

Post-socialist space and urban activism

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Arnika – Citizens' Support Center

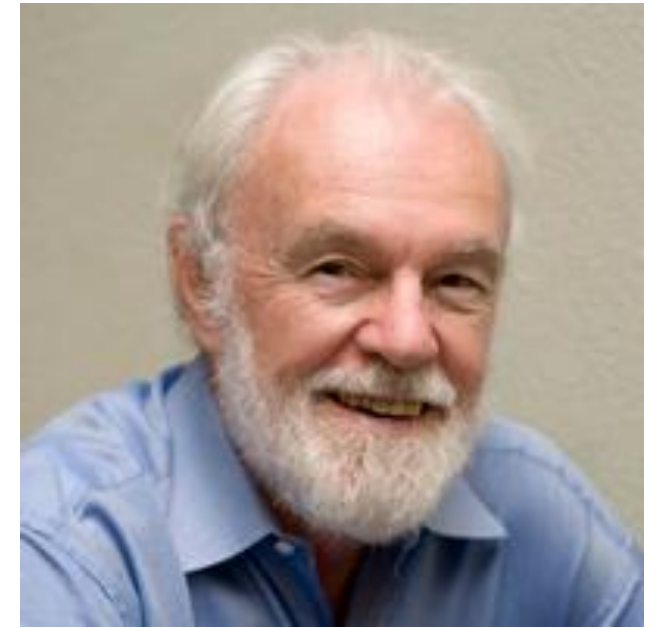
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DOMINANT

