

## **Za čistší město: Problémové lokality a jejich obyvatelé z pohledu místní politiky a správy**

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### **Towards a purer city: Problem localities and Their Inhabitants from the Perspective of Local Authorities**

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# Social exclusion in spatial context

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- Concept of **social exclusion** is defined as limiting access to resources, opportunities and positions: spatial aspect – forced, involuntary housing in disadvantaged environment
- **Relational approach** ⇨ social control and social integration
- **Constructivist approach** ⇨ SC as a process – the system of mutual social positions is discursively constructed, produced and reproduced
- State level – legal and economical framework, welfare system and employment policy – neo-liberal housing policy ⇨ **there is no legal definition of „social housing“**



# Research questions

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- **Aim:** to understand the process through which are the broader politics of social inclusion transformed into political and administrative praxis on the local level
- **Questions:**
  - How are the socially/spatially excluded („problem“) localities defined and understood by local politicians and administration? How do they define their strategies towards them and how do they legitimize these strategies?
  - How the image of „socially excluded“ people is constructed in narrative practices and interpretations of acts and interactions?



# Research method

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- Qualitative semi-structured and open-ended formal and informal interviews
  - mayors, local politicians, officers, NGOs‘ and private subjects (tenant owners) in 2009 in 12 cities
- State and/versus local level
  - politics and the administration
  - the public policy discourse („what should be“) and the discourse of practice („what is, in the given condition, possible“)
- Discursive practices are social practices – they are embedded in social and material structures



# Theoretical background

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- Concept of **purification**
  - Social integrity via the elimination of difference
  - Richard Sennett
- Concept **disciplination**
  - Disciplination of individual – training and surveillance
  - Michel Foucault
- Categories of **purity** and **dirt**
  - Stratification, symbolic and social boundaries
  - Mary Douglas, David Sibley, Michelle Lamont
- Urbanization process as a part of the project of modernity – city as clean and safe space



# Socio-economic transformation

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- The responsibility for housing policies was transferred to the level of municipalities
- Dislocation of socially excluded, mainly through local housing politics and municipal (urban) planning
- **Nationalization** ⇒ **Privatization** of housing stocks
  - to private home-owners, inhabitants
  - to private companies
- ⇒ Risk of displacement ⇒ the responsibility is transferred from municipalities to the private sector – private companies can realize, what municipalities cannot – to purify these places

