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# Strategies for Coherent Neighbourhood Development Projects in Bratislava

## Bachelor Thesis

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## **Summary**

East-Central European cities face governance and financial challenges in new development projects. These processes often had vague planning policies benefiting land-owners and little focus on the public interest of residents. This research focused on strategies for coherent neighbourhood development in Bratislava to ensure that amenities and services are coordinated with sizable new residential areas. A comparative policy and legal analysis of publicly available documents focused on the interplay between private sector actors, public administration, and public interest, using three case studies: the Chalupkova-Pribinova Zone as a failed example, the Urban Study Mlynské Nivy Zone as a pilot project, and Prague's development tools. Findings indicate improved coordination in Bratislava's approach, with both Prague and Bratislava leveraging City Spatial Plans to fund amenities through the private sector collaboration through a methodology for collecting contribution fees. A new framework used in Prague's new Metropolitan plan could serve as an inspiration for Bratislava's new Spatial Plan. Effective leadership has been crucial, driving positive changes by attracting skilled professionals. Legislative changes are needed to formalise contributions for amenities. Funding for public services remains a challenge due to the existing municipal fund redistribution system. Future research should explore the impacts of funding systems on municipal development, the dynamics between private developers and public administration, and the applicability of international urban development strategies within different legal frameworks.

**Keywords:** urban development strategies, neighbourhood development, zoning, private-public collaboration, amenities and services

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## **Introduction**

East-Central European cities' developmental processes were influenced by two prominent societal systems: (1) the socialist system, from 1945-8 until 1989 (Bartha et al. 2023), and (2) the post-socialist system, from 1989 to the present day shift that reflected in the transition of urban development policy (Buček, 2016). The central role of the state characterised the socialist period. Based on such an influential role, central economic plans, which brought the interests of the leading communist party forward, were realised, mainly focusing on essential public services (Buček, 2016). Services such as mass housing often neglect the population's needs and unsatisfactory quality (Buček, 2016). The following period is characterised by free-market and democratic principles trying to compare to the European "West" (Buček, 2016).

After over three decades, a quarter of a century since the fall of the Communist Block, the Western part of Europe overlooks issues of post-socialist cities in the East (Sgibnev et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the period's influence remains within the built environment, as per the housing stock or public transport infrastructure, institutions and governing bodies, and the mentality of the people and public discourses (Sgibnev et al., 2019). Merging the socialistic past with a new process of democratisation and modernisation has been challenging. Large-scale city expansions during the European socialist period came from the state's centralised power, which often neglected aspects important to current issues, such as economic challenges or environmental concerns (Buček, 2016). On top of that, the growth and concentration of post-socialist capital cities have been significant in the current free-market era (Sgibnev et al., 2019), which challenges post-socialist governance and legislation.

East-Central European cities face specific governance, regional, and financial challenges (Buček, 2016). In the context of Bratislava, the capital of the Slovak Republic (from now Slovakia), Buček (2016) researched that East-Central European cities are challenged in governance, city regions, and financialisation areas. After the 2000's, many economic-development-oriented and large-scale developments emerged. As Buček (2016) explains, these processes often had vague planning policies benefiting the interests of land owners and little focus on the public interest of residents.

Based on the text above, the research answers the following question: what strategies can be employed to ensure that infrastructure, services, and amenities are effectively coordinated with sizable new residential neighbourhood development projects in Bratislava? Such developments entail mainly new residential buildings and retail areas for stores (commercial areas). However, they should be accompanied by non-commercial services and amenities that are not financially motivating to build but uplift the neighbourhood, such as schools, kindergartens, tram lines, sports areas, cultural centres, etc. Literature brought forth three urban development policy challenges (governance, regional, and financial challenges) in studies (Buček, 2016); however, there is a knowledge gap for the specific policy implications that were not studied for/in the area. Answering the issue can provide a more in-depth understanding of different approaches that can be used to tackle the concerns above.



A comparative policy analysis was done on three case studies. Firstly, the impact of missing services, amenities, and infrastructure of new developments on residents' lives was studied. Secondly, by studying international examples, this paper looks at how different forms of public-private cooperation could be used to provide infrastructure, services, and amenities in new residential neighbourhood developments. The potential of outsourcing costs and promoting a fair relationship between private developer companies and the public sector could be researched from a feasibility perspective and a legal and democratic lens.

The following sections first examine the historical context of the issue, providing a detailed background to understand its evolution. Next, it explains the theoretical framework and methodology and then analyses the current state of affairs, highlighting recent developments and key players. This is followed by a discussion of the main challenges and obstacles encountered, along with potential solutions. Finally, the paper concludes with a summary of the findings and suggestions for future research.

## **Case Study Context**

The following part provides background information on the cities mentioned in this paper. Firstly, a thorough explanation of the context of Bratislava is introduced as the city is the main focus of the thesis, and the first and second case studies are located there. Secondly, the context of Prague is mentioned as the main strategies were drawn from this city. Both cities' municipality funds redistribution systems are briefly mentioned.

### ***Bratislava***

#### **Organizational Structure of Bratislava**

*Magistrát Hlavného mesta SR Bratislavy (magistrát)* is the central administrative unit responsible for professional, administrative, and organisational tasks (377/1990 Zb. o hlavnom meste Slovenskej republiky Bratislave). The mayor and city council pass binding regulations known as "VZN". Bratislava is divided into 17 semi-autonomous districts (Figure 1), each with its own legal responsibilities. The Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava (MIB), established in 2019 under the *magistrát*, plays a crucial role in urban planning, architecture, and development. MIB leads efforts such as amending the City Spatial Plan, designing public spaces, and ensuring sustainable urban planning. It also develops strategic documents and protects public interests, highlighted by its Urban Study Mlynské Nivy Zone project in public-private development cooperation.



Figure 1: Mestské časti of Bratislava (Wikipedia, 2020).

