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**Crisis and the construction of home:
Narrative accounts of the Financial crisis on
the Czech housing market**

Master thesis

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Abstract

This text deals with the Financial crises from the perspective of everyday lived experience. It presents the analysis of narrative accounts of lay people who were active on the Czech housing market during or after the Crises. Theoretically rooted in the framework of narrative analysis, the text widens the mainstream economical perceptions of Crises bringing the concepts of emotions, ethos and symbolic boundaries into account. On the behalf of the narratives of Crises, the narratives of the process of social construction of home proved to be significant for the narrator's identity construction and presentation. Text presents three main findings a) Crises is trope, which is used as such in the narratives b) moral evaluation, which might be coined as the bourgeois morality ethos prove their significance in the narratives c) housing choices being based both on „rational“ and „irrational“ factors i. e. emotions, moral evaluations. The main interpretation of the narrative accounts suggests the crucial importance of the narratives of social construction of home for the expression of being independent, capable, responsible and thus successful person. The ability to express the capability of securing what is culturally regarded as “good and ideal housing“ to the family, represents ones ability to succeed in the complex globalized, post-socialist reality. It also suggests the immanent importance of the category of (individual) success in the contemporary capitalist and post-socialist societies.

Abstrakt

Text prezentuje téma finanční krize (2008) z každodenní perspektivy laického aktéra na českém realitním trhu. V textu je obsažena analýza narativních výpovědí těchto aktérů, kteří měli zkušenost s nákupem nemovitostí v průběhu krize. Teoreticky a

konceptuálně text vychází přístupů narativní analýzy. Rozšiřuje tak většinově převládající zkoumání finanční krize o novou dimenzi tím, že vnáší do analýzy koncepty emocí, étosu a symbolických hranic. Text ukazuje, jak se v rámci výpovědí o krizi ukázal jako významný narativ vytváření domova. V textu jsou prezentovány tři hlavní zjištění: a) Krize je vypravěči v narativech využívána jako trope a je nejčastěji chápána jako vnější síla pomocí které je možné vysvětlit určité strukturální podmínky (př. nejistotu na pracovním trhu) b) v narativech se často objevují morální hodnocení, které lze označit jako *měšťanskou morálku*, a jsou významná pro tvorbu symbolických hranic i expresi identity vypravěče c) v rámci rozhodování o bydlení hrají roli faktory „racionální“ a „iracionální“ - emoce, morální hodnocení. Interpretace těchto zjištění naznačuje význam narativu vytváření domova pro možnost vyjádření určitých vlastností a schopností: nezávislosti, schopnosti, zodpovědnosti, dospělosti a tedy úspěšnosti. Právě kategorie úspěšnosti na základě toho, že je jedinec a jeho rodina schopna zajistit to, co je vnímáno jako „dobré/ideální bydlení“ reprezentuje zároveň schopnost jedince a rodiny uspět v podmínkách post-socialismu a globalizovaného světa. To ukazuje na význam kategorie „úspěchu“ v současných post-socialistických a kapitalistických společnostech.

Keywords

narrative analysis, Financial crises, everyday life, emotions, symbolic boundaries, morality, post-socialism, home

Klíčová slova

narativní analýza, finanční krize, každodennost, emoce, symbolické hranice, morálka, post-socialismus, domov

Rozsah práce: 112 946 znaků

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1. Hereby I declare that this master thesis has been written by me, and me only and that I have only used resources that are identified in reference list.
2. I declare, that I had not used this thesis for acquiring another university degree.
3. I agree with using this thesis for the academic purposes.

V Praze dne 15. 5. 2014

Tomáš Samec

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Dne 7. 6. 2012 v Praze

Předpokládaný název:

Globální finanční krize v každodennosti na příkladu aktérů na českém trhu s bydlením

Formulace problému:

V roce 2008 otrásla finančním světem série událostí, které mimo jiné vyústily v krach investiční banky Lehman Brothers, sérii vládních intervencí a prasknutím realitní bubliny, která se vytvořila ve Spojených státech amerických. V roce 2012 o čtyři roky později politické špičky Evropské Unie diskutují, analyzují a vytvářejí politiky na zvládnutí nejen bezprecedentní výše státních dluhů, ale také kontinuální prodražování státních dluhů a nižší konkurenceschopnost ekonomik.

Jako sociální vědec si kladu několik otázek. Jak je možné, že v odborném diskurzu sociálních věd – sociologie, antropologie, etnografie a dalších hraje toto téma roli ne snad marginální, ale rozhodně ne prvořadou? Je to snad proto, že dané jevy jsou pouze mediální bublinou a hyperrealitou? Jakým způsobem lze uchopovat problematiku tak komplikovanou a problémy tak komplexní, že je s obtížemi formulují a řeší přední experti, výkonní zaměstnanci či politici?

Někteří komentátoři hovoří nejen o hypoteční, dluhové či finanční krizi, ale o krizi systémové, krizi globálního, finančního kapitalismu. Jisté je, že ve Spojených státech jsou dnes největší rozdíly v čistých příjmech, v Řecku se do parlamentu dostává neonacistická politická strana a ve Španělsku je polovina mladých lidí, absolventů nezaměstnaná. V dotazníkových šetřeních obyvatelé České republiky uvádějí, že ekonomická situace je špatná, a že se obávají budoucnosti.

V teoretické části práce se chci zaměřit především na možnosti konceptualizace makrostrukturálních změn v souvislosti s jejich projevy a vnímáním v mikro-rovině, v každodenním jednání aktérů. Chci využít přístupu Michaela Burawoye, který ukazuje etnografické zkoumání globalizace respektive strukturálních procesů, přenosů, toků a představ, které souvisejí s tím co se souhrnně nazývá „globalizace“. Krize je zjednodušeně ve své podstatě produktem oné globalizované skutečnosti, je umožněna globalizací a zároveň globalizaci produkuje

V kontextu globálních změn a transformací se v práci se chci zabývat způsoby, jakým aktéři v české společnosti reflektují tyto krize (či Krizi). Chci se zaměřit na specifický terén a pole, ve kterém se finanční krize jistým ač nepřímým způsobem projevila. Touto oblastí bude vývoj na českém trhu s bydlením, především s ohledem na prodej nových bytů a stav developerských projektů. V této souvislosti se chci zaměřit na zkoumání zmíněných skutečností u většiny skupiny zainteresovaných aktérů – majitelů

bytů, realitních makléřů, developerů. Mým cílem není hledat kauzální souvislosti a identifikovat „objektivizovatelné“ dopady krize na trh hodnocení. Zaměřím se spíše na konstrukci významů a definic aktérů, jak se v komunikaci a interakci ke Krizi vztahují a jak ji chápají a vnímají. Nakolik je pro ně „reálná“ ve svých důsledcích a nakolik je druhořadá pro jejich každodennost a rozhodování v běžném životě. Tuto reflexi chci zasadit do kontextu jejich životního projektu a konkrétní biografie, osobní historie a jejich osobní vize budoucnosti a aspirací. Chci tedy zkoumat, zda Krize je „aktérem“ v jejich životním projektu. Jako možné schéma pro analytické dělení reakcí aktérů na jevy, jimi chápáné jako projevy Krize, se nabízí Hirschmanovo schéma exit, voice, loyalty, které lze kreativně využít s vědomím odlišnosti situace a obtížnosti uniknutí z tohoto systému. Mým cílem bude vybrat konkrétní lokalitu či lokality, kde je možné se touto problematikou zabývat - developerský projekt zaměřený na výstavbu bytů potýkající se dnes či v nedávné minulosti s nižším zájmem, klesajícími cenami, pozastavením projektu.

Práce tedy může ukázat kromě zodpovězení konkrétních otázek i abstraktnější rovinou problematiky, nakolik jsou globální procesy lokálně „překládány“ a to diskurzivně i v praktikách. Nakolik lze uvažovat o kariéře určitého fenoménu či balíčku fenoménů. V neposlední řadě může ukázat i na způsoby konstruování identit a způsobech, jakým lidé zvýznamňují jisté strukturální (tedy v každodenním životě odtahité, nepřímé a cizí v pravém slova smyslu) faktory.

Předpokládané metody zpracování:

V práci budu navrhnout inovativní využití teoretických konceptů týkajících se procesů a změn, které jsou označovány jako ekonomická globalizace či makrostrukturální transformace v kontextu sociologického výzkumu orientovaného na každodennost a aktérskou mikro rovinu jednání a interpretaci významů. V komunikaci s aktéry a při sběru dat budu využívat rozhovorů, stejně tak jako dostupných statistických dat. Použiji také obsahovou analýzu mediálních sdělení.

Předběžná struktura práce:

1. Úvod : Představení fenoménu a jeho historické ukotvení, kontextualizace ve vztahu k sociálním vědám.

2. Konceptualizace problematiky

- 2.1. Teoretický rámec strukturálních ekonomických změn
- 2.2. Grounded globalization
- 2.3. Interpretační schémata jednání aktérů

3. Reflexe výzkumných metod

4. Analytická část

- 4.1. Analýza rozhovorů s aktéry a informací z terénu
- 4.2. Komparace produkce a konstrukce různých typů vědění
- 4.3 Interpretace výsledků

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Introduction

Buying yourself a house might be a very important decision, but creating yourself a home may be the most important and hardest decision ever made. Making these decisions in the times of uncertainty, in the times of rising or dropping of market prices of real estate, which are supposedly caused by the Financial crisis, may be even harder.

In this text, I am dealing with the issues, which may be conceptually grasped in the dual oppositions. The first opposition is between *extraordinary* events and *everyday* practice with the former represented by the Financial crisis and the purchase of home and the latter by the act of living in the very house. Moreover, the Crisis is often seen as a *global* and complex phenomenon described in the *expert* terms and in the expert discourse. At the same time having *local* consequences and being experienced by *lay* people. Finally, as I further elaborate in the theoretical section, the Crisis may be experienced and communicated on two levels or modes: *symbolic* and *material*. These oppositions frame my work and are my basic conceptual starting-points.

The Crisis, being an central category in my theoretical work and in the research process, needs to be clarified in terms of a) why we, as social scientists, should be concerned with it and b) how we may possibly understand this phenomena. The Financial crisis started with the so-called Mortgage meltdown in 2008 in the United States and caused such an upheaval that we may presuppose virtually everybody was affected by it in a certain way.

The modernity itself has been connected to the concept of crisis marking its dynamics and accelerating social changes. Thus in the social sciences' discourse, we are more likely to perceive and understand crises not as extraordinary, but as the "normal state of being". However certain historical events, labelled as the Crises, had been different. Especially in their economical, political and social consequences. Specifically, the Great Depression in the 1930s' and the Oil Crisis in the 1970s' both marked the essential, structural changes of modern societies.¹

Overwhelming with its magnitude and scale, the Financial crisis can be conceptually divided into three dimensions. First dimension is the political economy of

¹ Specifically the years following the Oil Crisis has been according to David Harvey marked by the major transformation from Keynesianism mode of economy towards the Post-Fordist mode of flexible accumulation. (Harvey 2000)

the crisis. It consists of the economical processes leading to what was labelled as the Crisis and policies reacting towards those processes.² Second dimension is the discursive reflections of the Crisis either by the mediascape, expert discursive field and lay imaginations and narratives.³ Third dimension is the lived experience of the Crisis, which may be described in terms of how the freezing of the markets together with the absence of trust among the actors had impacted on the (in)security of jobs', the prices of houses and the availability of credit for individuals or small companies.⁴ These three dimensions represent of course the ideal types; in reality they are closely interconnected and one dimension directly influences and sometimes overlaps another. This may be illustrated by the fact, that certain discursive and language acts are performed in order to influence the possibility of how to govern the processes connected with the Crisis and affect the everyday life of people. (Brasset, Vaughan-Williams 2012). The performativity of certain (everyday) acts and behaviour is crucial for the social construction and management of the markets and macro-scale structures. (Langley 2010: 5-11). Each dimension thus illustrates the inner complexity of the Crisis.

Connecting different dimensions and dual oppositions seems to be a great task, which is likely to face the risk of become too broad and mashed in the end. I have thus decided to focus on one of the dimensions of the Crisis: on its lived experience.⁵ As a methodological consequence of such a focus, I interviewed group of informants, people who bought either house or apartment in the time around the burst of the market bubble in 2008 and are in their thirties or early forties. They belong to the so-called middle class; they do have higher education and children. Benefiting from the narrowing of my target group, I am attempting at fulfilling the concept of sociology as the science which studies the everyday life experience as practiced by Georg Simmel and uncovers the „exotic“ in the „banal“. (Highmore 2002)

2 This dimension was mostly reflected by economist (Roubini, Mihm 2010) (Shiller 2008) and deal with by the policy makers, CEOs and other experts. In the context of US Mortgage crisis it was the practice of predatory lending, using of CDOs and creating toxic assets, in the context of Eurozone debt crisis it was the „creative“ accountant practice over the state debts and then the austerity measures or quantitative easing.

3 This dimension actually consist of all the references to the Crisis and involves such accounts as mentioned in the previous note or the critical ones rooted in the either sociology, geography or anthropology (Pixley 2009) (Uslaner 2010) (Hart, Ortiz 2008) (Ho 2009) (Seabrooke 2010) (Kiersey 2011) (Martin 2011) and also reflections of the second order, who are trying to deconstruct the discourse of the crisis (Knight 2013)

4 This dimension is often encountered in some of the previously mentioned works doing the ethnography of the Crisis, more can be mentioned such as (Woolfson 2010) (White 2010)

5 Strictly saying by conducting the interviews, I am analyzing the second dimension of the Crisis, which is the discursive, while the narratives are mere accounts of the lived reality.

In order to deal with the issue of different scales - global and local (Beck 1999) (Burawoy 2000) (Robertson 1992) history and biography (Mills 2000) - the concept of narrative offers the possibility to be transgressive both theoretically and analytically. Especially in terms of enabling me as a researcher to comprehend how people themselves understand and express their understanding of the Crisis in the context of their experience. The importance of a narrative and the methods of its analysis are being described in the theoretical and methodological sections respectively. Furthermore, I would like to challenge the mainstream economical view of the Financial crisis and the actors being more or less rational in their behaviour. I would like also to question the limiting approach of behavioral economy reducing the complex set of emotions, social interactions and cultural shared understanding, into yet important, but somehow „irrational“ behaviour or stances.⁶ Contrarily to such simplifications, I acknowledge the importance of emotions, cultural understanding of situations and their representation through the language figures and narrative tropes in the process of comprehending the world, lived experience and bridging the global – local divide. Moreover, I recognize their importance in the process of identity construction and managing of (self)respect in the context of the social construction of home with the Financial crisis being in the background (or actually being the great actor in this process).