IDEOLOGY



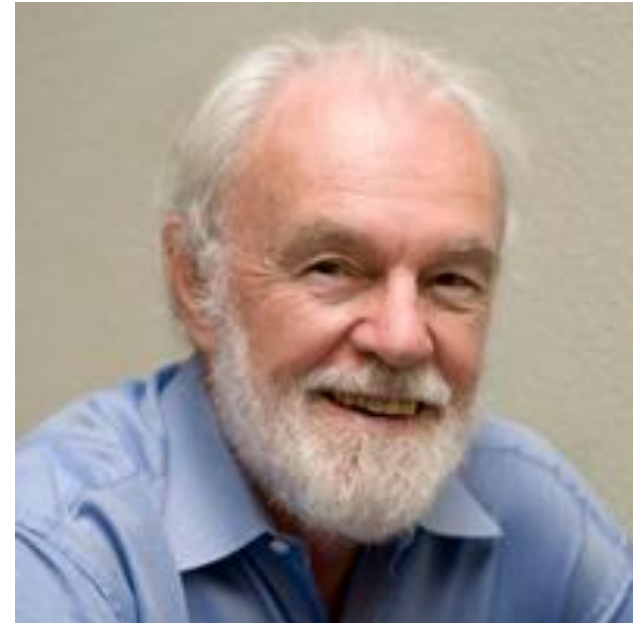
Henri Lefebvre



David Harvey

„All of us are
neoliberals,
whether we like it
or not.“

Harvey 2007: 6







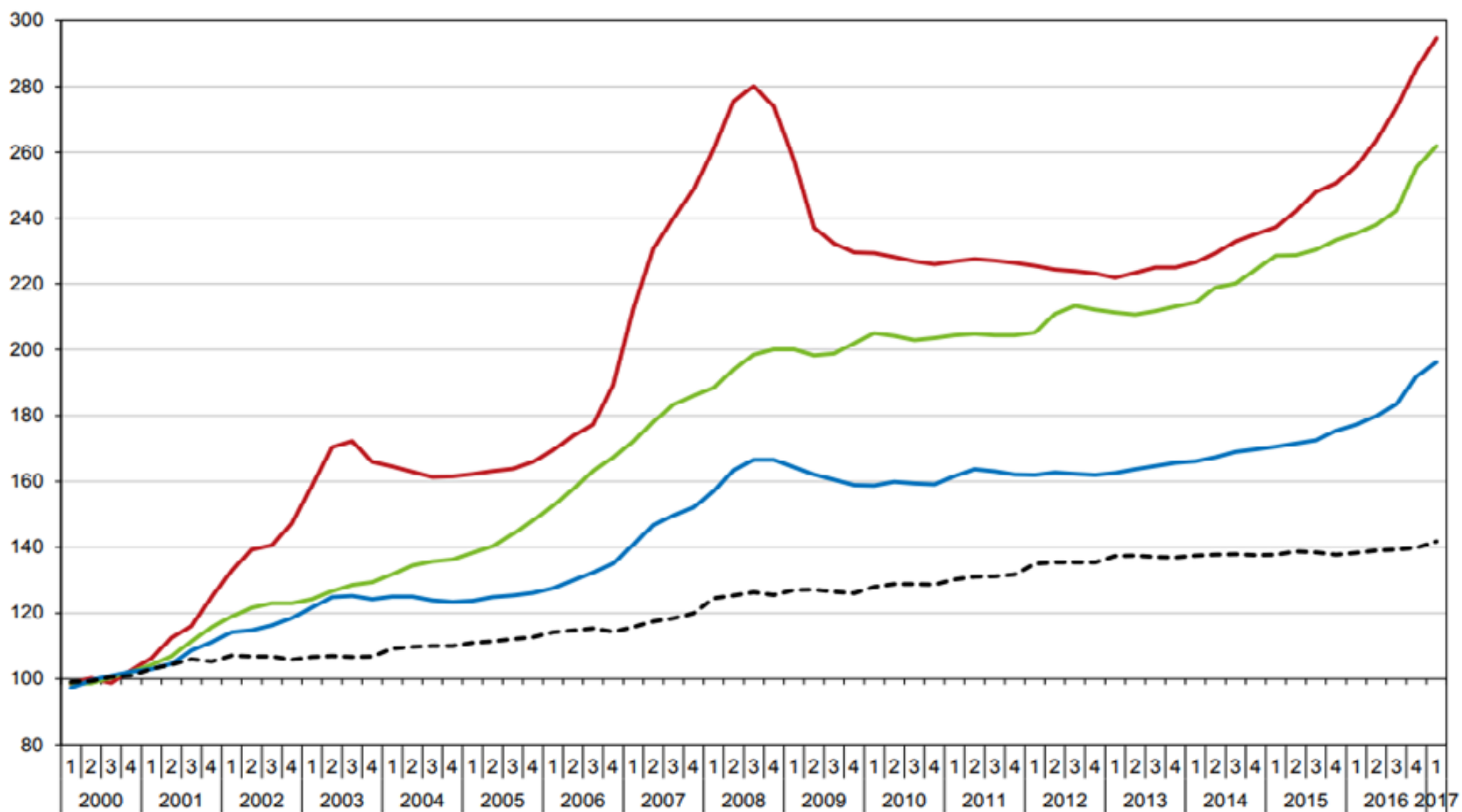












Housing & development in CZ

- > 2x bigger growth of housing costs than salaries growth
- > 11 avg. yearly wages on housing purchase (2x more than D, AUT, NED)
- > 26 % of household income on housing (5th in the EU)
 - 21 % share of rental housing (more expensive comparing to homeownership)
- > 2017 fastest growth of housing prices in the EU
- > mortgages – 47,5 % of household income



Conceptualizing „post-socialism“

- Tuvikene (2016: 512 – 513): prefix „-post“ pre-determines the scope of reflection (departure from ideas of socialist state to capitalism only as a *historical condition*); lack of *future imagination* (what will be after post-socialism?)
- Fraser (1997): state of post-socialism = increasing inequality, marketization, and the lack of broader alternative discourses, which culminates in the division of policies of *redistribution* and *recognition*

Transformation

- Sýkora and Bouzarovski (2012): *multiple transformations* – 1) institutional, 2) social, 3) urban
- Eyal, Szelényi, Townsley (1998): making *capitalism without capitalists*
- *Path dependency*
- Hirt (2012): *privatism*
- Chelcea and Druță (2016): *zombie socialism*

Institutional framing, urban development, decision making (Prague)

- 1990s – creation of municipal government (Horak, 2007); „learning by doing“ (Lokšová and Galčanová-Batista, 2021: 1 – 2)
- CSOs – since the beginning a significant impact; „politics of mutual delegitimation“ (Horak, 2007: 122)
- Pixová (2020) – *state captured* by the corporate sphere
- O'Dwyer (2021) – *post-communist populism* – transformational and democratizing potential, disappearing of neoliberal dogma, bigger inclusivity, less conservative, ideologically flexible

Post-socialist cities

- Specific urban structure, socialist influence
- Rapid changes in the 1990s -> transformation (transition), privatization, suburbanization, gentrification, financialization...



„Right to the city more than just a personal freedom to access urban resources: it is the right to change ourselves by changing our city. It is a collective, rather than a personal right, since this change inevitably depends on the exercise of collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization.“ (David Harvey)

- a right to shape/co-create our cities and urban spaces as their inhabitants; dialogical perspective (cities shape people/people shape cities); collective right

Lefebvre 1996: 147 → **the need of urban life, independent creative power (coming from people, not capital accumulation)**

„The freedom to make and remake ourselves and our cities is one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.“ (Harvey 2008a: 23)

To enforce the right to the city means to create formative forces within the urbanization processes and the ways, through which are cities are created, in fundamental and radical way (Harvey 2008b: 2)

„The right to the city is not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it.“ (Harvey 2003: 939)

Right to the City

- Lefebvre (1968)
- Lefebvre: „The human being has the need to accumulate energies and to spend them, even waste them in play. (...) These anthropological needs are socially elaborated (realized). To these needs can be added specific needs which are not satisfied by those commercial and cultural infrastructures which are somewhat parsimoniously taken into account by planners.“ (Lefebvre 1996: 147) → **the need of urban life, independent creative power**
- Lefebvre: dichotomy a) *city created by the people* a b) *city created for the people*
 - a) *way of space production directly supported and created by the inhabitants of the city without any mediation*
 - b) *as a consequence of structural social inequalities the city is being produced through a set of rules created by actors with adequate power (typical for capitalist cities)*