### Urban Planning Legal Tools of the Municipality

The primary city-level document is the Územný plán obce or City Spatial Plan, approved as a binding VZN by the city council. The "City Spatial Plan of the Capital City of SR Bratislava from 2007" (Bratislava, the Capital City of Slovakia, 2023) is a key document and tool for the *magistrát* to regulate new developments in Bratislava. This plan includes a detailed map and written document specifying legally binding regulations and limitations for each functional area while identifying potential development opportunities. Eight amendments have been made since its inception, adjusting the plan based on landowner requests. Additionally, legally binding and more detailed Spatial Plans of a Zone are created for areas indicated in the City Spatial Plan. If an investor's proposal aligns with all plans in their area, *mestská časť* must issue a building permit (200/2022 Z. z. o územnom plánovaní). Municipalities also collect a "development fee" for new construction projects, such as *Staré Mesto's* fee of 35€ per m<sup>2</sup> (VZN mestskej časti Bratislava-Staré Mesto č. 9/2020).

### Spatial Planning Documents in Bratislava

Table 1 distinguishes and explains the spatial planning documents defined by the Spatial Planning law (200/2022 Z. z. o územnom plánovaní).

Table 1: An overview of the spatial planning documents in Bratislava (200/2022 Z. z. o územnom plánovaní).

English translation	Slovak original	Main function	Scale	Contractor	Legal position
<b>City Spatial Plan</b>	Územný plán	Regulate spatial development of the whole city of Bratislava.	– the whole city of Bratislava – regulates “functional areas”	<i>Magistrát</i> (including MIB) Private companies	Legally binding for deciding on construction plans and permissions.
<b>Spatial Plan of a Zone</b>	Územný plán zóny	Regulate spatial development in a certain area with higher precision.	– certain areas with high development potential – binding to specific parcels	<i>Magistrát</i> (including MIB) <i>Mestské časti</i> Private companies	Legally binding for deciding on construction plans and permissions.
<b>Urban Study</b>	Územná štúdia	Assess possible spatial development, verify the conditions of proposed changes in the area and propose possible solutions.	– certain areas with high development potential	<i>Magistrát</i> (including MIB) <i>Mestské časti</i> Private companies	Advisory.
<b>Assignment</b>	Zadanie	Defines the area, identifies problems, main goals and strategic intentions, and the spatial planning documents requirements for the addressed area, including proposed variants solution.	– certain area with high development potential	<i>Magistrát</i> (including MIB) <i>Mestské časti</i> Private companies	Reflects on City Spatial Plan and Spatial Plan of a Zone and is required for proposing any change to these legally binding documents.

### Funding

Slovakia is one of the most centralised OECD countries in terms of spending and tax revenues (IPR Praha, 2020a). Public investments are mainly funded by the central government, redistributing taxes based on population size, age structure, area, etc., accounting for over 81% of city budgets. The remaining 19% comes mainly from property taxes (IPR Praha, 2020a). In 2021, Bratislava's budget was nearly 458 million euros,

about 1,038 euros per inhabitant (Gubčo, 2021). Local governments manage only 20% of investments, compared to the OECD average of 51%, and the country relies heavily on EU funds. Bratislava's GDP is 195% of the EU28 average (IPR Praha, 2020a).

### ***Prague***

Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic and the former capital of Czechoslovakia, shares a common legal background with Slovakia due to their unified history. Prague, Brno, Bratislava, and Košice all share the two-layer city organisation framework with *magistrát* and *mestské časti*. Since 1992, following the separation of the countries (460/1992 Zb. Ústava Slovenskej republiky), Prague has adopted various new laws, policies, and organisational structures. The Prague Institute of Planning and Development (IPR Prague), founded in 2013, is a contributory organisation responsible for urban planning and spatial development, producing policies and analyses on urban planning, demography, and development (IPR Praha, n.d.)

### ***Funding***

Prague is financed through central government redistribution schemes (IPR Praha, 2020b). Taxes such as personal income tax, corporate income tax or VAT are collected centrally and partially redistributed to municipalities based on population size, accounting for 64% of their capital expenditures. The remaining 36% comes from local taxes, mainly land and real estate taxes (IPR Praha, 2020c). In 2021, Prague's budget was 3.4 billion euros, amounting to over 2,589 euros per inhabitant (Gubčo, 2021). Prague's GDP is 138% of the average GDP of EU28 countries (IPR Praha, 2020c).

## **Theoretical Framework**

Governance is sharing responsibilities between actors whose actions are mutually dependent and are around the formal governments. Recently, the word has gained attention in institutional or academic settings, which points to a significant change in thinking about governing societies and reality (Zuidema, 2018). The central state dominated the past in both Western and Eastern European societies, but it has recently changed. The shift from government-enforced policies towards more hybrid forms of governance could be witnessed. Decentralisation and deregulation in EU or nation-states have become more common, allocating the responsibilities vertically to the lower levels. The change is, however, witnessed also at the horizontal level, sharing the responsibility across non-private, public sector, and civil society (Zuidema, 2018).

In shifting from government to governance, the government represents a form of top-down regulative institution. In contrast, governance is a form of governing with fluid responsibilities (Zuidema, 2018). The concept also emerged because of the "dispersal of authority" phenomena; governments are increasingly unable to make decisions and implement them, therefore seeking alternative forms of governance. A similar situation is happening in East-Central European cities, where the central authoritarian state was changed to a democracy and could not adapt to the free-market system (Sgibnev et al., 2019). At the urban level, the municipalities could not produce high-quality regulative policies but rather vague ones benefiting other than the public interest (Buček, 2016).

Multilevel governance consists of sharing responsibilities and competencies between government and non-government organisations and through different levels of authority (Zuidema, 2018). In Bratislava, the planning competencies are distributed from the state's Office for Spatial Planning and Construction of the Slovak Republic and bodies of territorial self-government: municipality and self-governing region (200/2022 Z. z. o územnom plánovaní).