This text brings yet another important insight from the historical perspective of the experience of the post-socialism in the context of the Czech Republic regarding the housing market. In this perspective, the domain of housing and the process of the transformation of the housing market represented by the privatization and restitutions of the real estate (Lux 2012) became the stage where people could learn how to live their lives under different structural conditions. Experiencing the changes on the housing market (which affected, if not everybody, then most of the people) was one of the learning tools how to live under new capitalist post-socialist conditions. As for example the practice of using the mortgage as a instrument to obtain the real restate has definitely not been “natural“ in the Czech context and actors on the market have had to learn it.⁷ The learning of the practices of the global capitalism could be seen as marked

6 The problem of (i)rational behaviour is of course not only a economical topic and in the social sciences is present in the classic work of Max Weber (1978) and in the philosophy from the beginning. I try to argue, that the approach of divided action into rational and irrational may be rewarding analytically, it faces severe problems, when mechanically applied in the lived world. And of course, rationality is relative concept. For what could be irrational for the expert may gives perfect sense for the „lay people“.

7 And they are still learning it, because as I show in my findings, mortgage is seen as something rather ambivalent it enables people to get their „dreams“, but at the same time is perceived as potential

by the narratives of independence and emancipation on different scales and dimensions: politics, economics, family and individual. But we may ask important question whether this independence and emancipation is rather illusory in the light of the still on-going Financial crisis. All these experiences during the period of transition and transformation might be seen as important regarding the symbolic tropes, certain ethos and imaginations⁸ rooted in the collective memory. (Halbwachs, Coser 1992)

The text is organized as follows. In the theoretical section, I elaborate on the concept of the crisis and its importance for the sociology as a discipline. Then, I present the specificity of global and post-socialist narratives of housing, importance of the sociological approach to emotions and their significance for the moral evaluation. Theoretical section is concluded by the description of the concept of narrative with the emphasis put on the significance of the language for the construction of everyday live. My approach is framed by acknowledging the importance of the imaginations of home being performatively narrated and altogether with emotions have the importance for the people, when relating to bigger scale events and structures such as the Financial crisis.

Methodological section elaborates further on the analytical significance of the narratives, reviews the research question, presents the data, reflects my role as the researcher in the field and describes in detail the process of analysis. The section on findings presents three main areas: findings a) about the Crisis b) about the performativity of social construction of home c) about the emotions and ethos being employed in this process. Each of these draws on the particular findings with the main interpretation being summarized at the end of the section. After that, I move to the discussion section where I reflect on the limits of my approach while stressing out future possibilities and promises in the field of research. The conclusion sums up my main findings.

hazard and different strategies are being employed to lower the amount of money lent through the mortgage. At the same time, the usage of mortgage is somehow exclusive. Only people with higher incomes and better education are usually able to get the mortgage as suggested by the data collected in the project GA ČR P404/12/1446 [The Application of Sociological Methods to Detect Housing Market Disequilibrium. Critical & Context-Sensitive Housing Research Methodology](#) during the quantitative survey „Postoje k bydlení 2013“ realized by the department of Socioeconomics of Housing in the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic (data will be released for the public use via site <http://nesstar.soc.cas.cz/webview/>) and I was able to analyze them being intern in this department.

8 These three concepts being deeply elaborated in the theoretical section.

1. Theoretical and conceptual background

1.1. *The Crisis and crises*

The perception and conceptualization of the phenomenon which has become known in the public discourse at first as the *Subprime mortgage crisis* and later on as the *Great Recession* or – in a European context – as a *European sovereign-debt crisis* (or simply the Euro crisis) is elaborated in this section. These terms share in common that they refer to the events, which lead, were connected or resulted from the crash on the US mortgage market and I subsume them as the *Financial crisis*. I further develop the connections between different dimensions of the Crisis as described in the introduction. I am going to depict the relation between the first dimension of Crisis - *political economy dimension* represented by the processes of the financialization and globalization of markets. Second, *discursive dimension*, which is represented by the issue of trust being accounted to the situation on the markets and its language, performative creation. Third dimension - *everyday lived experience* is represented by the issues of housing and its commodification experienced in the lived conditions. Then, how the headline of this chapter suggests, I deal with the issue of the particularity of this Crisis within the discourse of sociology as the science branch deeply related to the concept of crisis. Finally, I am going to suggest how the historical events and behaviour of certain actors became symbolic resources. Thus, they might be in disposal for other actors for the discursive re-use as symbolic references.

The goal of this text is not to uncover, analyze or discuss all the economical "reasons" of the development of the Financial crisis.⁹ Rather, I would like to focus on some particular issues which marked the transformation of the risk management and enabled the bubble to grow and burst. Housing markets become larger in scale and differentiated in their nature through the process of globalization of financial flows. Due to the increasing capacity and possibility to commodify the houses and apartments led to their move from the primary market, where house buyers and sellers meet, to the secondary market where residential mortgage-backed securities are traded (RMBS) (Aalbers 2009: 34-35). Interestingly enough, certain contradictions appear here. The

9 For those, who might be interested in the yet brief, but keen elaboration of the economical factors behind the Mortgage crisis I suggest this lecture from Douglas W. Rae:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yr2HkVjRHs0>

houses, which are stable, material and has been supposed to provide a solid certainty for those who own them, became the subjects of increasingly complex, incredibly fast and unstoppably algorithmized market (Schinkus 2008). The old duality of capital and land thus became multiplied (Stephens 2003: 1011). None of this might have been major concern because a similar process has been underway also with other tradable objects: share, commodities, public-debts etc. But all the mayhem suggests that the housing market is somehow special. When you start trading with the loans and debts, which are connected to the people's culturally deeply embedded dreams and aspirations of being home-owners (ibid. 1013) and add a little bit of greed and mischief (Kenway, Fahey 2010) the result has been the Mortgage i. e. Financial crisis. Manual Albers suggests that the problem of the Mortgage crisis and thus the Financial crisis originated in the practice of predatory lending, which is basically a practice of selling you “the dream” while knowing you may have problems with paying the debt in the future (Aalbers 2009: 38). The house of cards crashed when the unsustainability of these practices occurred and at the same time the credibility of RMBS became questioned.¹⁰

Situation on these financial markets could be compared to walking or even running in the dark being chased by wolves. You do not know where you should run or even if you run into the trees, but you have to keep running to keep the chance of escaping. The issue of trust floats on the surface. Jocelyn Pixley argues that in the end it is this trust which keeps running the financial markets (Pixley 2009: 60-62). Eric Uslaner suggests that the different kinds of trust are essential also in determining the social consensus and willingness to cope with increasing social inequalities (Uslaner 2010). With respect to the dimension of political economy, the great Crisis as a result of the market crash was mostly the problem of trust as described by Nouriel Roubini and Stephen Mihm (Roubini, Mihm 2010). But how is the ”great world“ of Wall Street connected to the everyday life of Mexican immigrant in the Sunbelt in Phoenix, Greek unemployed young mother and Czech family recently buying a house?

Uwe Schimank suggests that as long as people are able to construct (for them) certain trustworthy narratives about complex situations, they are able to cope with them, sustain certain losses and somehow keep certain level of trust towards the entire system. (Schimank 2008) In here we may see the connection between the *lived experience* of the crisis and its macro *political economical* dimension. The Crisis itself has evolved in the

¹⁰ In the critical documentary Inside Job you can find more description on this process of cheating with ratings of certain debts and process of collateralization of risks:
<http://www.sonyclassics.com/insidejob> produced by Audrey Mars

narrative trope and thus its *discursive dimension* has been formed influencing both its political and everyday dimension.

This process involves also collecting of information, hearing stories and then reconfiguring them into personal narratives infused with certain discourses of emotions which results into certain usage of language when speaking about the Crisis.¹¹ This is the mechanism of Crisis transfiguring from „objective historical process“ or „causal economic mechanism“¹² into a trope. The trope consists of more or less stable symbolic references constructed through metaphors, images and references to cultural domain . This nexus is able to trigger certain emotions and reaction when employed (Knight 2013). The Crisis is thus able to shape the understanding of space. It also functions as a framework for the construction and understanding of reality,¹³ while becoming a figure in the pop-cultural domain.

Being social scientist, one cannot escape the question: „*But how is this Crisis extraordinary? Modernity is about being constantly in crisis.*“ Ever since the beginning of the sociology as a discipline, the subject of its interest and at the same time the legitimization of the discipline itself was the great transformation of how the society functioned and individuals lived during the 19th century. For Émile Durkheim the transformation was marked by the moral crisis, for Karl Marx by the crisis of the legitimacy of the capitalist system, and for Max Weber by the crisis of the mode of governance. These notions marked some inconsistencies between the supposed ideal of living and the actual lived conditions. The dynamics of the second half of 20th century were also reflected by some authors in a way resembling the themes used by the classics. Zygmunt Bauman has been criticizing the moral decay and commodification of self and emotions (Bauman 2001), Michel Foucault uncovered new modes of ever-present governance and surveillance (Foucault 1979a) (Foucault 1979b). David Harvey or Robert Reich have elaborated on the idea of the transformation of labour in the times of globalization (Harvey 2000) (Reich 1991). Finally Ulrich Beck has brought to the fore a topic implicitly present in the works of classics – the idea of security and risk refreshed with the emphasis on the significance of reflexivity (Beck 2004). Sociology itself as a specific mode of production of knowledge and its dissemination was being the subject of crisis (Boudon 1980). The answer for the particularity of the Crisis had been

11 By Lambros Fatsis <http://sociologicalimagination.org/archives/12728>

12 Of course these definition themselves could be employed in constructing certain images of the Crisis.

13 In this case in very sad and brutal way being connected to the racial hatred against immigrants in Athens. <http://crisis-scape.net/>

already partially answered, by the notion of this Crisis becoming a narrative trope not being reified not only by certain „experts“, but also by lay people, as I am going to present in the following sections.

1.2. Housing: Global and post-socialist narratives and circumstances

Modernity and crisis walk hand in hand and so does the issue of (un)certainly and (in)security connected to the dynamic and flux world, we had been thrown into. Similarly the concepts of modern housing and modern home are subjects of the social construction using certain imaginations, which are not culturally neutral. Although communicated through global channels of communication, they are often contested and modified in the local context. Especially remarkable is the example and the relevance of the “*dream of own family house*”, which origins might be traced from 1930s' and interestingly enough in connection with the Great Depression, when the single-family household unit was supposed to increase the levels of consumption. (Taylor 1999: 13) The irony of history is that the American dream for home-ownership (Stephens 2003: 1013) (Boehm, Schlottman 1999: 217-218) and preferably in suburbs (Taylor 1999: 20) in connection with the transformation of ethos of thrift into the ethos of greed and/or (over)consumption (Kenway, Fahey 2010) resulted into the fertile ground for the housing bubble on the American housing market.

*That we can never get away from the sprawl /// Living in the sprawl /// Dead shopping
malls rise like mountains beyond mountains /// And there's no end in sight
(Arcade Fire)¹⁴*

The experience of living in these specific places – suburban neighborhoods, under certain conditions, which require certain conformity to the imagined ideal are so strong, that apart from scientific discourse they have been also subject to mainstream cultural production.¹⁵ This suggest two conclusions: 1) materiality of lived condition is deeply connected to the symbolic dimension and shape the actions of people often in a

14 Arcade Fire – Sprawl II (The Suburbs 2010)

15 Apart from the Arcade Fire album also vast number of movies such as American Beauty, The Stepford Wives, Blue Velvet and many others

subtle manner 2) the idea of suburbia home-ownership might be strong imaginary, but is not uncontested and matter-of-course. With the first remark I am going to deal now, while the second one will be elaborated in connection with the concept of symbolic boundaries.

We might assume, that the condition of post-socialist experience in the housing market and in the process of social construction of home is different, than in the United States or Western countries in general. Krisztina Fehérvary is developing argument, why has been the ideal of suburban family houses so successful in the Hungarian context and how is the materiality connected to the process of (social group) identity construction (Fehérvary 2011). She suggest, that the social differentiation as a process is being achieved by the specific material condition (living in the certain type of house) in connection to the certain management of space through certain activities, such gardening and others. (ibid 20-21). These practices are also reified by discourses of normality and morality, which circulate and in some cases are being narrated when there is a need to express some stances towards the lived situation. In other words those who wants to express their belonging to the middle class have to perform certain behaviour regarding their housing i. e. family house with „pretty accessories“ (both inside and outside the house) (ibid. 23-26)

While zooming on the global-national-local scale on the Hungary, I have to deal with the case of the Czech Republic. In the Czech context, the suburbanization has been subject of study mostly for the social geographers and sociologist. Either with the interest in it as phenomenon in general (Sýkora 2003) or in the concrete examples of this process in the regions of Prague (Ouředníček 2003) or Brno (Galčanová, Vacková 2008) or for the whole Czech Republic¹⁶ (Kostelecký, Čermák 2004). These studies mostly share interest in the processes of migration, mobility and social change.

The historical experience of transition and evolution of the housing market in the Czech Republic have been marked by several important features: property restitutions and regulation of the rental housing market (Lux, Mikeszová: 2012) (Lux, Sunega, Boelhouwer 2009). These unique circumstances have resulted in the creation of two housing classes: privileged and non-privileged i. e. those who did not have the access to the restitution of apartment or had to rent for the market prices. (Lux, Sunega 2006) So the differentiation of certain groups was in this case structural, but resulting from the

16 With the attention towards the „metropolitan areas“ defined around cities of Prague, Brno, Ostrava and Plzeň

application of certain ethos or ideologies, which favoured the private ownership and were somehow connected to the euphoric atmosphere after the Velvet Revolution (Lux 2012: 85-86) In arguing for private ownership or rental housing were employed also certain discursive figures and imagination such as „spoiled tenants“ and „greedy investors“, which also shaped the perception of certain types of housing, resulting together with other factor in almost universal acceptance of the ideal model of homeownership (ibid 89, 92). The imagination of „good investment“ in the real estate is so pervasive, that during the quasi-experiment with young people concerning their behaviour on the housing market, most of them were willing to pay significant amounts of their funds for their own house or apartment. (Lux 2009) So it seems, that the ideal of private ownership, preferably of family house is deeply rooted in the shared cultural preferences in the post-socialist countries. Those cultural preferences are being performatively actualized and thus reified in the everyday life through the emotions, usage of certain commonly understandable symbolic references (tropes) and links to the moral ethos. All these thus a role in the construction of places.

1.3. Emotions and moral ethos in the game: construction of place - home

Dealing with the complex issues of the Financial crisis both on the conceptual and empirical level I would like to use didactically strong approach of setting certain dualities or dual oppositions (more like in the form of continuous scales), which will help us to understand and describe the phenomena. First dual opposition is the importance of duality of *everyday life* – living a life in a continuously created place, which is perceived as a “home” and *extraordinary experience* – buying a house, moving to the new community, (not) being struck by the Crisis. Dealing with the notion of crisis in the post-socialist condition of everyday life is being thematized by Olga Shevchenko, whereas she points to the issue of merging of the acute crisis into everyday lived experience. (Shevchenko 2009: 2-3)

Second duality is the one of *symbolic* and *material*. The symbolic domain contains abstract principles, emotions, ethics or ethos. The material one refers to the objects or to the actors, which posses certain „power“ to influence the strategic decision making. In the context of this research it may be the price of house, loan-to-value ratio,

furniture, garden, garages and others. This domain consist also from certain practices, which are being employed by the actors on the housing market. These two aspects are in close connection and are being intertwined with each other. In other words, the material domain is being subjected to the scrutiny of the symbolic domain and the meaning of objects and practices is being constantly recreated using the symbolic resources. (Blumer 1966)

Third duality is the difference between knowledge, which is being perceived as *expert* and *lay*¹⁷; this duality is also connected to the imagined opposition of rational and emotional actions. Fourth duality is the *scale of reference or orientation* configured in narratives regarding certain subjects, objects and situations ranging from global – national – community – family – individual levels.

