

Abstract

The dissertation focuses on spaces in post-socialist Prague which transcend the hegemony of capitalist social and spatial relations and provide alternative spaces for non-profit culture and grassroots activities used and operated by students, artistic and creative communities, alternative subcultures, and NGOs. The author presents 14 case studies focused on these spaces, whose existence in the city is threatened. Referring to Marxian urban theory and the concept of the *right to the city*, the author critically investigates the democratic character of the social structures which are based on the contemporary socioeconomic model, and interprets the way in which the imperative of capital-accumulation, combined with the legacies of the totalitarian past, constrain the development of open democracy and civil society, and the creation of diverse, vibrant, progressive, and socially inclusive urban environments.

The empirical part of the dissertation outlines the process of creating and operating alternative spaces in Prague during a changing political-economic context, and describes in detail, alternative spaces that existed in Prague in the early 21st century. The author discusses these spaces in relation to two different regimes, which existed in Czech society before and after the Velvet Revolution in 1989. She evaluates these spaces in light of the way they differ from Western cities in regards to their relationship to urban development, gentrification and displacement; in connection with Prague's municipal politics and its official strategies; and from the perspective of their users' attitudes towards enforcing their *right to the city*.

Based on a critical scrutiny of the situation of alternative spaces in Prague the author is concluding that through dogmatically embracing neoliberal capitalism Czech society has replaced the former totalitarian regime with a new ideology, which ingeniously eliminates and marginalizes spaces and activities that don't generate economic profit. This fact is presented as a sign that open democracy and a tolerant pluralist society have not yet been created in Czechia. According to the author, the alternative spaces have the potential to contribute to the improvement of the urban and social environment in Prague and in Czechia as a whole.

Keywords: Prague, alternative spaces, alternative culture, art, urban society, creative city, post-socialist city, right to the city, Marxist geography, open democracy, neoliberal restructuring, economic crisis, gentrification, urban development, urban politics, civil society