Zuidema (2018) introduced the governance triangle (Figure 2), demonstrating the interplay of three key actors in governance dynamics. Firstly, in a setting in which government is dominant, governance has a coordinative character. It mostly happened in the past, when the central state was dominant both in Western democracies and in Eastern socialist regimes. The approach is still used in particular issues of a simple character, where the intervention of a strong central government is the easiest solution, and technical rationality (Figure 3) is therefore used (Roo, Yamu and Zuidema, 2020). Secondly, governance through competition happens when the market, thus the business sector, is given more freedom and has a neoliberal character. Such a system was imposed in Western Europe when the governments loosened up the rules for businesses and privatised some public institutions (Graham, 2019). Governance through argumentation is seen as a new trend in Western Europe. Roo, Yamu, and Zuidema (2020) argue that some modern spatial planning issues have a complex character: multiple interested parties wishing for different outcomes. These situations, over time, created the communicative rationality (Figure 3) in planning (Zuidema, 2018).

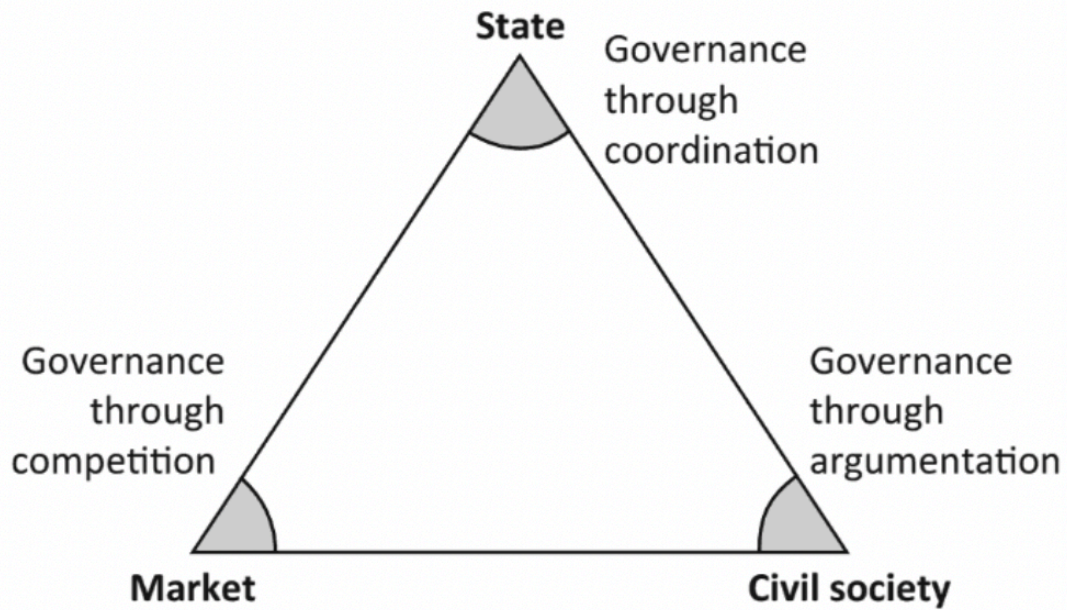


Figure 2: The Governance Triangle (Zuidema 2018).

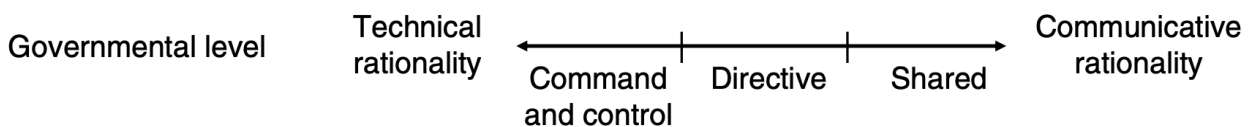
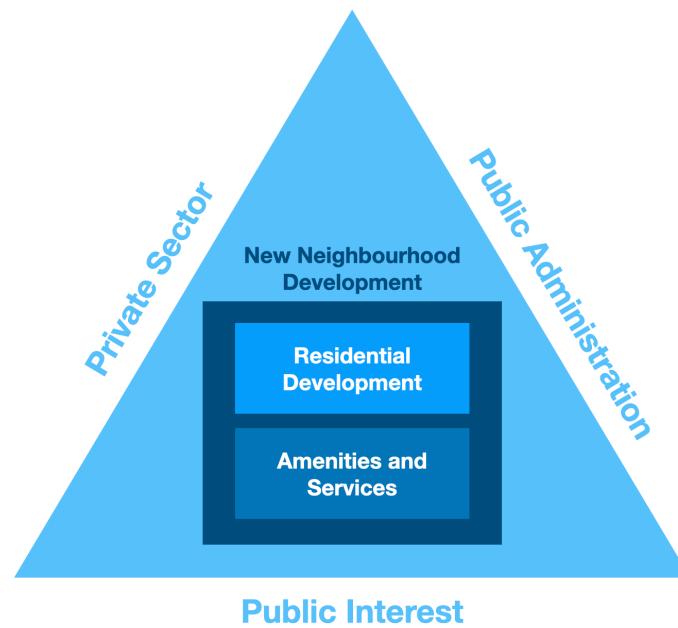


Figure 3: Technical and communicative rationality (Roo, Yamu and Zuidema, 2020).

The conceptual model (Figure 4) depicts three main actors and their interplay in governance processes in Slovak spatial planning. Like the Governance Triangle framework, the model distinguished the "private sector" as businesses, primarily investors, real estate developers and land-owners interested in profiting from new development projects. Moreover, "public interest" refers to the wishes and needs of the general public and the inhabitants of a space, whether it is affordable housing, a nearby supermarket, or a public school. Finally, the "public administration" in Slovak spatial planning is the formal government, mainly consisting of laws, regulations and municipality organisations such as *magistrát* and *mestské časti*. Their role planning in Slovakia is described in the 200/2022 Z. z. o územnom plánovaní Slovak law: spatial planning is a set of activities determining and regulating the territory and its functionality. Its goal is to create conditions for sustainable territorial development to ensure the territory is used efficiently, economically, aesthetically, ethically, and democratically, as well as to protect the quality of the environment and the quality of life of the inhabitants. The law states that the responsibility of spatial planning authority (*magistrát or mestské časti*) is to harmonise state, regional, municipal and local interests through the spatial arrangement and functional use of neighbouring territories (200/2022 Z. z. o územnom plánovaní).