The main concepts and theoretical approaches to deal with these issues certain concepts are summarized in the table 1 and will be described in this and following section.

Table 1: List of concepts

Concept	Author(s)
<i>Emotions</i>	Arlie R. Hochschild, Susan Shott, Christie Hazel
<i>Ethos</i>	Marie Ossowska
<i>Figure</i>	Anne Tsing
<i>Imagination</i>	Michael Burawoy, Zsuzsa Gille, Sean O'Really
<i>Narrative</i>	William Labov, Paul Ricoeur
<i>Metis</i>	James Scott
<i>Trope</i>	Daniel Knight

To grasp those four dualities request certain common ground and binding elements. The first one, is the importance of emotions in the both everyday and extraordinary experience. Emotions are helping to make sense of certain objects and thus they are essential in the process of knowledge construction. My understandings of emotion(s) is strictly sociological in the sense, that I do not want, nor I could study neural responses of my informants. Rather I analyze narrative – textual expressions of their emotions. Here, I adopt Susan Shott's symbolic interactionist perspective, that emotions are socially constructed. (Shott 1979) We do learn how to name certain

¹⁷ Lay knowledge may be understood and conceptually linked to the James Scott's concept of *metis*, which is the practical knowledge, rooted in the local contexts, informal and everyday practices (Scott 1998: 309-341)

feelings, labeling them as certain emotions, which has certain connotations in the discourse and thus they are able to construct meanings. But moreover, we also learn, what is appropriate to feel in certain situations and what is not. Arlie Russel Hochschild coin this as a *feeling rules*. (Hochschild 1975: 289). Emotions in this conceptualization are not only psychological states of mind, but involve cultural prescriptions and typification of actions in certain situations. (Hochschild 1979) In other words, thanks to shared cultural understandings, we are able to name certain states of mind and act in compliance with the definitions.

This approach to emotions reveal, that through their prescriptive force, are able to shape people actions especially in the process of employing what Shott calls reflexive (e. g. guilt, shame, pride) and empathic role-taking emotions. (Shott 1979: 1324) The strength of influence is based mostly on the moral connotations of certain emotions (especially guilt and shame) (Sheikh, Janoff-Bulman 2010) and is connected to the ability, which Ian Burkitt calls: „(...) *live up to one of the ideals that rank highly in our order of concerns*“. (Burkitt 2012: 463) Being able to live a life worth of (self)respect in essential and constitutes the power of the emotional management. But how are those emotions connected to the issue of Financial crisis, housing and construction of home? I suggest they are two complementary answers for this question. First, they are significant emotional discourses around these issues, which have also moral connotations. Second, being able to incorporate the dynamics of emotions in the understanding of place enable us to implement the procesual understanding of place(s).

The housing market has not been subject of analysis through the lens of emotions until recently. One of the approach is mostly represented by the behavioral economics trying to explain the existence of the market bubbles or other imbalances (Akerlof, Shiller 2009) This approach has the disadvantage of being culturally decontextualized. Second one is the approach represented by Hazel Christie, Susan Smith and Moira Munro, who are trying to combine the effect of emotions on the market and the meaning of home presenting the idea, that emotional discourses constitute framework for people and emotions are relational – do not resident “in the market” nor “in the buyers/sellers“ (Christie, Smith, Munro 2008: 2305). This approach seems to be more comprehensive, while is able to explain both „positive“ (attachment, pride, excitement) and „negative“ (fear, anxiety) emotions in the context of buying a real estate and creating a home (ibid. 2309-2310). These emotions are often hard to articulate, but seems to play significant role especially in the stage of final decision

making (Levy, Murphy, Lee 2008: 284-265). Their findings (Christie, Smith, Munro 2008: 2302-2309) suggest, that the certain emotions like fear and love, which are mostly enhanced in the people by certain emotional discourses and thus by their own self-regulation through feeling management and the will to retain a face (Goffman 1982) are both influencing the market and have significance for people themselves to be able to construct identity and ontological (in)security. (Christie, Smith, Munro 2008: 2310)

Financial crisis on all three levels, as I had previously conceptualized it, was subject to various more or less intense and fierce emotions and Jane Kenway with Johanna Fahey speak even about the emoscape of the Financial crisis (Kenway, Fahey 2010: 718). This should represent the idea of relational character and fluidness of emotions, while connecting them to certain moral ethos (in their dictionary ideoscapes), such as ethos of greed or austerity. (ibid. 720-725) Together with Maries Ossowska I understand the ethos as culturally shared morally significant symbolic references, which might be employed in the communication in order to raise certain emotions and understandings (Ossowska 2012)

1.4. Narrative(s): the story is behind it all

Saying: “Oh! This mortgage is such a good buy!” Does not just mean, that it is rationally and economically advantageous, but also makes you feel good and capable, because you were able to fix this kind of advantageous financial instrument.

For social scientist this remark would be like one the top-chart summer tune hundred times repeated in the radio: language is not neutral medium of communication, but using it you also create and construct the world for yourself and also for others.¹⁸ Although this might seem evident and matter-of-course, I feel the need to stress this important theoretical foundation in connection of Financial crisis and housing. I will focus here on the communication genre of narrative and on which tools are used in the narrative to steer the reality in one way or another. Lambros Fatsis deals with this language issue in very imaginative fashion drawing the examples from the maelstrom of Greek crisis and convincingly shows “*that language is simultaneously a political and performative act*”¹⁹ (Fatsis 2014) The “performativeness” of language will be more

¹⁸ I do not want to elaborate this idea already deeply rooted in the discourse of sociology and social sciences thanks to different authors dealing with this issue from different perspectives such as (Wittgenstein 2001) (Garfinkel 2002)(Berger, Luckmann 1973) (Searle 1969)

¹⁹ Fatsis (2014): <http://sociologicalimagination.org/archives/12728>

elaborated in the paragraphs dealing with narratives, while the political dimension will be more deeply developed in the paragraphs about the “language tools” used in the narratives.

The concept of narrative suffers from the most common disease of concepts in the social sciences. It is overloaded with different meanings and used in different frameworks (structural, hermeneutic, interactionist) and thus becoming sort of a “buzzword”. (Hájek, Havlík, Nekvapil 2012: 201). My aim is to avoid using the narrative as a conceptual and analytical cover as criticized by Paul Atkinson and Sara Delamont (Atkinson, Delamont 2006) and clearly state its relevance and utility.

Narrative seems to be irreplaceable in the effort of grasping both biographical life-times stories and small stories about everyday life experiences. (Spector-Mersel 2010: 213) Moreover bridging the great divide between the personal – inner narratives and culturally shared stories and events (Häninnen 2004) or biographical experience and the big histories and structural events (Polkinghorne 1988: 14) as conceptualized in the classic work of Charles Wright Mills. (Mills 2000) This aspect is not important just in the sense of communication between individuals, but narrative as a genre serves also for individuals themselves to make sense of life (Ezzy 1998: 239) (Spector-Mersel 2010: 210). The significance of narratives is embedded in its two important features: the evaluation of morality issue and dynamic, diachronic aspect of the narratives.

Classic work of William Labov dealing with the structure of narrative suggest the significance of the evaluation part of narrative. (Labov 1972: 354-370) The evaluation in this sense serves like a justification of the account, but also serves as a medium to communicate certain stances of the story-teller and serves as a performance of certain morality or ethos (Atkinson, Delamont 2006: 165) Narratives also may serve as a tool how could people describe themselves in the “favourable light”, being a “good person” (Hanninen 2004: 78) and constructing thus a certain face and practising the impression management in the Erving Goffman's sense. (Goffman 1959). This has profound methodological and analytical implications. From the analytical point of view, hearing people stories enable us to approach shared cultural understandings of what is “right“ and „wrong“ and thus knowing this, we are according the Charles Wright Mills able to deal with the issues of social control, which is applied through usage of certain „vocabularies of moral motives“ (Mills 1940: 908, 913)

From the methodological perspective it sheds a light on the „danger“ of insincere or even mendacious informants' accounts.²⁰ We have to be aware, that every narrative account is performance and presents certain language game (Atkinson, Delamont 2006: 170) and people's talking is not just talking but also “doing“ : influencing, evaluating, achieving (Hanninen 2004: 78) (Mills 1940: 907). Another issue, which should not be forgotten is the crucial idea²¹, that the meaning is not inherently contained somewhere in the story itself, but has to be created not just by the story-teller, but in the cooperation with listener. (De Fina 2009: 238, 246-248) Here, I get to the conceptually important model of narrative developed by Paul Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1983: 52-91) and described by Martin Hájek, Jiří Nekvapil and Martin Havlík (Hájek, Nekvapil, Havlík 2012: 210-217), which reveals the significance of co-operation and shared cultural pre-understandings. Ricoeur operates with the concept of *mimésis*, which represents the creative imitation and is being employed in the three stages of narrative(s): 1) prefiguration – being story-teller symbolic and temporal understanding of the world 2) configuration – creative teller's account of sequence of events into the meaningful story 3) refiguration – active perception of the narrative which combines the content of it with the listener/reader understanding.²² (Hájek, Nekvapil, Havlík 2012: 212)

But which „tools“ are being employed in the configuration of narrative and thus connecting individuals (pre)understandings? I would like to elaborate three of them, which are however closely interlinked: trope, figure and imagination. The usage of the Financial crisis as a trope, that is a symbolic reference, which draws his imaginative and meaning constructing power from a pool of metaphors, images and references to cultural, historic or situational cliches, is in detail described in the text of Daniel M. Knight (Knight 2013). Discursive usage of tropes draws its power from their imaginative potential. In another words connecting certain themes through metaphors using some cliches is the best cocktail to provoke certain emotions in the people. In this case blame, fear and anxiety. The emotions are not significant themselves, but serve in the political arena (ibid. 152-154) This usage of imaginations is also elaborated by Michael Burawoy and his colleagues (Burawoy 2000), especially by Zsuzsa Gille and Seán Ó. Riain, who argue that the successful usage of imagination in the public

20 This problem will be further elaborated in the Methods' section

21 This idea is closely connected to the above mentioned issue of language games and performativity of language.

22 According to Douglas Ezzy, who deals with Paul Ricoeur's conception of narrative and practical action, not only narratives itself do not „contain“ meanings, but also practical action needs to be interpreted and requires reading (Ezzy 1998: 244)

discourse is essential in order to achieve certain political goals. (Gille, Riain 2002: 283-285) They further develop the aspect of importance of scale: in order to be successful in the usage of imagination in the political domain, it is necessary to be able combine global and local imaginations. (ibid.)

The concept of figure refer to similar issues and according to Anna Tsing it is even more pervasive for cognitive grasp of certain „huge narratives“, as for example the capitalism (Tsing 2009: 9-11). Tsing makes the illustration with the figure of Wal-Mart being a “servant leader”. Operating with this figure in the discourse of labour market shapes the structure of global capitalism, while influencing the perception of its brand for lay American people. (ibid. 18-25) All this discursive and narrative tools share in common, that they refer to certain symbolic domain, which may be pool of metaphors, moral code or political programme and often create certain understandings of the situation in the „shortcut“ style and and trigger certain emotions.

In the context of housing John Flint and Rob Rowlands speak in the connection of commodification of most of the aspects of social life, and housing in particular, about the usage of imagination in the process of branding certain housing tenures. They suggest, that certain imagery is used e. g. for social housing to distinguish “better” social housing among the category itself (Flint, Rowlands 2003: 224-226). These distinctions are closely related to the moral values, „grammars of living“ and ethos and sort the people according to their ability to secure the home-ownership. (ibid. 224-228). To sum up, narratives are certain genres of communication, which enable people a) to understand the world b) construct their identities c) do not contain meaning itself, but the meaning arises from the co-operation of story-teller and listener/reader d) they employ figures, tropes and imaginations to secure either better teller-listener co-operation or fulfill some political goal e) they are considerably evaluative and this aspect is the key in the process of understanding shared moral values and ethos and thus conduct of people.

2. Methods

2.1. Research questions

The interviews were framed under three main themes: 1) narrative of housing (i. e. how they get to their home) 2) narrative of contacts with the neighbors 3) narrative of the Financial crisis. Although the themes of home and neighborhood were chosen at the beginning as supplementary and were supposed to provide certain context for the accounts of crisis, they have proven to be important and narratively rich. I had not entered the field with certain hypothesis regarding my data and I approached the data analysis in the inductive way (Mayring 2000: 3). However, complete “tabula rasa” is mere fiction and I also entered the field with my pre-understandings of “what the crisis is” and “what could it mean for my informants”, because I have had been dealing with this topic for some time already. I had also conducted two “pre-interviews” in order to better understand the position of my future informants, triangulate my pre-understandings even before the construction of my interviews' guideline. I had stated two main research questions, each of them with subsequent ones:

1. How is the perception of the Financial crisis connected to the process of constructing of home?

1.1. How does interrelates the everyday and extraordinary and expert and lay knowledge in this perception and in this process?

1.2. How do people relate to the crisis in terms of scale, do they perceive in the global or local context?

2. What kind of „language tools“ they use in their narratives when speaking about the Financial crisis and relating it to the issue of home?

2.1. What is the function of the crisis in the informants narrative, what they try to tell by using it in the narrative?

These questions may be summed up into one meta-questions, which underlines them. That is the question about the Crisis as an actor in people's life and life project and about the process how people cope with the dynamically changing world and create certain „safe havens“ (Taylor 1999: 21)

2.2. Researcher as an actor

Conducting field research and gathering of what might called primary data bears the necessity to deal with the role of the researcher in the reflexive way as described by Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (Hammersley, Atkinson 1996: 16-22; 80-123). Even though I have not conducted the ethnographic field research in the very meaning of that term, I am convinced, that every field research has to be reflected especially with regard to the role of the researcher. Earl Babbie mentions several reasons, such as the a) reactivity of those who are researched (informants will behave differently knowing they are being „studied“); b) process of adoption of the standpoint of the informants and c) last and definitely not least the ethical dimension, which actually underlines all above and consequent (Babbie 2007: 288-292). Conducting research is also deeply political matter. By studying the world, we are creating certain knowledge, which may be applied by different actors and (dis)interpreted in certain ways to support certain politics and policies. (Hammersley, Atkinson 1996: 20-21).