# Localities

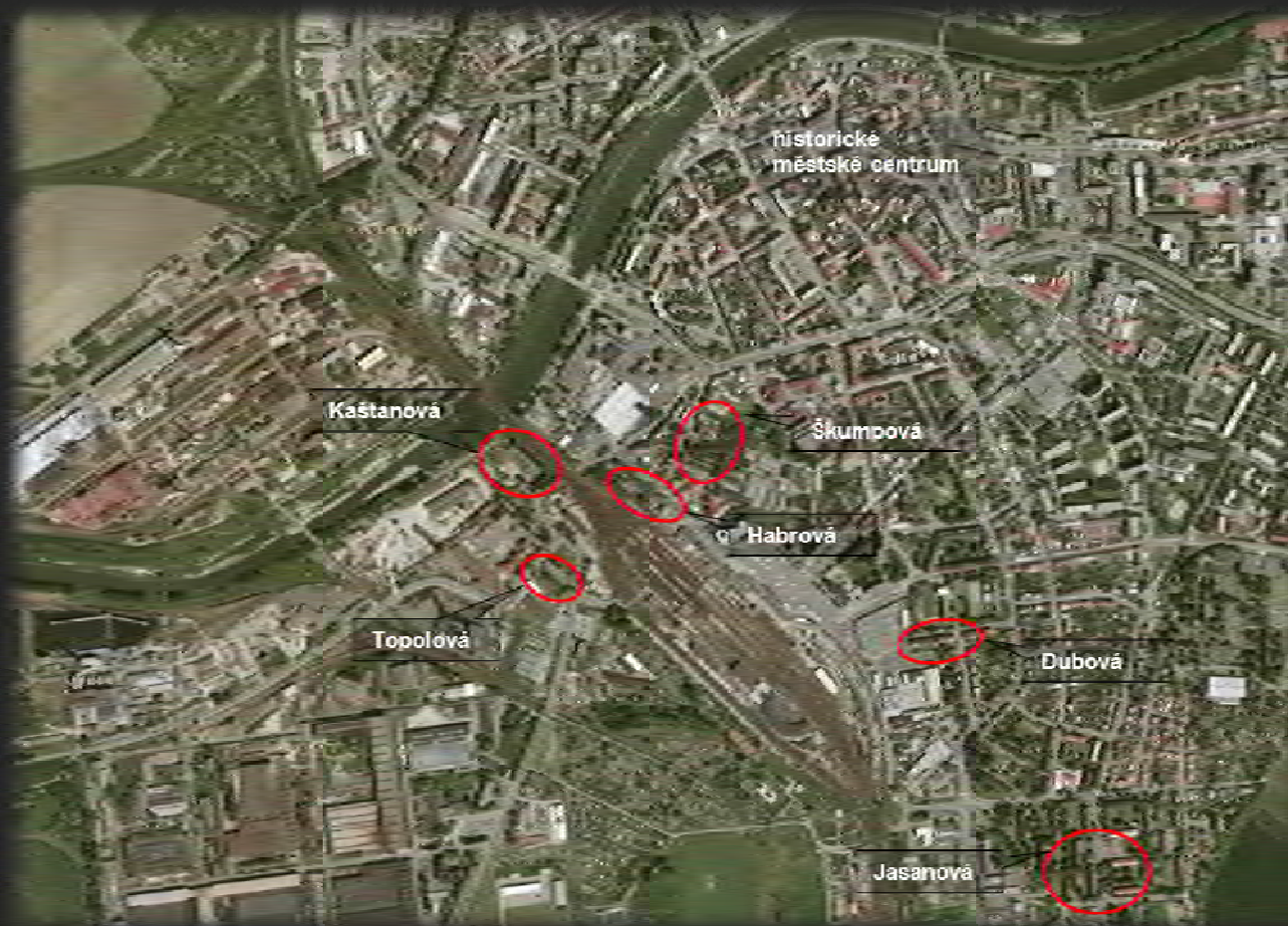
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- **Diversity** – from those with only minimal investments (used as a „deterrent“) or planned to be displaced to some under the renewal process and reconstruction
- Position within the urban system from centre to periphery
  - **Visual aspect** of spatial exclusion - localities in a central position are perceived as problematic mostly because of their visibility



*Source: Topinka, Janoušková 2009*

# Lunakov example



*„How did you  
come to Lunakov?*

*From the railway  
station? Then you  
could see it in your  
own eyes! Have  
you seen that  
horror?“*













# Inhabitants as/and localities

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- Places and inhabitants: dirty, noisy, obtrusive or dangerous
  - the concept of **hygiene** is discussed and **moral criteria of purity** are applied
- Example – different ways of using of **public spaces**
  - fear of **contamination** - those who are „lolling and loitering“ inappropriately are in conflict with those passing through
- **Difference**
  - We, those who are passing through
  - They, those who are staying
- **Purification** as the strategy to eliminate diversity



# Inhabitants as/and localities

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- The inhabitants of these localities are not perceived (in common/local sense) as poor people – the problem is not defined in terms of shortage of opportunities, but in terms of **cultural and ethnic differences**
- The perception of **undeserving poor** is also tightly connected with the visuality - Goffmanesque interpretation of incompatible „facade“ and „scene“, **recognizability**
  - *„they do not look like poor people“ X „you can tell if that the single mother [from majority] is a welfare recipient“* ⇒ **construction of the borders of entitlement**



# Defining the problem

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- **Ethnization** – „common sense“ perception of ethnic differences is overlapping the „ethnically neutral“ concept of social exclusion/inclusion – the problem is how to speak and not to speak about Roma at the same time
- „*We are not allowed to count Roma people, but than they want us to give them their numbers!*“ – the allocation of financial support from the state Inter-ministerial Commission for Roma (!) Community Affairs is based on the presence of problem Roma communities



# Conclusions

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- Local actors have to deal with the situation, when the de-ethnicized state social policy which lacks the spatial aspect of social integration, is realized through the institutions and programs based on the ethnicity of their clients.
- On the municipal level, the **borders of responsibility** (ownership plays a crucial role) and **borders of entitlement** (the perception of those who are in need or precarious situation as un/deserving poor) are constructed within the legal, economical and welfare system.



# Thank you for your attention!

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□ **Questions and comments:**

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□ **Selected literature:**

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