*Figure 4: The conceptual model of the governance triangle in the context of new neighbourhood development (adjusted from Zuidema, 2018).*

These three actors interact in new neighbourhood development projects, defined as any addition to a significant-sized built environment, mainly consisting of new residential buildings and amenities. These developments entail central residential or office spaces, the primary profitable buildings for the developer, and amenities and services that provide a higher standard of living in the area and are essential for the neighbourhood's functionality. Funding and cooperation in building amenities and services are critical in finding new strategies. All three actors should work together, and thus, the communication in the planning of the projects should have a governance character (Buček, 2016). The analysis of the reciprocity and collaboration process resulted in new strategies for funding and planning for new neighbourhood developments in Bratislava.

The following section on Methodology explains the methods used, data collection, and analysis of three cases to answer the research question.

## **Methodology**

This thesis produced a comparative policy analysis through a review of policy and legal documents. As some of the studied cases are ongoing, well-documented policy processes within organisations (*magistrát* of Bratislava, *mestská časť Staré Mesto*, and Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava) were assessed. An overview of current spatial planning practice in Bratislava is provided in the Background section. Three case studies were picked for analysis: Chalupkova-Pribinova Zone for its missing amenities and services, Urban Study Mlynské Nivy Zone as a pilot project using a new methodology and Prague's institutional framework as an international example. Each case was assessed through the conceptual model: the governance process between the private investor and city authority and outcomes in terms of commercial (residential spaces and retail) and non-commercial developments (services, amenities that do not generate big profit, and infrastructure). In the Discussion, future strategies are suggested based on the process analysis.

### ***Data collection***

The majority of data was gathered from municipal organisations (*magistrát*, *mestská časť*, MIB, and IPR Praha) and legal frameworks connected to the case of the city. In the week of the 11th – 22nd of March, the researcher contacted professionals from *mestské časti*, *magistrát*, and MIB, who guided the research towards relevant materials, policy documents, legal materials and explained the urban planning and development process in Bratislava. These documents are, by law, available online. However, the complexity of the topic and non-intuitive placement of these documents on websites require assistance from government employees. The researcher analysed the documents in the following weeks, basing the analyses on the study's conceptual model. There are no data management risks as all data used in this study are publicly available. Research ethics is discussed below.

### ***Data analysis***

During the analysis, the focus was on governance processes in new neighbourhood developments. It examined the interplay between the local municipality (*magistrát* or *mestská časť*) through policy or legal documents and the private investor's behaviour, with the public interest and democratic principles as guiding values. The goal was to analyse each case's process, describing stakeholder actions and critiquing them with the public interest. The governance process of the first case study, Chalupkova-Pribinova Zone, is explained through urban planning documents, highlighting implications for private parties, public interest, and the position of *magistrát* and *mestská časť Staré Mesto*. This area was chosen for its relevance as a downtown region with ongoing development and significant investor interest. The second case study focuses on the Urban Study Mlynské Nivy Zone, emphasising new relationships, procedures, and agreements between *magistrát* and private investors in neighbourhood development. The study referenced housing policy documents and a methodology for private investors. An international example from Prague was included due to its similar legal and organisational background. In Prague, neighbourhood development is primarily managed by *magistrát* and IPR, with policies from these institutions forming the basis of analysis. Mr Hlaváček, Deputy Minister for Territorial Development in Prague, developed a methodology for the *magistrát*, and IPR Prague created the Metropolitan Plan to guide future development. The discussion section



compares these three analyses, drawing suggestions for improving Bratislava's neighbourhood development strategies. It evaluates the progress in policy and public administration's role in urban planning in Bratislava, compares it with Prague's organisations, public administration role, and spatial planning tools, and assesses how they benefit the public interest and regulate private investors' behaviour.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

This research method only involves interaction with academic materials or freely available policy documents, mainly in the Slovak language. Concerning positionality, my role as a researcher is characterised by a nuanced positioning, given my informed awareness of latent trends and unexpressed opinions within the *magistrát* and the City Spatial Plan creation process. This insight is derived from practical experiences gained through internships, coupled with familial connections. Hence, I objectively studied the topic and distinguish data from social stereotypes and spoken trends. I used reliable sources and continuously review my work. The research was also be peer-reviewed by colleagues before publishing.