Being aware and concerned of these issues, I have put huge effort in not to harm my respondents in a way, that they could feel like being stupid or making wrong decisions, while talking about e. g. mortgage. I have tried not to evaluate their actions or stances during the interviews and if so, then only in the polite way to encourage them to continue. Their accounts could have been definitely influenced by the fact I had recorded the interviews and they were talking „officially“. Their knew their accounts would be part of the research project. So they might have been trying to construct their Face and narrative in a way they thought it would fit not only their and culturally shared image of what is supposed to be narrated about these topics, but also towards what they supposed to be mine image about that. (De Fina 2009). I have put effort into lowering the formality of interview, ensuring my informants, that we are chatting like friends or good acquaintance and thus I am convinced, that I was able to establish a certain „trust bond“. So was I able to discuss also problematic issues or those, who are not always the

topic of everyday conversation²³. However, in general those narratives were created and circulated about the „good things“ and only partially about „the problems“, thus also the silence or absence of certain connections between themes and silences²⁴ are significant for the full analytical picture. (Ryan, Bernard 2003: 92-93) (Martin 1990: 340, 355)

Moreover, the role of the researcher is not being present only during the interviews, but also afterwards during the process of interpretation and writing, (Hammersley, Atkinson 1996: 255-258) which is both creative act, but should be rooted in the evidence and the conclusion should correspond with the data. On the beginning, before the interviews, I had have rather perceived the Crisis in its first and second dimensions – political economy and discursive and I did not really divide the Crisis into the multiple phenomenon. Conducting the interviews opened to me a new insights, expecting the accounts to be more „expert“ or being related to the expert discourse of the Crisis. I was surprised by not exactly the lack of importance of the Crisis for my informants, but rather with the vagueness of understanding how Crisis works on the political economy dimension. But during the process of writing I have realized, that this kind of vagueness is one of the basic modes of applying certain knowledge, simplification of reality. Also the degree of relevance of the knowledge (Schuetz 1944: 500) regarding the Crisis seems interesting: Crisis itself was usually not a topic for the informants (i. e. not relevant for them), but bringing certain issue into the interview, the Crisis has become more and more important in their narratives illustrating certain features of their identities and practices as being described in the Findings section.

2.3. How can be the perceptions of the Financial crisis approached?

Being theoretically and conceptually rooted in the what might be in general called social constructivism and symbolic interactionism, while using the framework of narrative analysis and being interested in the lay accounts regarding the Financial crisis, choosing the narrative interviews as the main method of data collection was obvious decision. The decision to conduct the narrative interviews was done after considering

23 In certain interviews I was told, that I am the first, who hear this account about certain issues.

24 The importance of silence i. e. not telling certain issues into the account is significant for certain authors in their studies of collective memory such as Paloma Gay y Blasco (Blasco in Pine, Kaneff, Haukanes 2004: 255-272) and Susan Narotzky and Paz Moreno (Narotzky, Moreno in Pine, Kaneff, Haukanes 2004: 273-294)

possible advantages and disadvantages of this approach. Both of these are rooted in the character of narrative accounts as already described in the theoretical section. To revise them very briefly, narratives are creative structured stories, which enables narrators transcend the time and space²⁵ and express their opinions, which may be based on the shared moral ethos. They are performative acts, which reconstruct the past by connecting certain events and actions into meaningful whole (Chase in Denzin, Lincoln 2005: 656-657) However narratives itself do not contain meaning, but the meaning is re-created in the co-operation of story-teller, who sets up what can be and how it should be understood, and listener, who hears or reads and thus interprets the narrative(s).

I was aware of the possible limitations of the narrative inquiry approach, connected to the a) issue of correspondence of narrative reconfiguration of past (based on the personal memory) and history of narrated events (Miztal 2003: 115-116) and b) narrators employing the facework (Goffman 1982), in order not to be perceived as stupid or incompetent and/or morally degraded in the eyes of others (i.e. me as listener). I made up the advantage from the second issue, interpreting the narratives as such, enabling to deconstruct those faceworks. The first issue is inevitable struggle between subjective memory and collective, “objective” history, which is actually false one, while all the accounts of past are mere reconstructions and the past is performatively recreated in the narrative and can be only read as such.

Another, more concrete hazards were firstly, that the topic of the Financial crisis, financial situation and family issues may be for certain people very intimate and private issues, which they do not feel comfortable speaking about with a complete stranger. Secondly, they just do not remember or do not care about the issues of the Financial crisis.

First strategy, I embraced to deal with those hazards was the specific framing of the interviews: when I asked for the interview I said, that I am interested in the „way they acquired their home, about their relation in the neighborhoods and about the Financial crisis“. Also the logic of interviews followed this frames. Second strategy was to establish certain bond with the narrator either built on the fact a) we knew each other from past or b) that we share somebody who both know or c) being involved in some communication with this person already for some time about the issue of my research. Third strategy somehow surpass the interviews frame and rest in the fact I

25 Linking the micro everyday scale with „big events“ (i. e. history) and structures.

systematically followed also the media and expert discourse²⁶ about the Financial crisis, which allows me to orientate in this complex issues.

2.4. Interviews

Altogether I have conducted 11 narrative interviews which ranged from 40 to 75 minutes²⁷ and 9 of them were done with individual and 2 of them with couples. Two of these interviews were preliminary and were done only without explicit scenario, only framed by the topic on my research. Afterwards I have developed an interview's guideline with a sets of themes and questions sorted into the three frames: 1) narrative of housing (i. e. how they get to their home) 2) narrative of contacts with the neighbors 3) narrative of the Financial crisis. Although structured in this way, I have never actually used the interview guideline in the way, that I would look up and read any question from it and I encourage my narrators to tell their stories in the way, which is convenient for them. In other words, they get the instructions, what themes I am interested in and I then I asked the question in case the narrators were not talking about the issues I wanted to be mentioned in order to compare their accounts. All of the interviews were recorded and nine „core“ interviews were transcribed completely and analyzed subsequently.

I also tried to specify the group of my informants in order to be able to get a deeper understanding about certain imagined social group. In my case I was interested in the people who bought their houses or apartments slightly before, during or after the Crisis, so the likelihood that the Crisis is relevant theme for them might be higher. They were also mostly men and women with families (two of them divorced) and young children in their thirties or early forties. Roughly half of them are from Prague and half of them from Písek.²⁸ Most of them were also what could be classified as middle-class and in terms of education with mostly university or college degrees. Therefore the chance their narratives would converge around certain themes and the usage of tropes, figures and imaginations would be comparable was increased.

26 I have participated during my work experience as a chief co-organized of the Eurodad-Glopolis International Conference 2013 'Debt, finance and economic crisis – consequences and solutions' and thus I had unique chance to experience certain „expert“ accounts of the crisis in person.
<http://eurodad.org/1544809/>

27 Together roughly 10 hours of interviews.

28 My hometown, located in the South Bohemia, with 30,000 inhabitants

During the search for the interviews I have used a) my social networks b) contacted by e-mail approximately fifty „Společenství vlastníků jednotek“, which is the „Collective of the owners“, legal entity. The usage of social networks proved to be more effective and even though I have managed to get several answers on my e-mails, I have gathered only one interview via this mode of communication. Four of the nine core interviews were done in the home of the informants and thus I could also observe the subject of our interview - their homes. Four of them were done in cafés and one of them in the informant's office. They were all similar in the fashion, that my informants reserved their time for the interview and were not overly under the time-pressure. They were all instructed not only about the topic of my research and themes I am interested into, but also about the ethics of my research. That is, I have explained and promised them their anonymity and my secrecy in the sense of connecting their narratives and them as individuals. In this regard all possible references, which may suggest the connections in the quotation in the findings section will be anonymized. After the official end of interview – switching off the recording, most of the informants expressed the interest in my thesis and studies and most of the interviews contained this kind of personal follow-up.

Due to the previous contact with informants in order to tell them information about my research (framing and topics) roughly half of them had quite prepared their introductory narrative and half of them mostly expected me to ask and start the interview. The structure of the overall narrative followed mostly the logic of the framing: home > neighbors > Crisis. And after the introductory brief narrative each informant stepped down to the more complex stories. Each of them was also able to add some their insight or remarks in the end of interview, when I was asking the question: „If they want to add anything, they feel we missed during the chat and is important for them in the connection to these topics“.

2.5. Method of analysis of the narrative accounts

I have already stressed out the conceptual significance of narrative as communication genre. From the analytical point of view, I have decided not to conduct the narrative analysis in the strict sense, but combine it with the qualitative content analysis. (Krippendorff 2004) I have decided for this combination from two main

reasons: a) application of narrative analysis alone increase the risk of overlooking certain figures or tropes in the narrative, which might be crucial b) qualitative content analysis is very flexible (White, Marsh 2006) and enables combinations with other kinds of analysis and conceptual framework i. e. narrative analysis.²⁹

Certain branches of narrative analysis, which may be labeled as structuralist are quite limited in the results of analysis, being able to describe the common structure of narrative (Labov 1972), lifetime events related to the macro-scale event (Kazmierska 2001), or represent certain process on the behalf of narratives into the visual, structural model (Bearman, Stovel 2000). These approaches alone would not sufficient enough to answer my research questions and analyze the narrative figures and tropes in their structural connections, but also in their embeddedness in the meanings and context. The concrete analytical procedure, which I have undertaken can be summed in the following steps:

Process of analysis:

- 1 Preliminary phase: transcription of the interviews, transfer of data into the Atlas.ti software, which I used in the following analysis.
- 2 Open coding of the interviews, where the unit of analysis (Schilling 2006: 31) were mostly sentences and/or paragraphs, which signified certain stance or evaluation of action of informants.
- 3 Roughly from the half of the data analyzed, I have developed preliminary categories, which I tried to use for every following coding and thus in the code combining categories and concrete codes. Categories were constructed on the behalf of their thematic similarities (Ryan and Bernard 2003) and involved symbolic and practical dimensions (as described in table 2)
- 4 After this the stage of what might be called “acute constant comparison”, rose up 500 codes, which were only limited in their affiliation to their categories. Thus I have reduced the number of codes looking for the similarities in the accounts and assigned all codes to certain categories (in the Atlas.ti so-called families). This resulted in the number of 250 codes.

²⁹ This approach is somehow similar to what Hammersley and Atkinson call „theoretical triangulation“ (1996: 165), but in the sense of methods of analysis.

- 5 All of the categories were subject of specific analysis in order to „make sense of them“ and in order to identify the most relevant ones. Preliminary results were based on the careful comparison of accounts connected to each category – theme were laid down.
- 6 Three most relevant categories were identified taking into account also their quantity³⁰ (Schilling 2006: 34) and the relevance for the construction of narrative: *Crisis*, *ethos* and *emotions*. Codes of these categories were visualized and then sorted out according to their content into the super-codes or sub-categories (as presented in the findings section)
- 7 Again the process of what Krippendorffs calls hermeneutic loop (2004: 87-88) was undertaken and the relations of categories – supercodes – codes – data was reconsidered.
- 8 Three main findings were formulated and again the narrative aspect of the data were taken into account when constructing the main interpretation, which frames the main and minor findings into one coherent result.

Table 2: List of final analytic categories

Non-textual evaluation	Symbolic references	Textual evaluation	Practices/ Materiality / Everyday experience
Ambivalence	Aesthetics	Evaluation	Children factor
Emotions	Imaginations	Expert('s)	Family
Symbolic boundaries	Ethos	Self-perception	Finance
	Tropes		Financing of housing
			Mortgage
			Locality
			Real estate agency
			Reconstruction
			Unrealized housing
Cross-cut categories	Crisis, Community, Housing, Space		

Describing the process of analysis in the very detail and clarifying each step, I would like to increase the „truth value“ of my study (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Finally I would like to stress the fact, that I have not analyzed the accounts as taken-for-granted

³⁰ For the relevance of combination of „qualitative“ and „quantitative“ methods see Onwuegbuzie, Leech (2005)

facts, but as performative accounts embedded in certain (un)wanted language ideologies (Gal 2005). On the other hand I have not fully adopted the deconstructivist methodology (Martin 1990), but only focused on the certain ambiguities, contradictions and metaphors (ibid. 355), which hailed the incoherence between the what is being told and evaluated by narrator and what is being told in the other part of the story or is taken as the culturally „normal“ way of referring to certain issues.

3. Findings

3.1. Narratives of the Financial crisis

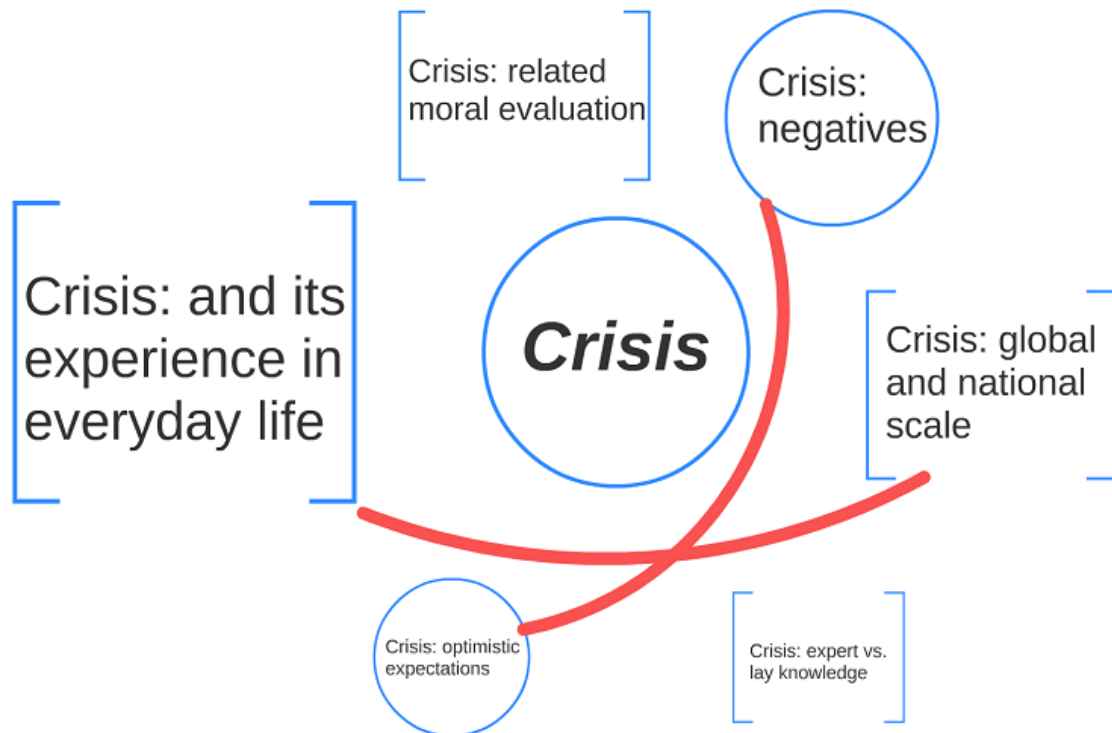
It has been 2 034 days since first wave of unexpected, unimaginable and unexperienced turmoil struck on the global financial markets turning what used to precious stocks into worthless trash. This era was marked by the fall of Lehman Brothers and ever since we have been witnessing the massive changes on global and national scale in the several domains of economic. Prices of houses dumped, interest rates from sovereign bonds for some countries skyrocketed and millions of people either lost their jobs or their job security. Even though the Czech Republic was not the country hit severely with either debt-crisis or did not suffered from the burst of housing market bubble, mass media were referring quite often about „the (Financial) Crisis“. How is this major social and economic event narratively expressed by my informants?