- inhabitants of the cities are bearers of social change (i. e. users of urban spaces); they decide about the shape and structure of the cities instead of the capital (which has through the neoliberalization of policies took over the domination in decision making about cities)
- broad, fluid concept, inhabitants of the cities in the centre of attention
- active citizens, accent on social movements and change from below (horizontal change)
- some principles are present in current urban activism (different situation in post-socialist countries)

- 1) grassroot movements and initiatives
- 2) civil society (CSOs)
- 3) professionalized organizations (NGOs)

Urban civic activism

1) Grassroot movements and initiatives

- > Bydlet – žít <http://zadostupnebydleni.cz/>
- > Kolektiv 115 <https://k115.org/>
- > Sdílené domy <https://sdilenedomy.cz/>
- > Food not Bombs <https://food-not-bombs.cz/>
- > Iniciativa nájemníku a nájemnic
<https://iniciativanajemniku.cz/>

- > European Coalition Right to the City -
<https://housingnotprofit.org/>
Hausprojects, tenants syndicates, squatts, occupy
- > ecological movement, FFF, urban
mobility/cyclists movements
- political motivation, radical action
- overlaps with other groups











Civil Society

- > active citizens, neighborhood initiatives
- > NIMBY – „not in my backyard“
- > place attachment (Altman, Low 1992)
- > mechanisms of activation: new development, place and environment protection, neighborhood life, local political situation & management, heritage protection; tenants associations (Mietshäuser Syndikat)
- > participation in permitting & administrative procedures, participation, meetings with authorities, public space & discussion...
- > political participation (local councils, municipality), comments of strategic documents & key regulatives (Metropolitan plan, Strategical plan...), implementation
- > use of dominant discourse, engaged public, taking part in expert discussion, bureaucracy, education & orientation in legal system
- > various instruments & interests





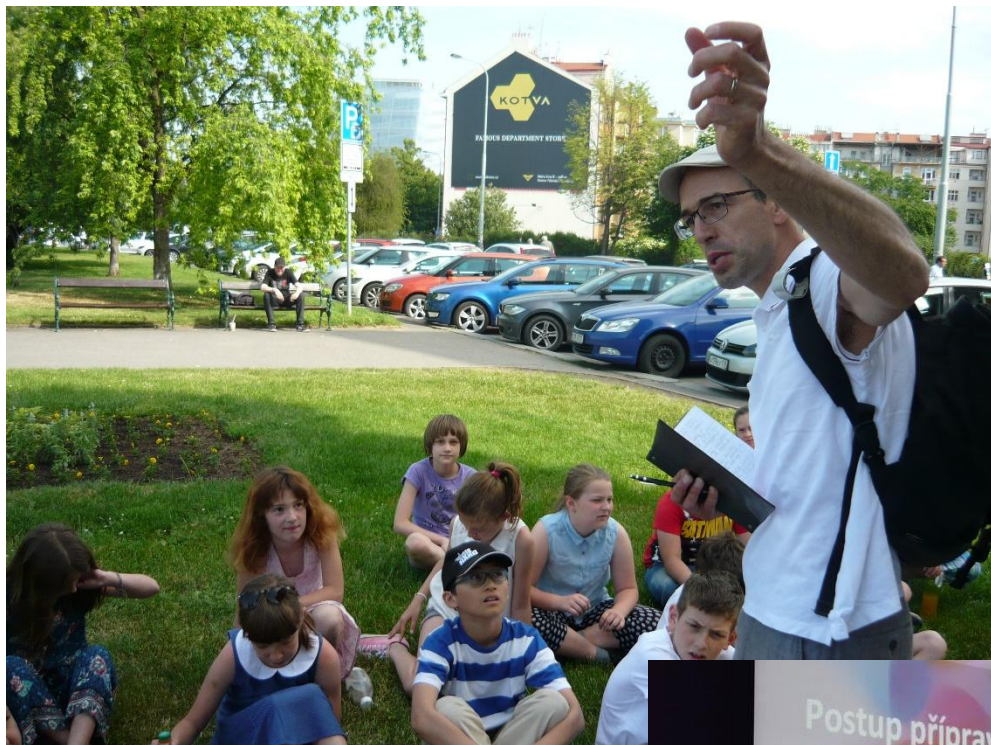




Professionalized organizations

- part/full time working agenda
- donations, grants
- media campaigns
- political lobbying
- working/expert groups
- watchdog
- research activities
- expert facilities, grassroots/CSOs support, networking
- Auto*Mat <https://www.auto-mat.cz/>
- Arnika <https://arnika.org/>
- Platforma pro soc. bydlení <https://socialnibydleni.org/>
- Bieno <https://www.vnitrobloky.cz/>
- Pražské matky









ZA PRAHU ▶3
UDRŽITELNOU
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května
2023
Kasárna
Karlín



- ▶ Bulvár LIVE: Doprava v Praze
- ▶ Participativní workshop
- ▶ Kritické procházky:
Vetřelci a volavky • Auto*Mat
- ▶ Koncert: Cardo & Decumanus
- ▶ Film: Časopis výborní zlatí





Thank you for your attention!

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