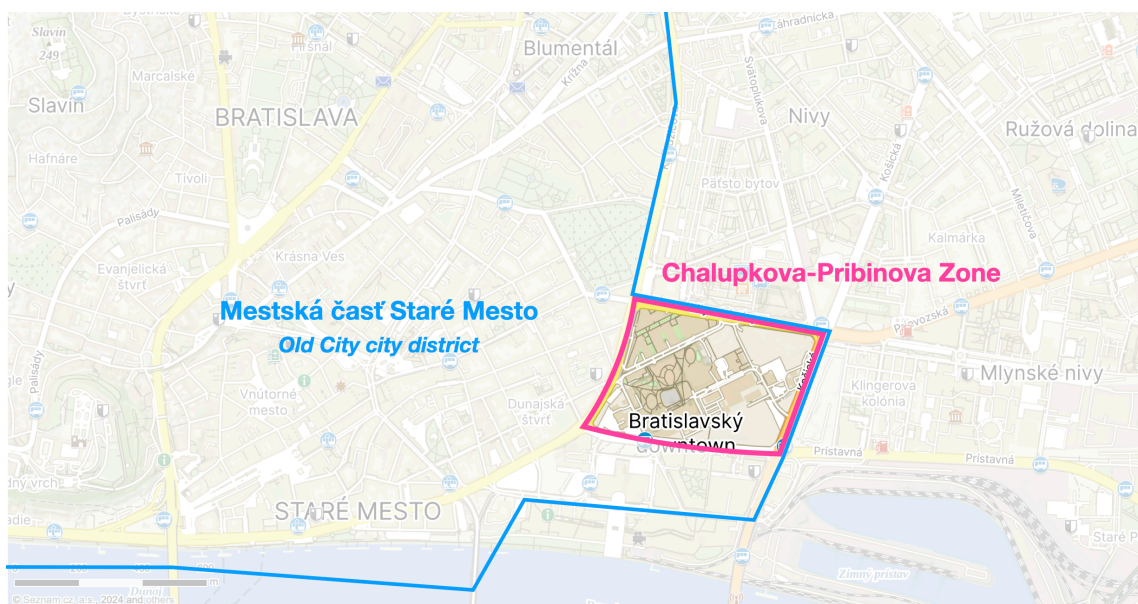
Following part discussed the analysis of case studies.

## **Analysis**

### ***1. Chalupkova-Pribinova Zone***

#### ***Process Description***

Chalupkova-Pribinova Zone is an area in the Bratislava downtown region in *mestská časť Staré Mesto* (Figure 5). It was an industrial site identified as having high potential for further city development due to its proximity to the city centre in the 2007 City Spatial Plan (Bratislava.sk, 2007). The site features industrial-protected sites (JELA s.r.o., 2017) and a new concentrated high-rise development.



*Figure 5: Closer view on the Chalupkova-Pribinova Zone and its relationship to the Mestská časť Bratislava-Staré Mesto, (adjusted from Mapy.cz, 2024).*

The City Spatial Plan from 2007 already dedicated most of the area to J codes and numbers 201 and 501 (see Table 2 for explanation). However, before the Spatial Plan of a Zone could be approved, one industrial functional area, 602, had to be changed in the City Spatial Plan, which happened in the Second Amendment in 2011 labelled as RV/SM/25, changed to 501 (Bratislava.sk, 2011). The codes also changed from J to M (Figures 6 and 7), raising the floor space index to its maximum (Bratislava.sk, 2007), based on urban studies done by private parties. The first Spatial plan of the Zone was finished in 2011 and suggested a block structure (Voleková, 2023). In the meantime, one of the investors chose Zaha Hadid's Sky Park, featuring towers (Figures 8 and 9), which contradicted the proposed block structure (Penta Real Estate, n.d.). For unexplained reasons, the Spatial plan of the Zone was withdrawn and never approved from the council meeting by the major of Staré Mesto in 2012 (Uznesenia z 11. zasadnutia Miestneho zastupiteľstva mestskej časti Bratislava-Staré Mesto, 2012). Sky Park's towers, therefore, got valid building permission in the following years.

Table 2: Explanation of Numbers and Codes from The City Spatial Plan from 2007 (Bratislava.sk, 2007).

Number	Explanation	Code	Floor Space Index
201	public amenities of city-wide importance	J	2.7
501	mix-use developments: residential areas and public amenities	M	3.6
602	areas of technical amenities	Raised M	3.9

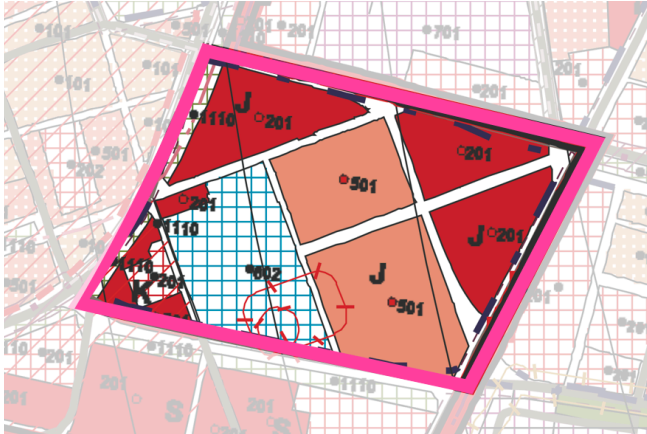


Figure 6: Chalupkova-Pribinova zone in the first City Spatial Plan from 2007, adjusted by the author (Bratislava.sk, 2007).