Interviews with informants were framed as interview about „housing, finding a home, community and Crisis“, thus narrative of Crisis was supposed to be inherent part of the interviews. Surprisingly, only one third of informants actively worked with the concept of Crisis in their stories, while the other third just briefly mentioned it during narrating about different issues and one third of them did not mentioned it at all till they were asked direct question about the Crisis.

Sub-categories created from informant's account are visualized in scheme 1, their size based on the number of occurrences. Most of the informants deploy Crisis in their narratives as a trope, which constitutes certain emotions, moral evaluations and may have the necessity to recall the knowledge resources based on their expert knowledge. There are two main dual oppositions how people frame their perception of the Crisis (connected with red line in scheme 1). First one is the issue of scale: whether

they are connecting their everyday life to the Crisis or talking about crisis from the global or national perspective; second one is opposition of expectations which are emic categories of optimism/pessimism.

Scheme 1: Visualization of Crisis' sub-categories



3.1.1. Everyday experience of crisis or global scale : lay or expert knowledge

Even though the introductory and framing topic of interviews was the experience with housing market and creating of home, the majority of references about the Crisis were not mentioned in connection to these processes. However, they were configured by informants in connection to their work experiences. In their accounts mostly figures the expressed anxiety over the jobs (in)security, which is mostly taken-for-granted as caused by the Crisis.

„ (...) pro nás je nejdůležitější, aby měl manžel práci no. (...)“ „For us, the most important things is that my husband has got the job.“ (1:69)

„ (...) ale určitě se projevovalo [Krise] takový to období leden až duben, tak jako to jsme vždycky měli jako minimální plat, tak jako snížený ty platy na nějaký minimum.“
„ (...) it [the Crisis] has definitely showed during the periods from January to March, we always got the lowest salary possible“ (5:70)

On several occasions informants mentioned, mostly „by-the-way“, not being particularly proud of it, the financial tensions they have been experiencing while paying for their mortgages and/or their „housing savings loans“. Nevertheless, they hardly put the Crisis as a main factor behind these difficulties. Only one informant said, that their financial tension was the result of her husband's loss of job (which was coined as „caused by the Crisis“). So, we get again to the pervasive connection of jobs (in)security issues and Crisis in the informants narratives.

Informants were framing the Crisis in the narratives within their everyday experience. Using it as a figure, almost with superstitious abilities, as something distant, which just affects the everyday life and it is taken as something people cannot really do much about. Crisis is somewhere out there causing our jobs becoming less secure and the competition on labour market fiercer.

„Takže jsme si říkali, že se nás to netýká, že ta první vlna tý krize se ho nedotkla, až taková druhá jo.“ „So we thought we are not concerned, the first wave of crisis did not hit him, the second one it did.“ (4:66)

„ (...) protože to přesně vidím, je to velký problém s tou prací tady u nás.“ „ (...) I can clearly see how is the problem with a jobs in here (...)“ (7:32)

This may of course be a problem also for the security of their mortgage (or other debts) payments and thus for their homes. Being aware of this mortgage was functioning as a significant trope in the narratives and as a actor in their lived experience.

Some of the informants attempted to somehow transcend their actually lived reality and incorporate the Crisis into the bigger scale picture. This has been done mostly by referring to the nation scale of the Crisis and again to the situation on the labour market in the state or global context. Even in this attempt to reach for another perspective the definitions and perceptions of crisis are rather vague and non-expert and Crisis figures as invisible Leviathan causing upheaval.

Although connecting the Crisis to the labour market was the most common and pervasive practice, in certain narratives the Crisis also figured in the process of acquiring and maintaining the home. Either in the sense of almighty force on the market, which cause the situation before 2008 to be the „jungle of the fierce competition“ and the situation in e. g. 2012 to be „piece of cake for buyers“. This theme was common in one narrative.

(...) The prices were high, it was not the crisis yet in the 2007. The market was kind of overheated and it was the construction BOOM around here, yeah new house everywhere, everywhere new buildings ... (3:99) BUT when we were selling the apartment, the crisis already come into it, real estate market has frozen up (3:105) ... I made with him kind of gentleman agreement, de facto I made, but that was the era! You could saw five people standing in a row [for that apartment] so I told him 'OK, good, let's make a deal.'. (3:116)

(...) to zrovna byli ceny nahoře, když ještě nebyla krize 2007, to jakoby, to bylo našponovaný a právě tady se stavělo, uplně si viděl, to byl BOOM jo, takže tady všude byly novobyty, jakoby novostavby (3:99) ... ALE když jsme to prodávali, tak to už byla krize, byty se nehejbaly (3:105) ... Já jsem s ním udělal jako nějakou dohodu, že jo, jako gentlemanskou, de facto jsem, to byla ta doba! Tam si věděl, že dalších pět lidí v řadě stojí, takže já jsem mu řekl: "Oukej a dobrý, takhle se dohodnem." (3:116)

3.1.2. Moral dimension of crisis: not just to be or not to be optimist/pessimist : emotions and ethos related to the crisis

Concepts of „optimism“ and „pessimism“ are being used by the informants, when talking about the future prospects of their life or society in general. Crisis being something negative is mostly expressed by narrating about certain strongly experienced emotions: mostly fear, anxiety and insecurity. Crisis has the attribute of being a trope, possible to use to explain certain complex processes under one umbrella buzz-word term. Thus the question lies whether emotions mentioned in connection to the Crisis are actually being triggered by the perception of Crisis or whether the Crisis is used by people to legitimate their feelings of insecurity. In other words, do the *political*

economy of crisis and its *discursive dimension* influence the lived realities or the this event and situation serves only like a reference and frame for interpretation of certain lived conditions. Only in one narrative was this insecurity spoken in reflexive way and was evaluated as something at least ambivalent – with some bad sides, but also with many possible opportunities.

„ (...) *ale kdybych byla sama za sebe, tak bych z toho [Krize] měla obrovskéj strach.*“

„ (...) *if I am by myself, I would be really scared [of Crisis]*“ (2:46)

„ (...) *neděláte radši nic, nepodnikáte teda se zařizováním toho bytu, nějaký podstatný věci, protože se bojíte, co bude. No a potom se to zase nějak, zase setřese.*“ „ (...) *you rather don't do anything, no furnishing of the apartment, no important stuff, because you are afraid, what's going to happen. Well, and then you just shake it off.*“ (4:91)

„*Tak jsem dostala trochu strach z toho, že to půjde třeba vejš jo. I když nevím, ale měla jsem z toho strach, tak to hrálo roli taky v tom mém rozhodování jo.*“ „*So, I was little bit scared it will rise up [market prices of apartments]. Even, if I did not know, but I was scared. So, it played a role in the my decision making.*“ (6:38)

„ (...) *že ten obecný trend je k nějakým třeba kombinacím několika úvazků. To znamená menší jistotě, na druhou stranu větší flexibilitě, což sebou jako podle to nemusí bejt apriori negativní věc. Jo, že člověk neví, nemá takový to zaměstnání 20 let na jednom místě - přideš v 9, odejdeš prostě v 5...je to (...) tak jsou lidi, kterým to vadí víc než mně jo.*“ „ (...) *the general trend is towards some combination of part-time jobs. That means less security, but more flexibility, what does not have to be apriori negative issue. Well, yeah you do not have the same job for 20 years, like you would come at 9 and leave at 5 (...) they are people, who are concerned with this [insecurity].*“ (8:63)

The place of expressing the emotions seems to have special place in narratives. Emotions are not being told at first, but they sometimes resides under the surface of the well constructed narrative. At certain points of the story there are bring out either when a) the narrator somehow lose his or her role and confess in a way to this emotion, which may be regarded as potentially „shameful“ b) when narrator wants to express his or her point and supports it with expressed emotion to prove his or her point. Here is important to remind, that also other tropes worked as important to provoke fear or distress: mortgage and loans in general.

„ (...) nikdy nevíš, co se stane. Kdo, kterej z nás přestane vydělávat nebo prostě je to takovej Damoklův meč no [hypotéka], kterýho jsme se rádi zbavili teda.“ „ (...) you never know, what's gonna happen. Who will quit the job, so it is such a Damocles sword [mortgage] which we enjoyed to get rid of.“ (2:26)

„ (...) tu oprátku okolo krku [hypotéku] jsme nikdy neměli (...)“ „we never had the rope around our neck. [mortgage]“ (3:131)

„Ne! Hypotéku ne, no...že jo no (smích) pro mě naštěstí ne no. No překlenovací úvěr. Takže tím, že jsem sama se třema dětma, tak by se mi to i špatně splácelo, to bych si asi netroufla.“ „No! Mortgage no! Luckily, I did not have to. Only bridging loan. I would not dare, because I am alone with three children and it would be hard to repay it.“ (6:14)

Speaking about mortgages, loans and financial instruments we are going to move to the moral dimension of crisis. Informants' narratives mostly draw their evaluation from two ethos. First one was ethos of self-responsibility. Second one the criticism of overconsumption (mostly employed in two narratives). The first one brings several interesting interpretation routes and keys for understanding the narratives in the broader picture.

It can be paraphrased like this: „I don't like people complaining...if you want, you can always do something...you can start from yourself.“

These kind of references to the implicit moral codes can reveal us a) narrators are constructing symbolic boundaries between them (as capable) and other (as potentially incapable). Symbolic boundaries being originally Michele Lamont's (Lamont, Fournier 1992) (Lamont, Molnar 2002) concept, while one of the dimension of symbolic boundaries create certain distinction and differentiation between „us“ and „them“, in a way „us“ = „good“ and „them“ = „bad“ on the moral basis (Southerton 2002: 175); and b) the reference to this kind of morality suggest, that the „right“ people are those who are self-responsible in the neo-liberal financial capitalism way. This notion does not come with the trope of Crisis as strongly as with the issue of finding a self-owned house or apartment as I will show in the next sections.

In the informants' narratives the trope of Crisis becomes in a way fetish (Ahmed 2004: 76-77), which is able to maintain „life on its own“ without necessary reference to the „reality“, because people employ this trope to reduce the complexity of late modern lives (Schimank 2008). This reduction functions with the use of Financial crisis as a *deus ex machine* coming and threatening people job security and sometimes their housing security, thus threatening their ontological security. This conception of Crisis resembles the conception of lay perception of Crisis, which David Leiser, Sacha Burgeois-Gironde and Rinat Benita call the systemic perspective on the Crisis (Leiser, Burgeois-Gironde, Benita 2010: 134-135), but apart from their conceptualization also this dimension contains the moral evaluations.

The fact, that usage of trope of Crisis has not been „natural“ for my informants suggest, that the figure of uncertainty, insecurity does not fit exactly into the general narrative of construction of home and serves mostly like a performative expressions of problems and their solutions.

3.2. Narratives of home and community

Looking for a place, which could become your home seems to be a quest for a holy grail in the informants' narratives. Analyzing this ultimate decision, two important notions have proven to be significant. First, the particularity of certain places (locations) in terms of their atmosphere and accessibility of other places or objects. Second, so called „children factor“. Both of these are connected to the imagination of perfect home and then the actual decision to get certain home based on both „rational“ and „irrational“ factors.

3.2.1. Accessibility for home: nature, work, garden and schools

Thematization of space has been important in the construction of narratives. Certain configuration of space into places and objects, which are being „useful“ and „pleasant“ for informants is needed to satisfy the need for the ideal home or at least get to this ideal as close as possible. Most pervasive was the imagination of *nature*. This trope enters as the most significance actor in the narrative evaluation of certain places (current of unrealized) home or during the description of the searching process. Nature

should be close at hand. That is something, which is taken for granted, because it is just good for children. You can go there and be there, with children and there is nothing to question about. Comparing this to the Fehervary accounts, we can see striking similarity. Fehervary also mentions the change from the socialist ideal (live in the city and be in the countryside on the weekends) to the post-socialist's embodied in the suburbia housing and propose, that the continuity of dream was not abandoned completely and the arguments somehow remained the same even though the context has changed: *“to be in the suburbs is good, because there is nature, therefore it is healthy for your children“*. However it has been modified by the emphasis on the self-realization through your housing and explicit denial of socialist past as backward using certain aesthetics. (Fehervary 2011: 25,27, 32-34)

„Já tady ještě samozřejmě nějakým způsobem jak máte malý děti, tak od toho bydlení a od toho očekáváte nějaký jakovýto zázemí vedle, jako myslím hřiště a přístup do lesa (...), tak tady taky, to bylo takový, že eště jakoby chcete, aby to bylo trošku u té přírody.“ *“Well of course, if you have small kids, you expect some standard of living. I mean some playgrounds and access to forest (...) you want to be close to the nature.“* (7:45)

„ (...) takže pro mě bylo důležitý to místo, aby se mi líbila ta příroda, to okolí (...) „ (...) for me, the location was important, that I like the nature and surroundings.“ (8:7)

Difference between the ideal of my informants and the Fehervary's is the denial of suburbia by my informants. Not only because the distance and worse accessibility (you have to “drive everywhere“), but also due to the symbolic boundaries towards those who live there.

Similarly to this topic, in some of the narratives was present the idea, that public space has undertaken major change in terms of using it by children. There is no more „going out to streets“ and play there on their own for them, as it used to be even fifteen years ago (as I can remember it myself). Now according to my informants, this is not possible due to several reasons, while the main one is the importance of feeling of safety for the children. Another one is the rising structuring of free time for children and thus the lack of it for them. But the idea of safety is quite interesting and some of informants spoke about the place with boundaries, where you can release your children, but not in the public space itself. This change of the public space, evident in the perception of

people would deserve more attention in some other research, but here we need to focus back on the process of construction of „good home“ narrative. I suggest, that the trope of nature as a certain space, which is semi-public: you go there and meet other people, but usually as a family – you do not leave kids alone, functions as a new public space and is important to use not only that you have fresh air and nice smell of recently cut wood.³¹

Although *nature* is the most frequent term, also another tropes are being employed in order to describe the perfect home. One of them, not surprisingly, is the imagination of *garden*, which acts as somehow tamed nature, again ready for children to play around.

„A děti, že si užijou tu zahradu, to co jsme neměli, že jsme se nastěhovali do bytu no.“
„And kids can enjoy the garden. That is, what we did not have, when we had moved to the apartment.“ (5:51)

Another objects and features, which are being summoned to illustrate the need for a good accessibility are mostly proximity to schools, jobs, and places like shops or hospitals and sometimes the fact you can reach them by foot is highly regarded. What is strikingly similar is the almost ever-present figure of importance of the possibility to access these objects or places for children and by children. They become almost the magic and center point for the people conduct. Proximity of grand-parents sometimes become essential and influence the decision making process in terms of choosing the location of new home.

„(...) já neřídím, tady to máme kousíček jo, takže to je jako obrovská výhoda. Potom tady máme 2 základní školy, který zvažujeme to je taky jako super, jako pro mě jako neřidiče je to perfektní, (...) ta nemocnice je třeba teď daleko, ale jinak lokalita super, k řece je to kousek, jako myslím, že i tak jsme jako spokojený no.“ *„(...) I do not drive the car, so that we have everything nearby is advantage. Two elementary schools, we can decide, so for non-driver that is perfect. (...) the hospital is quite far away, but the locality is great, it is close to the river, so I think we are content here.“ (1:32)*

31 Another example from the post-socialist context about the significance of (good accessibility of) nature for the people everyday life experience I drew from my experience of two-week field research in the sleeping district Lazdynai in Vilnius, Lithuania. Figure of nature being important and desirable was one of the most common, when talking about their attitudes toward their district and private/public space production and consumption.

