization of the dominant ideology within the discourse related to the territorial development of Prague. The thesis is based on the premises of critical urban sociology, for which the central theme is the agency of capital in the urban environment. However, it uses Pierre Bourdieu's social theory, specifically the concepts of field and capital, as a research basis and theoretical framework. These serve as a tool to delineate the research terrain - the 'field of urban development in Prague' - within which the discursive analysis was conducted. Methodologically, it draws on Bourdieu's theoretical framing of ideological domination, developed with Luc Boltanski, which conceptualises the specific characteristics of the dominant ideology. Their specific manifestations are traced within the research, but beyond this, the analysis also notes principles of domination not yet identified in theory, the role of subversive and oppositional discourses, and borderline cases, thus demonstrating the complexity and multi-layered nature of the field in the context of ideological performativity. The theoretical framing is further supported by the delineation of the post-socialist space in late capitalist society and the outlining of actor roles within the field.

The study shows that the discursive patterns of (re)production and legitimization of the dominant ideology are linked to the specific nature of domination within the selected topic, which is based on the historical and political-economic contexts of post-socialist Prague, linked to the decision-making system, actor distribution and relations between actors, and the possession of key capitals (especially economic, cultural, symbolic, and, consequently, field-specific *spatial capital*). At the core of the discursive framing that underpins reproductive and legitimization processes lies the central narrative of the *unconditionality of construction* as a universal solution, with its contextually different variants usually emerging in the discursive conjunction of hegemonic private sphere actors with specific public sector representatives. The *meta-narrative* of construction is further supported by the hegemonic narrative system, which reinforces dominant-ideological frames through specific attributes of the appearance of *naturalness* and *neutrality*, *expert framing* and *alienation* of the subject, among others.

As Samuel Stein (2019) has shown, the field of urban development and real estate globally constitutes one of the most powerful economic sectors that has a major impact on the nature of the global dominant order. As such, it therefore becomes the perfect laboratory for exploring processes of reproduction and legitimation of domination. In the space of a particular post-socialist city, the characteristics of the dominant ideology (global neoliberal capitalism) are complemented by specific attributes that are rooted in the processes of post-revolutionary transformation, but are also tied to the historical development of the city, which has co-shaped the physical structure of the space and the decision-making frameworks. These attributes include, for example, the way governance mechanisms are shaped, institutional and economic transformation, the emergence of a specific governmentality (Eyal, Szelényi, and Townsley, 1998), the birth of a culture of *privatism* (Hirt, 2012), or contextual mental patterns tied to the socialist past conceptually referred to as *zombie socialism* (Chelcea and Druță, 2016). In the context of urban policies, the role of *privatization* and the gradual transformation of land-use planning systems, and the functional and structural divisions of the city linked to post-socialism, as well as specific local manifestations of global processes such as *gentrification*, *suburbanization* or *financialization of housing*, the emergence of brownfields as central transformation areas, the growing role of private development, and other processes, bear a major influence.

Theoretical approaches to the transformation of post-socialist cities have been concentrated in three central streams (Ferenčuhová, 2013: 215-216), at the core of which lies an examination of the combined influence of global and local forces on the process of transformation and the gradual unpacking of the sub-parts of transformation over time and in spheres of action, particularly in the context of institutional, social, and spatial transformation of cities. However, in the context of the initial ideological framework of critical urban theory, the thesis also reflects the theoretical debate on the role of post-socialist studies in global scholarship, especially because of its reflexivity and sensitivity to the specific characteristics of post-socialist space and its ability to encompass them using Western theoretical concepts, while also noting regional differences within the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

In the context of the theoretical conceptualisation of the research field, the thesis notes the range of applications of Bourdieu's social theory in urban studies, which has demonstrated the high practical capacity of his concepts to serve as a research tool

across regions and *physical spaces* of cities (e.g., Wacquant, 2023; Savage, 2011). Based on this theoretical analysis, the thesis draws a specific field of actors of urban development in Prague, which is divided into four central groups - the public sector, the private sector, the civic sector and the media. Relationships and pressures exist between the actors and the different spheres, and in the context of ownership of specific capitals, actors move in (and have access to) the field and are able to influence it discursively and through their actorial practice. The definition of the field serves as an entry point for the analysis of discourse as a central carrier of ideological frameworks and the formation of domination. The latter is framed by the theoretical characteristics developed by Bourdieu and Boltanski ([1976] 2008), which are rendered in the identified narratives, and further complemented and elaborated in the context of 'subversive' discourses.

The analysis identified the central actors (represented mainly by specific representatives of public administration, experts and the private sphere), the central themes associated with the development and planning of Prague (such as the building law, zoning plan, housing affordability, specific development cases, etc.), and the discursive patterns formed on them, which become the carriers of legitimation and (re)production of the dominant ideology. The metanarrative of unconditional development, which in effect reinforces the hegemonic positions of dominant players (especially private developers), has been shaped within discursive coalitions of private and public spheres and selected experts. Discursively, it was supported by the biased and methodologically inaccurate World Bank Doing Business statistics in conjunction with the use of specific urban principles and values that were usurped from hegemonic positions to confirm and reproduce the status quo. Also playing a role was the hegemonic position of the city's technical expertise, which postulates *architecture as a universal value* that further encourages construction driven by the private market rather than by the city's political leadership or official apparatus. Abstraction and subject matter expertise shape the process of *alienation* and have a significant impact on the actorial *provision of access*.

The process of ideological *unrecognition*, which helps to maintain actor positions and inequalities in the field, was discursively supported by the attributes of *neutrality* and *naturalness* identified by the theory, which support the process of internalization of dominantly ideological values among actors (including construction

of the dominant ideology as a *doxa*), and the construction of *authenticity* and *self-referentiality*. The analysis demonstrated the existence of post-socialist sentiments in the discourse that further contribute to the reinforcement of dominance, and also support the process of marginalizing of alternatives. At the same time, the division of the field is not strictly binary on a dominated-dominated scale, but shows the movement of actors in the field in the context of particular topics, the existence of borderline cases, and the relatively high capacity of subversive actors to shape counter-arguments that inscribe themselves in the discourse and can influence the final decision-making and the physical structure of the city. However, the ability of the dominant ideology to shape a 'central interpretive framework' that is adopted by subversive actors in an attempt to gain legitimacy and relevance has been visible.

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