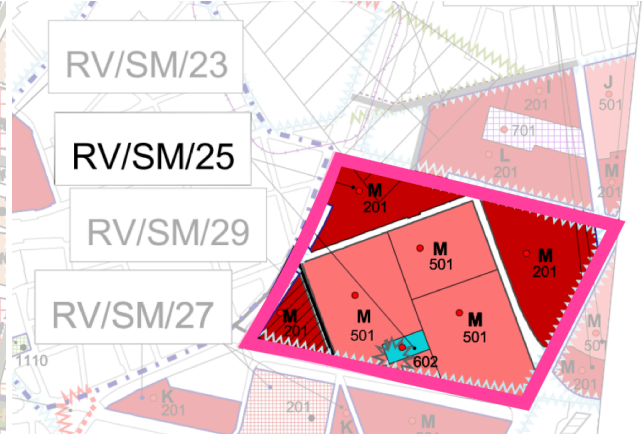
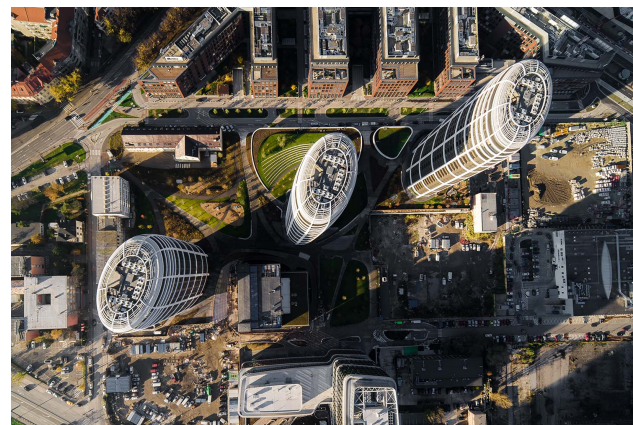
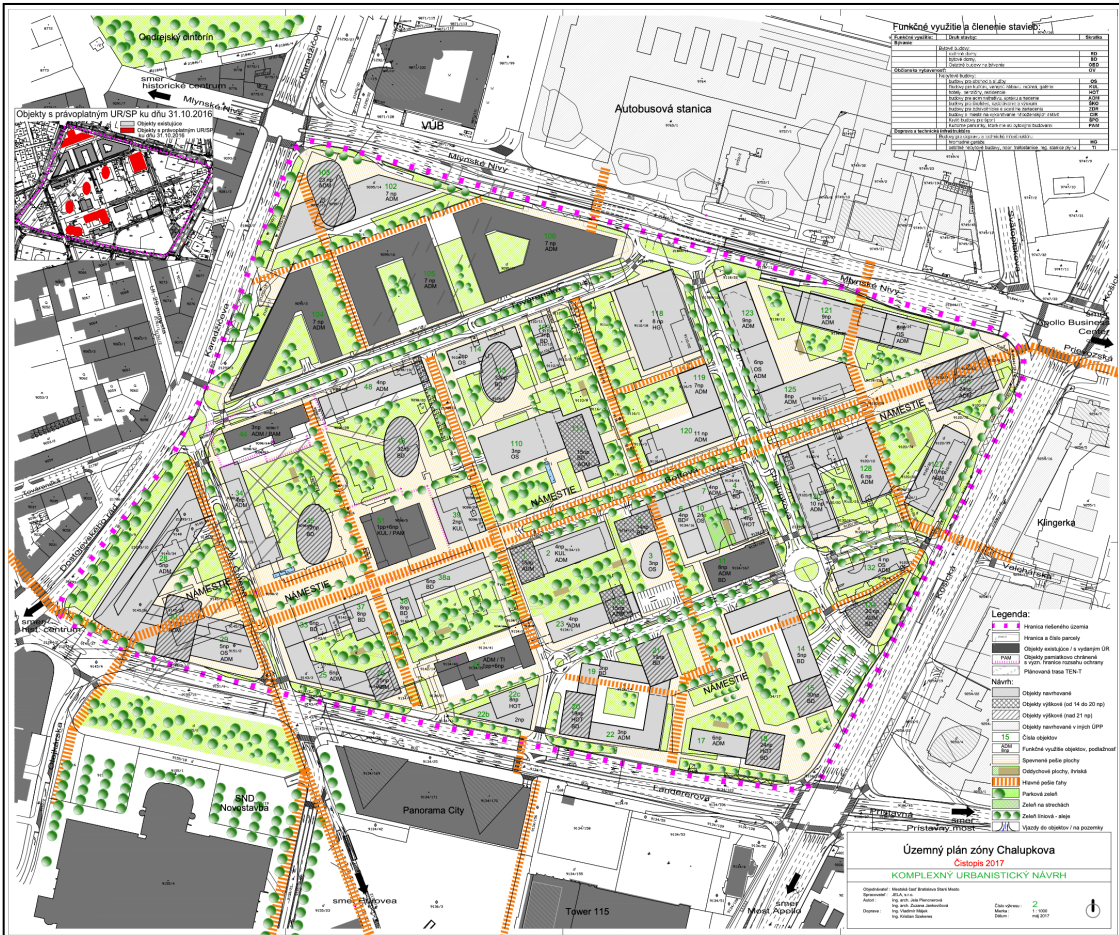


Figure 7: Chalupkova-Pribinova zone in the Second Amendment in 2011, adjusted by the author (Bratislava.sk, 2011).



Figures 8 and 9: Sky Park towers (Penta Real Estate, n.d.).

In 2015, another agreement for the second Spatial Plan of a Zone was signed (Zmluva o dielo č. 311/2015), see Figures 10 and 11 for comparison, and released in 2017 (JELA s.r.o., 2017) after multiple developments had already taken place and a significant part of the buildings were standing or approved to be built (Figure 12). The Spatial Plan of a Zone also raised the floor space index from the already highest allowed 3.6 to 3.9 under the condition that the developer cleans the soil pollution on its parcel (JELA s.r.o., 2017). Thus, since 2007 (and 2011), the approved City Spatial Plan allowed the investors to propose and build anything following the legislation until the Spatial Plan of a Zone was approved in 2017 (Bratislava-Staré Mesto, 2023), regulating the area to the specific parcel. See Figure 13 for an overview of the process.



Figures 10 and 11: A complex urbanism proposal for First and Second Spatial Plan of a Zone Chalupkova (JELA s.r.o., 2012), (JELA s.r.o., 2017). Notice the differences in block structures in the first one vs tower structures in the second one.