The need for space, which can be used for children and also for self-realization evokes the dream for your own family house. This dream is yet not being about the house in the suburbs for my informants and possibly represent the dream not just for family house, but for family and house (as a place of security). Presence of this dream in people's narratives is not being non-reflexive, but becomes certain reference point: you can refer to this ideal type of dream when creating the narrative of your ideal home. You can either fit in this category (which seems to be dominant) or you are kind of subversive and you have to bring certain arguments to support your decision not to move to family house. Children often serves also as an actors, who enable communication between people, becoming reason to bring them together and somehow enhance the relationships among the community (but not to build the community itself). Even though this was very common narrative, informants usually mentioned that their contacts within community (or better to say with close neighbors) are on the basis: „We are good, but we are not *friends*.“ Children often figure in narratives as reasons, why to move or why to do a reconstruction of the apartment or family house. In terms of analytical significance, the codes related to the category „children factor“ are as present as the codes related to the category of „crisis“.

3.2.2. Materiality and symbolic boundaries

Accessibility and „children factors“ are important figures in the narratives, but for some informants, they are not the only ones used in describing the ideal home. For some people certain material objects are significant in creating an impression of the ideal. Two most important are balcony and garage. I interpret these two as tools to enable better accessibility of the public space, keeping the tool itself being private *per se* at the same time. In other words, balcony brings a little bit of „nature“ into the home, while garage enables to possess car (your private object) in order to be able to reach for work, school and other public places. But the significance of materiality and places is not in its „usefulness“ and function, but resides also in the realm of aesthetics and symbolic dimension. Differentiation between the city as a cultural hub and countryside as a place for nature and the aesthetic and functional differentiation between gardens as places of „chill out“ and places „to deal with“ (cutting grass, etc.) are employed to

create certain symbolic boundaries. These are even more evident in the example of differentiation, which is being made by some of the informants: them and „others“ living in the suburbia. The suburbia figures as a place with a bad accessibility and place, which encompasses certain strict social norms, which are materialized in conform aesthetics of garden and in a way comparative game run about the social status.

„ (...) kdežto když jsme šli sem, tak jakoby si si uvědomoval, že tady jsou starousedlíci, někdo je tady možná novější a jakoby, že tady tak zapadnem, že tady nebudeme, že tady, v té novostavbě, každý si kouká přes plot: 'hele ten má 2 garáže, ten má 4 auta (...) nedodržíme ten standard, kterej třeba tam všichni očekávají a že tam budem trnem v oku někomu jako.' „ (...) when we moved here, I realized, that they are mostly denizens here and we would rather fit here, that in the newly build neighborhoods, where everybody is like: 'look he has 2 garages and 4 cars' (...) we would not meet that standard, which is expected there and we will be like thorn in the eye for someone.“ (3:5,6)

„No a druhá věc vlastně je, že Petr má kapelu a prostě je rád žije jako kulturním životem. Já taky nejsem úplně jako ten tip, co jako zaleze jenom zahrádka a domeček.“

„Well, and second thing is that Peter has a band and he likes to live a culturally rich life. I am also not a type, which cares only about the garden and the house.“ (5:14)

„No, máme vlastně kamaráda, který taky jako bydleli v Čechovce a ty se přestěhovali do Vlastce...obrovské pozemek, dům, všecko...no, ale to je problém...aby vůbec oni přijeli do Písku je strašnej problém furt jako musíme my jezdit na nima nebo musíme, už bylo x akcí, kdy jsme říkali, ať sem přijedou a je to já nevím 10 km a oni tady pracujou, oni sem jezdí do práce, ale jako ten život společenské absolutně nula. Právě proto, že tam mají děti a nemůžou je tam nechat a je to hrozně komplikovaný. Je to volba jestli chce mít člověk ovce na zahradě nebo jestli chce jít do kavárny, prostě je to...tak my nechcem ovce.“

„Well, we have a friend who lived in the city, but moved in the village...huge estate, house, everything...but there is a problem for them to come the city. We always have to go there to see them. It was like a thousand events we told them to come, and it is only

like 10 km and they work here, but still the social activity zero. They have kids, and they cannot left them there alone, so it is horribly complicated. It is the choice, you either have sheeps on the garden or you can go to the coffe house...so we do not want the sheeps. (5:91)

These symbolic boundaries serves as important figures in informants' narratives, because they enable them to configure certain ideal place and express the „best“ of it making other places „not suitable“ for them and in general „suspicious“ and just not that great. Through the narrative expressing of the symbolic boundaries creation certain ethos and emotions are revealed, these will be described more deeply in following sections.

3.2.3. Atmosphere and decision : bond and locations

The process of finding a home was narrated as a complex chain of events and stages, which employ the need to make several different choices, regarding the financial issues and accessibility and (in)security issues among the most important ones. Informants often stressed the difficulties and demands of the process of searching for a new home, which involves a lot of effort in terms of looking up informations and going to visit the apartments or houses. Interestingly enough the final decision itself and sometimes the fact, they were able to get to a certain home or apartment was the result of what could be seen as „coincidence“ or „irrational factor“ on the first sight. It may be the coincidence in terms of acquiring the information about the certain house and possibility to buy it via informal networks of contacts. Also majority of narratives mention the crucial importance of certain instant emotional bond to the place, which is framed under the term ”atmosphere”.

„ (...) jakmile jsem sem vkročila, tak se tady člověk cejtil dobře“ „(...) the moment I came it, I felt good.“(2:14)

„ (...) ale v tom starým, de facto, když jsme sem přišli, tak na mě jakoby dejchla nějaká taková atmosféra, kterou jsem znal a kterou, do který jsem jakoby chtěl vstoupit, kdežto, když jsem viděl (...)“ „but in that old house, when we came, so such a atmosphere just

embraced me, which was kind a familiar for me, the one, which I wanted to enter into (...) (3:4)

„ (...) tak jsme v podstatě neměly moc času na výběr, přesto jsme vybírali půl roku, ale i tak se během toho půl roku neobjevilo nic, co by bylo takový úplně SRDEČNÝ.“ „(...) basically we did not have much time for the selection, but anyway we have searched for half a year, but still nothing really HEARTY.“(4:23)

„No...a to jsme se šli podívat a okamžitě jsme věděli, že to je von.“ „So, we went there and we immediately knew that's the one. (5:18)

„Určitě, určitě i na ten dojem jako člověk dá.“ „Certainly, you care about the impression [of the apartment]. (6:30)

This immeasurable moment often deeply involves expressing emotions in the narrative configuration of the situation. The place is immediately able to generate certain emotions, which are essential in the establishing the connection between informants and the place to construct a home.

This again supports the Akhil Gupta's and James Fergusson's thesis about the importance of *home* and *homeland* in the imagination of people and also support their claim about the constant recreation of place(s) and culture(s) (Gupta, Ferguson 1992: 10-13) through the emotional bond towards the places as stressed out by Doreen Massey (Massey 1994). She argues for the relevance of procesuality of creation of places. Her approach is remarkable not only because she points on the significance of process and dynamics of place, but that she also suggest to understand a place such text. Places themselves have no inherent meaning. They are ascribed to them only by „readers“ (people, networks of people) summoning certain values and characteristics, which are based on their knowledge and networks of relations between them. (ibid.)

These emotions of attachments were not often limited to certain house or apartment, but to the place in the broader sense – certain city is being perceive as home. The evidence from narratives thus support this conception of places not being created merely by the fact of being in the certain time-space coordinates, but also by certain interactions and processes.

3.3. Narrative expression of ethos and emotions

I have already touched the theme of morality, which is inherently connected to the genre of narrative, because informants were making evaluative judgements, which were often connected and expressed by emotions. In other words, it is very hard to explain some moral imperatives by referring to them directly and explicitly, explaining them in the rational way or sort of logic. They are often taken-for-granted. Although the rationalization of them may be one of the strategies how to legitimize them. Emotions thus become one of the ways how to effectively express certain informants stances and opinions, while they are maintaining the role of „good narrator“. One, who can tell a meaningful story. On the other side, emotions did not work as a pure explainer of the ethos in informants narratives, e. g. „We are scared of having the mortgage, thus we think is bad.“, but rather accompany the moral accounts in a illustrative way to make them more significant.

Another important feature in the stories, which enabled expression of moral commitments or judgements were certain tropes, which could informants relate, criticize or deny or in some other way use in their stories. Some of them were already mentioned: mortgage, loans or credit, nature, garden; and others were also used: role of expert, unrealized housing choices, family house, reconstruction. (see the table 3)

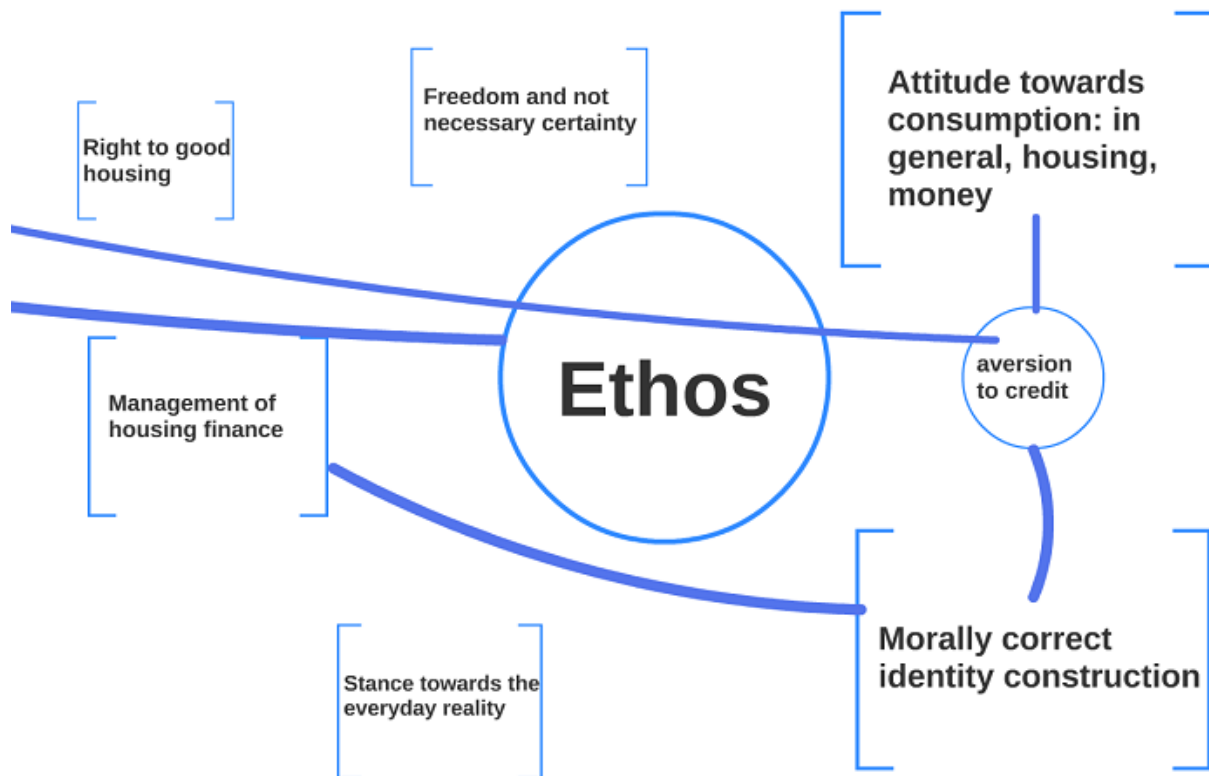
Table 3: Connection of tropes with certain ethos, emotions and evaluations

Trope	Ethos	Expressed emotions	Evaluation
Mortgage	Aversion to credit Attitude towards consumption Significance of the family (financial support)	Commitment, obligation – fear, concern Rich metaphors („ <i>rope on the neck</i> “, „ <i>Sword of Damocles</i> “, „ <i>commitment</i> “)	Extern advices being used – mostly from the informal social network („friend of friend“)
Loans or credit	Aversion to credit Attitude towards consumption Significance of the family (financial support)	Fear from the loan and from the inability to repay it.	Important is the to lower the loan towards the value of house or apartment : family support
Nature or garden	Morally correct identity construction	Affection towards the nature as place for children and for self-realization.	Place for children Tool for expressing the symbolic boundaries

Role of expert	Morally correct identity construction	-	Either self-perception of being expert or the use of expert's advice in the financial issues
Unrealized housing choices	Morally correct identity construction	Discontent with the real estate agencies.	Importance of accessibility of place.
Family house	Morally correct identity construction	Expressed emotional bond and attachment towards the place. Imagination of the ideal housing.	Enables children to have more place for themselves.
Reconstruction	Morally correct identity construction	Stress - draining strengths both emotionally and physically Enjoyment of the reconstruction	Bad experience with the workmans. („do-it-yourself is better“ approach) Self-realization through reconstruction

Two central moral themes, which were most often referred to, were analytically coded under subcategories Attitude towards consumption (in general, housing and money) and Morally correct identity construction. These two are connected through most cited moral reference, which was the aversion to credit and are also connected via the category Management of housing finance. Other fields of moral evaluation are thematized in ethos: Freedom – certainty is not necessary, Stance towards the everyday reality and Right to good housing as depicted in the scheme 2.

Scheme 2: Visualization of Ethos' sub-categories



3.3.1. *Attitude towards consumption (in general, of housing and money)*

When talking about the consumption either in general, or in particular about the consumption of space (housing), money and time, most prevailing narratively expressed accounts were connected to the issue of frugality, modesty and thrift and aversion to loans, credit and debt. The theme of aversion to debts was most strikingly present and was rather ambivalent in nature. Even though some of the informants reflected, that in strictly rational sense it would be favourable for them to use loans to finance their consumption of housing, they try to avoid it as much as possible.

„Když máme úvěr, tak myslíme na to, že ho chceme uplatit dřív i když je to možná z hlediska ekonomy, není to úplně nejefektivnější, protože samozřejmě dluh je levnější, než vlastní zdroje (...)“ „When we have some credit, we always think how to pay it off as soon as possible, even from the point of view of economist it is not the most efficient strategy, because of course the debt is less expensive, than one's own resources.“ (1:68)

Here is necessary to mention the essential role of the mortgage trope. As already mentioned in the section about the narratives of Crisis, mortgage was likely to trigger fear in the informants and they tried to avoid having huge payments of the mortgage (but sometimes did not succeeded). They developed several strategies, which share common the diversification of the portfolio of loans (not having one huge loan, but more smaller ones). First strategy was using the advice from expert, who is often in quasi-friendly relationship to informants. Second and the most common was the financial help from parents in order to reduce the value of mortgage. Interestingly enough this help from parents subverts the ultimate goal, which seems to be to get one's own place to live and that is the manifestation of independence and capability. (Peebles 2010: 230)

Another dimension of ambivalence of this loan and credit aversion is the fact that as informants tried to use the loans as little as possible, for the reason of getting the house or apartment (and thus home), credit was perfectly justifiable. They usually constructed symbolic boundaries between them as good creditors (using loan for housing) and the bad creditors (making debts for their overconsumption of material goods). The moral dimension of debt (ibid. 232-233) is thus revealed in the informants accounts.

It can be paraphrased like this: *“Using the mortgage and housing loans is good, because you invest this money into your family. Using loans and credit to supply your consumption is wrong and despicable.” (9:45)*

Here are the two main ethos interconnected and the narrative performance of good, reasonable and capable creditor is essential in the performance and maintenance of morally correct identity. This face maintenance is achieved using and mixing the „rational“ and „irrational“ arguments, which is perfectly fine for the informants, because they do not understand the rationality as is usual in the economics discourse. What is being rational for them draws the rationality from the ethos and emotions related to places, objects and people.

3.3.2. *Morally correct identity construction*

From the issue of frugality and thrift, which were in some narratives also strongly connected, not just to the loans/credit problem, but also to the rejection of overconsumption of material goods and highly praised value of time we get to the second frequent ethos – Morally correct identity construction. This subcategory involves such narratives performances, which leads to actualization of certain ethos in order to construct the morally correct identity from the standpoint of the narrator and supposedly also from the standpoints of the listener(s).

It seems that this theme is the most central one. Presence of certain figures in narratives suggest, that for informants to be a good parents, capable finding nice house or apartment in the good location, close to nature means far more, than just the way how to acquire and maintain proper Face through performing certain role of parent.

Who is according to my informants „good person“ and thus more or less implicitly them? As already mentioned, it is the one, who can: a) make a decision, that results in acquiring a „good debt“ and being able to repay it;

„A ted', ted' už je to vlastně komplet, už nejsme vůbec zadlužený, takže jako loni v prosinci, v listopadu jsme splatili v podstatě 95% toho (...)“ „And now, it is almost completed, we are not indebted at all. Last December, November we paid off 95% of it.“ (2:73)

„No, tak my jsme měli jako velkej vstupní kapitál. Díky tomu, co jsme si našetřili a díky tomu, že nám jako přispěly rodiče a zbytek, na ten zbytek jsme si vzali hypotéku, před 3 lety. No, my jsme spořivý no.“ „Well, we had quite large capital at the beginning. Thank to our savings and our parents gave us some funds and for the rest we took a three years mortgage. We are thrifty.“ (3:77)

„Jo, přestože manžel si vydělá docela dost peněz, tak nějak jako rozumně se nechtěl zadlužit nějak, (...)“ „Yeah, even though my husband makes a decent money, we did not want to get unreasonably over indebted.“ (4:49)

who is b) hardworking, especially when it comes to searching for a new housing opportunities or taking care for the reconstruction

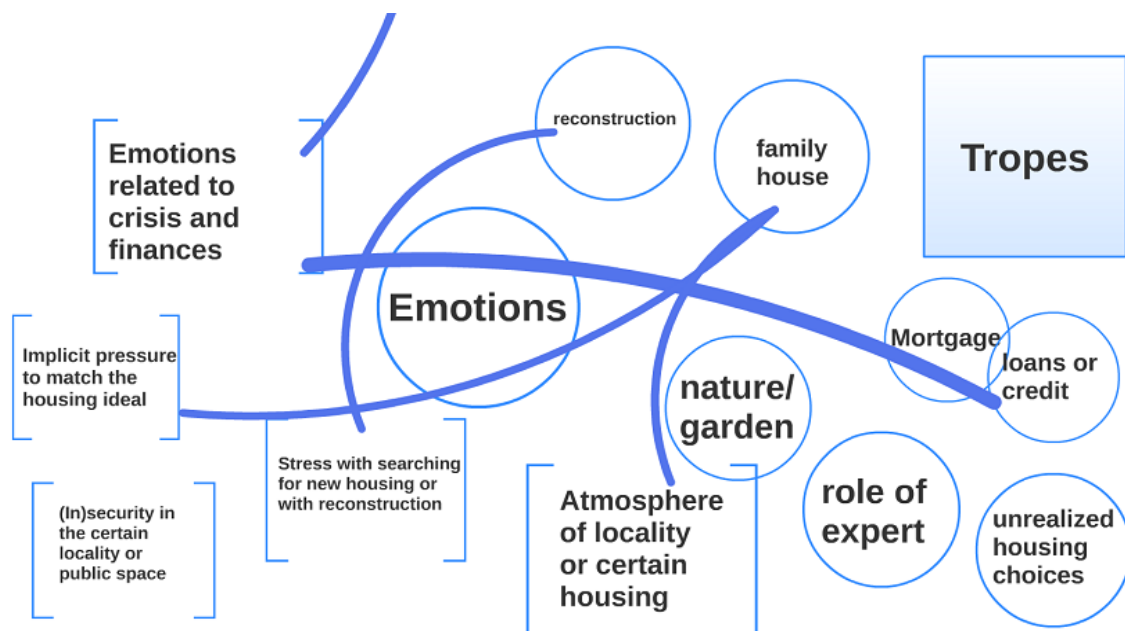
„ (...) a potom jsme začali vlastně stavět tady a tu stavbu jsme dělali hodně nebo převážně manžel, že jo, já jsem tak nějak pomáhala, ale dělali svépomocí hodně, jakože manžel je dost šikovnej v tomhleštom.“ „(...) and then we had start to build a house here and my husband did a lot, I had helped somehow, we did a quite a lot of thing in do-it-yourself style, because my husband is skilled in this.“ (7:3)

c) who is independent and take care of not just him or herself, but whole family (especially in times of crisis) either in the job or housing issues. All these three are multiplied by the fact, that they needs to be fulfilled in order to maintain the family.

„ (...) takže když jsme začli plánovat rodinu, tak já jsem začla plánovat velkou rekonstrukci.“ „ (...) so when we planned to have a family, we have also started to plan this huge reconstruction.“ (1:9)

The connections between the narrative expression of emotions and its usage with the relation with certain tropes is depicted in the scheme 3.

Scheme 3: Visualization of Emotions' sub-categories and Tropes (in circles)



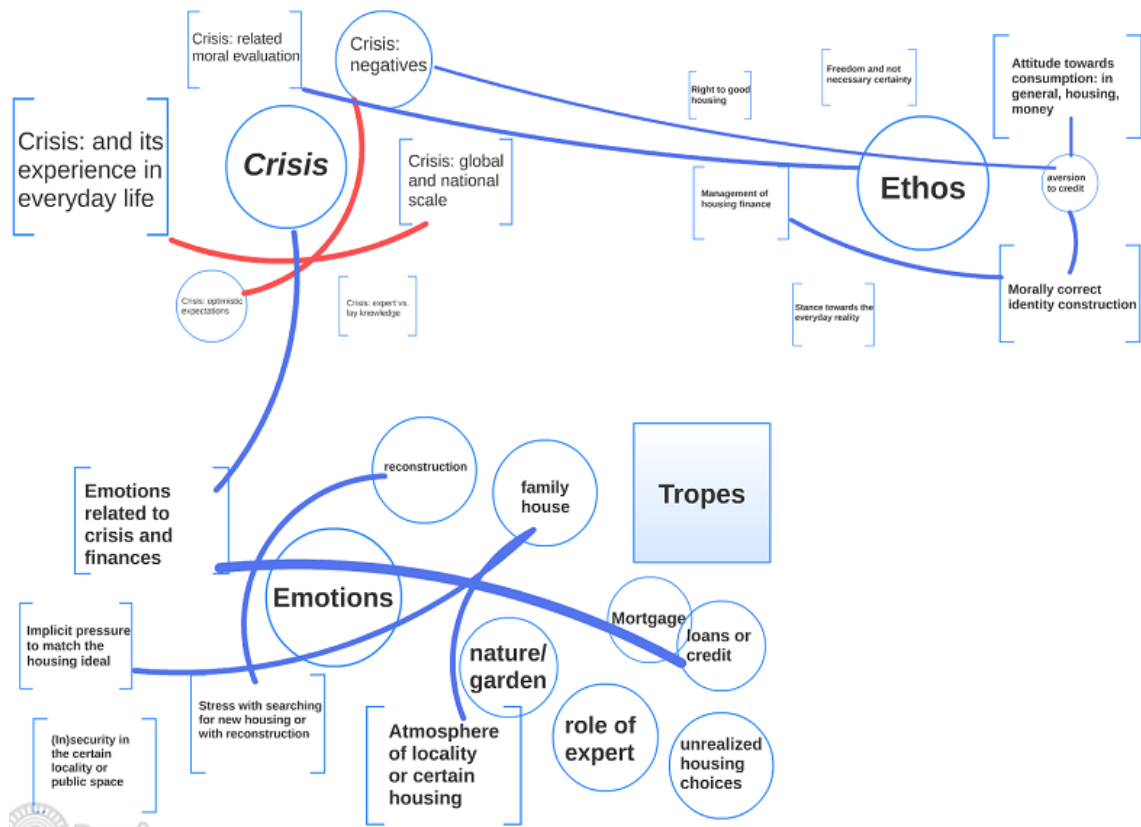
3.4. Narrative of the success, responsibility and adulthood

All of mentioned practices in the morally correct identity construction are components in the grand story of success, which seems to be the meta-narrative, the *raison d'être*, the current under the river surface. The ability of acquiring and maintaining certain (accessible) house or apartment turning it in the home even in the times, when things are uncertain (Crisis) or some difficulties approach (problems with financial repayments, divorce) tells an ultimate story of your life success and for young families with children this kind of success might be even more important than success in jobs career or other fields.

This story employs certain ethos and moral evaluation. Financial crisis serves in people's narratives as trope or figure, which evokes certain strong emotions (Knight 2013). These emotions as Andrew Sayer suggest, serves as certain cultural tools with the ability to distinguish between „good“ and „bad“; „favourable“ and „unfavourable“. This seems to be inseparably connected to the certain emotions, such as fear, pride, guilt and shame, which are being drawn in the basis of evaluative aspect of these normativity constructing emotions. (Sayer 2005: 947-953).

The story of being independent, responsible and capable tells a story of success on the level of everyday experience (ritual of leaving the old family and creating a new one) and on the extraordinary, macro-structural historical basis. Being capable to deal with the complex system of housing, which requires certain abilities you are able to live a life in the context of globalized, post-socialist country. Being so pervasive, this meta-narrative indicates how much is the idea of success socially and culturally determined and demanded. Thus it suggests, that in the post-socialist condition, we have already through certain performances on the housing market acquired the basic capitalist values.

Scheme 4: Relations between main categories



4. Discussion

In this section I would like to discuss the limits of analysis, which could be based either on the character of data or due to the specific method of analysis chosen. Moreover, I sketch the possibilities for further research in this field.

I realize, that conducting a research inherently changes and invades the worlds of those being studied and also that presenting certain findings inherently evokes certain meanings, evaluation and thus certain normative stances, which could be used also in the political struggle. (Stöckelová, Grygar 2008). My goal was not to enhance certain political standpoint by giving them the power of knowledge, but rather describe the everyday perspective toward the Crisis, which I felt is mostly overlooked in the (Czech) Crisis' discourse. Moreover, I put effort into not causing any kind of harm to my informants (Hammersley, Atkinson 1996: 268-273). Concretely, I did not want to challenge the informant's decision or their viewpoints and confront them with the “scientific rationality”. Also the design of the interview was done in the order to

encourage their activity and not construct some pre-understandings of the „what should be told“. This resulted in the situation, where I did not stress them to talk about the Crisis in a way, that could be labeled as the „examination“. In other words, when I was asking the questions about the Crisis, I did not want to „drain them out“.

This approach helped me to reveal the finding, that Crisis is not theme, which is often started by informants themselves and have to be bring in the narrative of home creation. But on the other hand it did not enable me somehow get deeper and uncover and possibly deconstruct the facework of the informants. Retrospectively evaluating this, I feel that I could have had push a slightly more in terms of bringing this topic more into the conversation, while not pushing my informants „where they do not want to be“. This could have been achieved by bringing the questions about the connections regarding the Crisis and other tropes or significant figures used by the informants. On the other hand, I am convinced, that this evaluation was not possible during the interviews and needed the analysis to be done. I have also conducted certain triangulation of my findings (Hammersley, Atkinson 1996: 232)³²

Asking the hypothetical question, what could have been done differently conducting the research again seems to be even more urgent in the light of my findings. In other words, the research of the Crisis and its perception and understandings seems to uncover certain important findings about the nature of the process of evaluation of self and others and the process of knowledge creation and distribution about certain global phenomena. The amount of literature dealing with the debt/credit issue and its moral dimension is vast in the anthropological tradition³³ (Peebles 2010) and issues of consumption or thrift are being thematized in different works (Ritzer 2013). But I am convinced, that we lack the description of connection between the everyday production of knowledge about the global phenomena and understandings of how are certain moralities constructed. In other words, which justifications either on the explicit or

32 Besides the discussion with colleagues or comparing with the literature another chance for triangulation was due to the fact I participate in the analysis of both quantitative data, structured interviews and focus groups, which are part of the the project project GA ĀR P404/12/1446 [The Application of Sociological Methods to Detect Housing Market Disequilibrium. Critical & Context-Sensitive Housing Research Methodology](#) in the department of Socioeconomics of Housing at the Institute of Sociology, of the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic. This accounts, which aimed at studying the housing decision making (mostly in connection with the ownership and renting) suggest, that the Crisis is mostly thematized as an external factor, which somehow influence the lived reality. This would support my argument, but more precise and rigorous analysis would be needed to rely on this analytic suggestion.

33 Gustav Peebles interestingly deals in his exhaustive overview with the issue of whether credit/debt may be interpreted as liberating or enslaving and brings different works in order to illustrate both sides of the production of certain power structures based on the debt bonds. He also convincingly shows the moral dimension of credit/debt issues. (Peebles 2010)

taken-for-granted level are employed and which specific figures and metaphors are used. Their deconstruction described by Joanne Martin could be useful tool in the new interpretation of ever-present phenomena. (Martin 1990) Duality of expert and lay (knowledge) seems to me significant, because „expertness“ of knowledge often serves as the means for promoting and applying certain practices or political programmes (such as austerity measures). Further elaboration on the how the morality of market (Fourcade, Healy 2007) is being re-constructed in the everyday interactions and language games is thus needed.

5. Conclusion

I started my research project with the fascination of how the “big world” of business and financial capitalism is both very fragile and resilient at the same time, as it was expressed across the media accounts since the burst of Subprime mortgage's market bubble. I have perceived the discursive field of the Crisis in the Czech Republic as undertaking some shifts. In mediascape, the Crisis was omnipresent at first, but it faded into background and become an ordinary framework of the economical condition.³⁴ The expert field³⁵ of discursive dimension of the Crisis has been mostly dominated by economists, with certain exceptions on the side of sociology, anthropology and geography such as (Jessop 2014) (Knight 2013) (Aalbers 2009) (Woolfson 2010) and others. We could also experience the political-economy dimension of the Crisis being embodied in the austerity measures and economical recession in our lived realities and in the reductions to funding as for both non-governmental organizations, and scientific research.