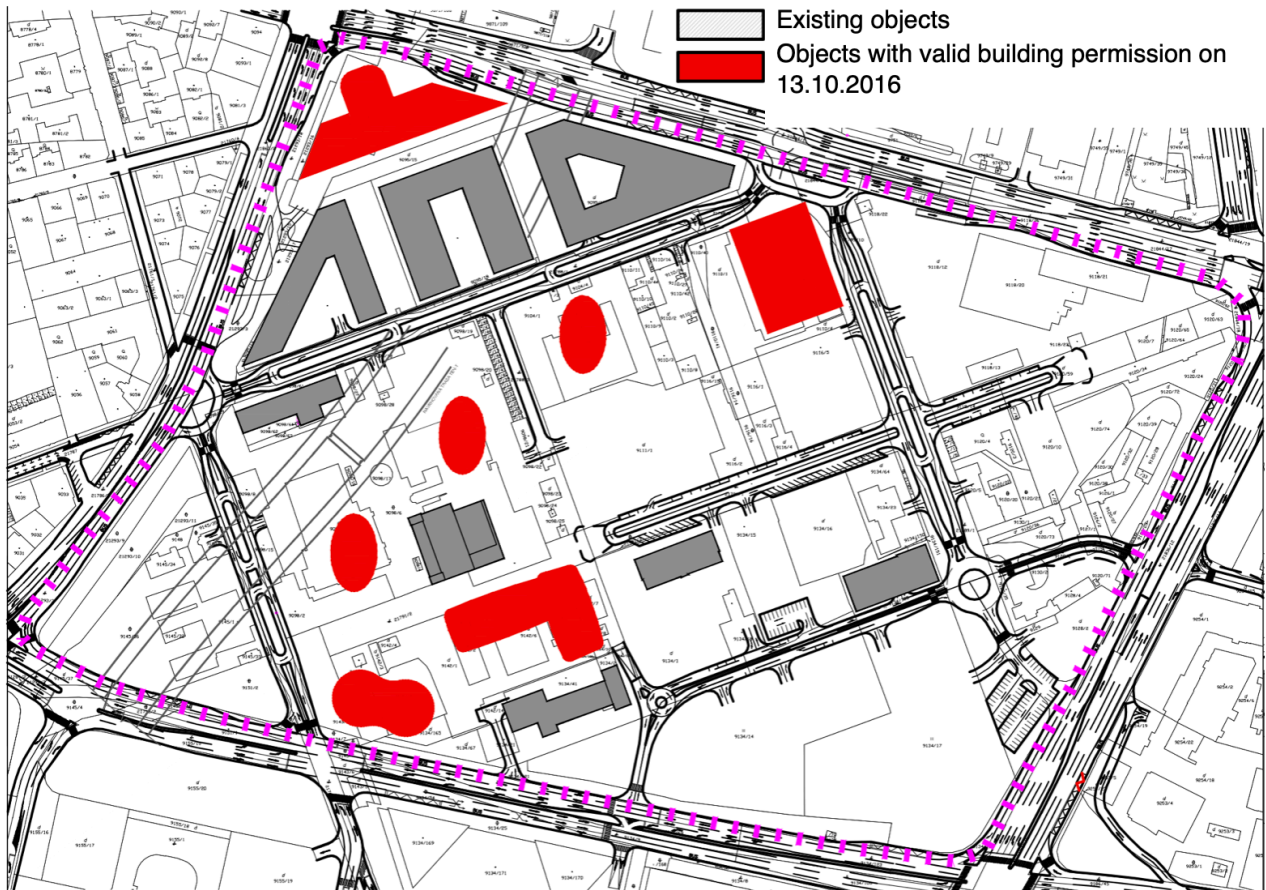


Figure 12: Existing objects and objects with valid building permission just before the Spatial Plan of a Zone approval, translated by the author (Bratislava-Staré Mesto, 2023).

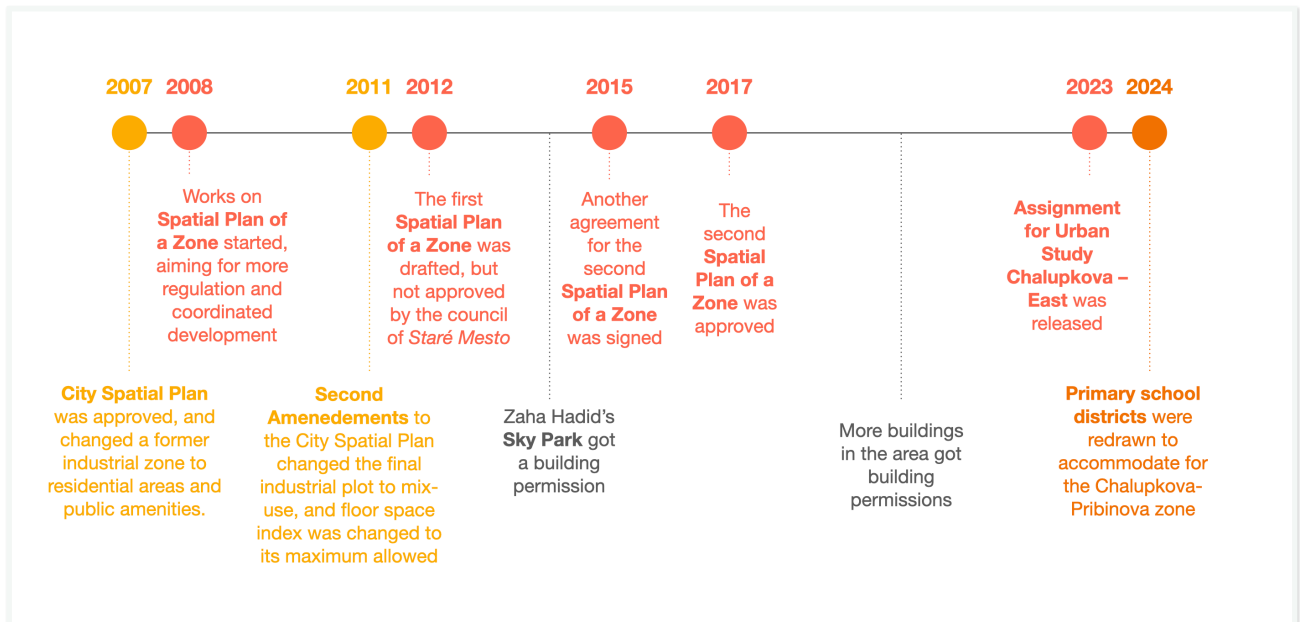


Figure 13: An overview of the processes in the Chalupkova-Pribinova Zone (made by the author).