Similarly, how the discourse of the Crisis has been changing, so has been my research project. I have been facing the challenge to grasp the Financial crisis within the dimension of the lived experience of lay people. Thus housing and experience of social construction of home was chosen to frame the experience of Crisis expressed by the people narrative accounts. My task was to show the interconnection between huge

34 May be compared to Shevchenko's (2009: 2-11) account of „normalization“ of the crisis or towards the accounts of crisis being a normal and inherent parts of capitalism mode of production as stated by Bob Jessop , who also deals with the issue of crisis *of* or *in* neo-liberal mode of capitalism and processes of routinization of management of those crises (2013)

<http://bobjessop.org/2014/05/08/interview-the-fessud-annual-conference-financialisation-and-the-financial-crisis/>

35 This expert part of the discourse being represented by scientist, think-tanks and other analytics

global processes (political economy dimension of Crisis) with the everyday life and its construction through certain practices, moral judgements and materiality. My research thus sheds the light on how these lived experiences of Crisis are being perceived, reflected and communicated as well as on how they can potentially become the part of the second, discursive dimension of the phenomena of Financial crisis.

My findings may be divided into three categories 1) specific partial findings 2) three general findings (based on the synthesis of the first category) 3) one main interpretation of narrative accounts.

5.1. Specific partial findings

Thematically the partial findings may be divided into three realms: narratives of the Crisis, of homes and community and the expressions of emotions and ethos, which are based on its importance and recurrence in the narrative accounts. Being in detail described in the findings section, I present here the table with the summary of them in table 4.

Table 4: Summary of partial findings

1. Narrative of the Crisis	1.1. The Crisis is mostly framed in the everyday experience in connection with the job insecurity , while the global or state dimension framework of Crises is also present it is not the main one.
	1.2. Two dimension of knowledge regarding the Crisis may be identified. a) <i>lay</i> ³⁶ , understand and use the Crisis as a trope, something taken-for-granted causing certain problems b) <i>expert</i> , rarely used while referring to the lived experience dimension of the Crises
	1.3. Evaluation of the Crisis is being done through certain emotions (fear, uncertainty) and by emic categories of optimism and pessimism
	1.4. The Crisis evokes moral dimension and enable narrators to produce symbolic boundaries : them as being able to repay debts and secure the housing issues and to criticize the overconsumption

³⁶ Again I point to the link towards the Scott's concept of metis (Scott 1998: 309-341)

2. Narratives of Home and Community	2.1. Importance of accessibility of certain places for the good home: nature, work, garden etc. All these are mostly related and justified as being the children's need. The “ children factor “ seems to be very significant for the narrators.
	2.2. Symbolic boundaries related to certain practices and aesthetics is being employed to explain the choice for certain location of home. The figure of the “ unrealized housing choice “ is widely used in the narratives to illustrate the complexity of the searching process
	2.3. The final decisions in the housing search process were often made not only with respect to the reasons related to the accessibility and the issue identity issues, but were also rooted in the emotional dimension and included the usage of informal social networks . This means that certain houses or apartments were chosen (not only!) because of their atmosphere.
3. Narrative expressions of the emotions and ethos	3.1. The stances of modesty and thrift were mostly expressed in relation to the financial issues such as loans, credit and mortgage were expressed the stances. The narrators put emphasis on the ability of debt repayment. The differentiation between a „ good debt “ (like an investment = for the family) and a „bad debt“ (only for material consumption) was made.
	3.2. Morally correct identity is presented mostly in relation to the issues of a) ability to repay the debt(s) b) be hardworking, especially in connection of the managing the housing search or/and the reconstruction of estate c) being independent and can take care of the whole family

5.2. General findings

Interpreting the partial findings from the more general point of view, I suggest three general findings. Firstly, the housing choices employ far more issues, dimensions and factors than we would presuppose according to a certain conceptual decision making schemes (Wong 2002). The choices are being made on the basics of what would

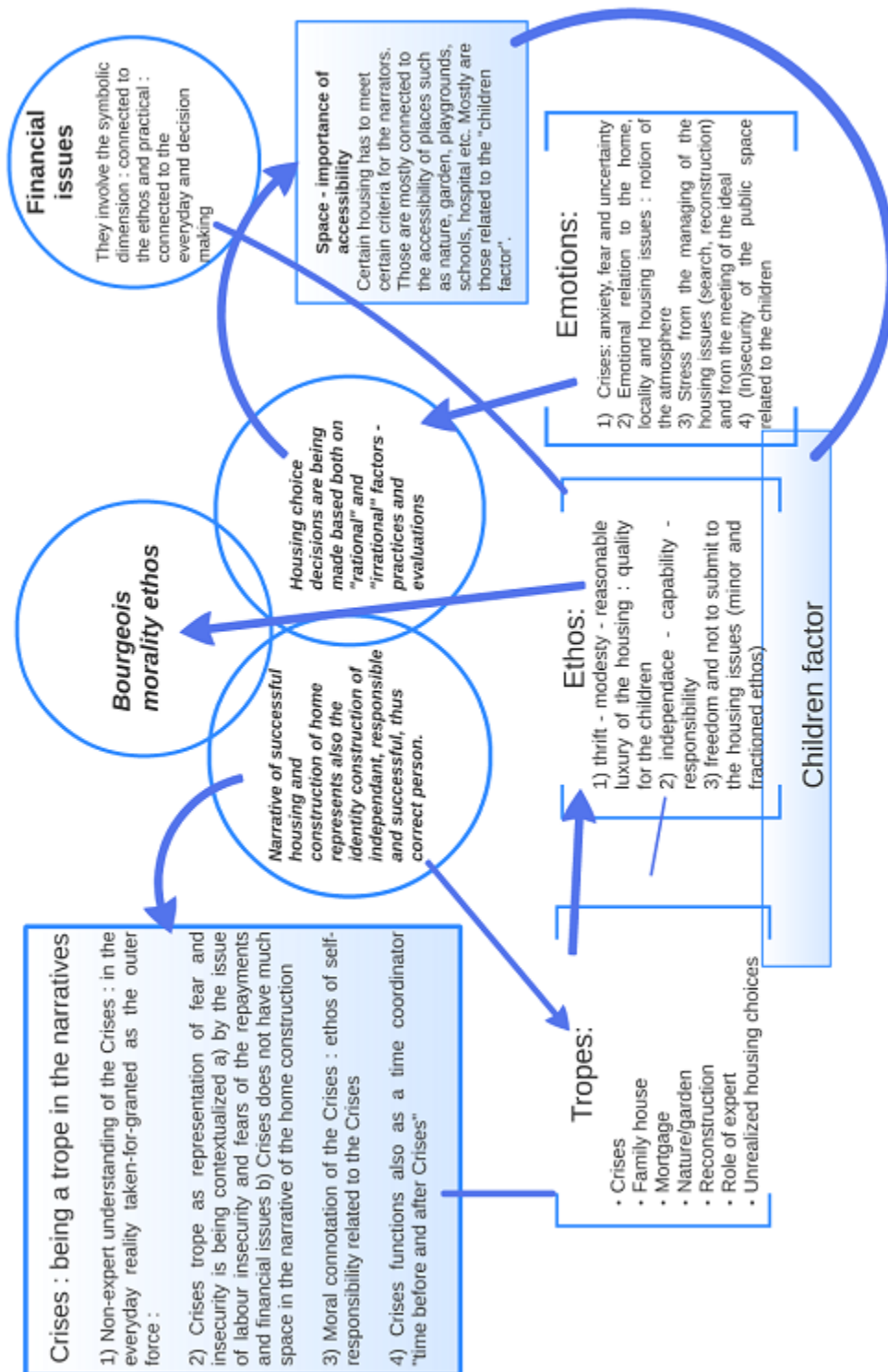
be termed like irrational behaviour under the terms of mainstream economics. But they are rather strongly rational for the regular, lay actors. This kind of rationality may be driven by emotions. The feelings of bond towards certain places and of commitment towards children, make just perfect sense for the informants. Thus the idea, that places are being constantly re-created (Massey 1994) seems to have a lot in common with the emotions and their management. Also the connotations and co-occurrence of narratively expressed emotions and certain subjects or objects – such as house – locality – “children's needs“ suggest, that certain emotional discourses (Christie, Smith, Munro 2008: 2301) exist. The discursive expression of emotions is means of certain „rules“ prescribed as „love“ or „affection“ being connected to the e. g. home – children – safety – garden/nature. As I showed in the theoretical section, emotions also influence the (self)respect of the subjects, so they mostly influence the decision making process. In other words, being *good* parent (i. e. one expressing love and responsibility) towards the children means to be able to secure for them a place with certain features (access for nature for example).

Secondly, the extraordinary decisions and everyday practices have been usually described in terms of some moral stance. Those are also very much rooted and connected to the (expressed) emotions, but not only to those. As Andrew Sayer suggests, emotions are important part of conducting moral evaluations. Fear (from the Crisis), pride (on the fact, that he/she is able to secure the home in the times of uncertainty) or guilt (towards the generalized society of overconsumption) are being employed to draw certain symbolic boundaries on the basis of evaluative aspect of these normativity constructing emotions. (Sayer 2005: 947-953) Those symbolic boundaries draw certain line between those who are *good* (often people themselves) and *bad* (some of the others). To construct successfully the symbolic boundary, which may be expressed in the narrative (and thus being introduced by the narrator with the assumption being culturally understandable), requires to draw its meaning from certain culturally and historically significant symbolic references. In other words, when my informants speak about the debt with the aversion, they presuppose, that their speech and stance would be understandable for me (and also for generalized others). Their stances might be either taken-for-granted or explicitly reflected. In order to construct the intelligibility and perform persuasiveness of their accounts, they refer to and use certain cultural tools to draw on what Ossowska calls *bourgeois morality*, which relies on the ethos of thrift, responsibility and family values (Ossowska 2012). The emphasis on the

category of *normality* being expressed by the narrator is not accidental. Those specific values and qualities seem to have enormous relevance for the identity construction and also for belonging to certain social group, which is also connected to certain materialities – such as family house (Fehervary 2011: 20-21). In other words, expressing modesty (with the reference e. g. on the values inherited in the family or through global citizenship), responsibility towards children influence very much the decisions of the informants.

This leads us to the third and final general finding. What becomes essential in the narratives of the Crises and home constructing (with the accent on emotions and ethos) is the ability of being independent, capable and responsible person. This does not just help perform normality moral correctness, but also serves as a vehicle to produce and express oneself as being *successful* person. The success is being narratively constructed by the usage of certain tropes (the Crisis, reconstruction, family house) to picture the problems of getting to the final destination – current home. This process also somehow marks the transition ritual from an old family to the a one, but with some ambivalence, because the narrators often had to rely on his or her parents (financial) support. So the independence is often more or less ambiguous.

Scheme 5: Main findings scheme



5.3. Main interpretation

Relating these accounts to the wider historic and structural context, we may understand them as a representation of the issue, where the domain of housing becomes field of where the ability of living in the post-socialist condition can be expressed. In other words, the ability to express the capability in the area of securing the what is culturally regarded as „good housing“ to your family represents your ability to succeed in the complex globalized, post-socialist reality. Coming back to the Crisis, it is the ability to dance and dance all over again, because in the life the music cannot really stop – referring to the famous quote by the Chuck Prince:

“When the music stops, in terms of liquidity, things will be complicated. But as long as the music is playing, you’ve got to get up and dance. We’re still dancing.”³⁷

Why keep dancing? Why keep expressing your success and the ability to reach towards the success by being independent, capable and responsible in the field of housing and home social construction? The fact of those qualities being so intensively narratively constructed and performed suggest the immanent importance of the category of (individual) success in the contemporary post-socialist and capitalist societies.

This process of “being successful“ is being achieved on an everyday basis. When this should be expressed in the narrative, certain tropes, figures, emotions and moral evaluations (based on the certain ethos) are being used to present the narrative account, which is supposed to be understandable in the broad sense of meaning. In other words, narrators expressing and structuring their stories in certain ways presupposed the shared understanding with their listeners (i.e. me). This suggests, that this „story of success“ is culturally a shared and thus relevant for both the everyday life practices and extraordinary decision making.

This text is based an approach to the Financial crisis, which is not common in the context of the Czech scientific discourse about the Crisis. It tries to present the implications of the perception of the Crisis in everyday lives of „normal“, lay narrators. This helps to widen the perspective as well as our understanding of the Crisis not only from the economical point of view. The theme of the Financial crisis is being under-

³⁷ <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/80e2987a-2e50-11dc-821c-0000779fd2ac.html#axzz31g03Wvsvy>

researched in the Czech social sciences and I thus hope to bring a new insights in this topic. I employ a perspective, which further challenges both the mainstream economical understanding and also the behavioural economics explanation, which I see as overly culturally decontextualized. I employ original methods of analysis combining the framework of Ricoeur's understanding of narrative with the qualitative content analysis resulting in a broad and yet focused inferences. Bringing together concepts of emotions, ethos and symbolic boundaries, I am able to better understand the actual practices, strategies and choices of my narrators. My main interpretation is also somehow widening the context of my study, explaining certain stances from the historical point of view as specific practices on the road from socialism to post-socialism acquiring and/or contesting the global cultural values related not only to the housing, but to the identity construction as such.

Summary

Dealing with the phenomena of the Financial Crises, which is in the post-socialist social sciences discourse still yet under-researched topic, this thesis aims to present the lay narrative accounts of the Crises. It comes up with the idea, that crises have always been significant topic for the discipline of Sociology and suggests the concrete conceptualization of the Financial Crises within three dimensions. The first being political economy of Crises, second being discursive dimension and third, lived experience of Crises. Dealing with the third dimension on the behalf of its discursive representations (narratives) it brings theoretically important concepts of (socially constructed) emotions, symbolic boundaries, tropes, moral evaluations and ethos. The text frames the issue of Crisis within the broader frame of the issue of housing and social construction of home. Both methodologically and analytically it draws from the tradition of narrative analysis as developed by Paul Ricoeur, William Labov and others and combines it with the qualitative content analysis providing rich and coherent findings. Three main findings are 1) Crises is trope, which is used as such in the narratives of the informants, mostly understood as external force, *deus-ex machine*, under which may be certain circumstances (e. g. insecurity of jobs) easily explained;

2) Moral evaluations are being significant in the narratives as references towards the Crises, finances and behaviour in general. Those moral judgements strongly resemble the bourgeois morality ethos; 3) Both everyday practices and extraordinary events and choices are being based both on „rational“ and „irrational“ factors i. e. emotions, moral evaluations, informal knowledge networks. The text presents the general interpretation of these findings. In sum, the narrative of home construction represents certain culturally shared references towards, what is perceived as „good“ or „correct“. Concretely, narrators being able to tell the narrative of successfully acquiring a home (where Crisis often figures as „*twists and turns*“ in the narrative) they are thus able to express their responsibility, independence and capability. All those qualities indicate the success of the individual and family in the coordination of their lives in the conditions of post-socialism and globalized world. Being so pervasive in the narrators accounts, this meta-narrative indicates how much is the idea of success socially and culturally determined and demanded. Thus it suggests, that in the post-socialist condition, we have already through certain performances on the housing market learned the basic capitalist values.

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