### Critique

The plan expects the number of inhabitants in the newly built residential areas to be more than 5,000. Nevertheless, Mrs Luptáková (2024) from the Department of Urban Planning, *Mestská časť Bratislava – Staré Mesto*, expects the numbers to be much higher due to the higher floor space index. Moreover, as the zone features administration buildings, almost 20,000 people are estimated to be in the zone daily after its complete construction (JELA s.r.o., 2017). However, the plan did not plan for any form of public transportation through the site or adjust the streets in the area, whereas more than 10,000 parking spots were proposed (JELA s.r.o., 2017).

The plan estimated that the area needs education facilities to place 211 kindergarten children and 716 primary school children (JELA s.r.o., 2017), yet proposing to build only two kindergarten facilities without a specific location and leaving the rest for the area surroundings, without analysis/proof. *Mestské časti* must guarantee a space in their primary school for its inhabitants. *Staré Mesto* is, thus, trying to mitigate the situation by redrawing the primary school districts (Figure 14) to accommodate for the Chalupkova-Pribinova zone (VZN mestskej časti Bratislava-Staré Mesto č. 3/2024). *Staré Mesto* also does not have a specific temporal demographic analysis, which only adds to the problem.

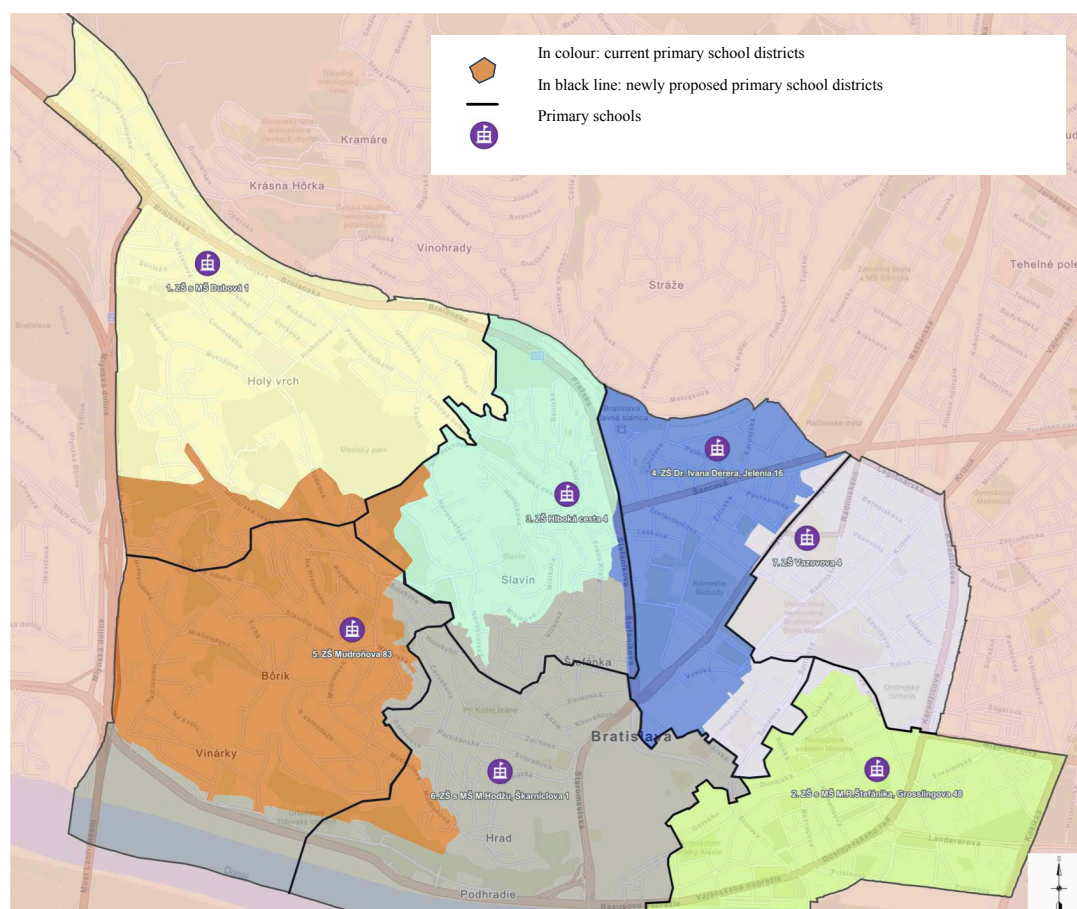


Figure 14: Current and newly proposed primary school districts adjusted for Chalupkova-Pribinova Zone, (VZN mestskej časti Bratislava-Staré Mesto č. 3/2024).

In conclusion, the process of changing zoning regulations in the area and the non-approval of the first Spatial plan of the Zone is suspicious. The late delivery of the second Spatial Plan of the Zone questions the public vs private interest, as it, for instance, underestimated education facilities and approved higher floor space indexes. There was no active cooperation between the public administration of Staré Mesto and private investors; it was just an exchange of documents. A new Assignment for Urban Study Chalupkova – East from 2023 (Smart City Office I s.r.o., 2023) is an opportunity to alleviate problems in the area (Figures 15 and 16).



*Figures 15 and 16: The area Chalupkova – East is the object of the new Assignment (Penta Real Estate, 2024).*

## 2. Urban Study Mlynské Nivy Zone

### Process Description

The first successful example of a collaborative process between *magistrát* and private parties in neighbourhood development in Bratislava is the pilot project *Mestská urbanistická štúdia zóny Mlynské Nivy*, Urban Study of the Mlynské Nivy Zone (Metropolitný Inštitút Bratislavy, 2022). The Study started with *magistrát's* public call for the City Spatial Plan amendment applications to increase housing availability, aiming to construct new social rental housing, which is neglected in Bratislava (Hlavné mesto SR Bratislava, 2023). The “transformation area” Mlynské Nivy Zone close to the city centre (Figure 17) had many amendment applications, and therefore, *magistrát* proceeded to prepare the Urban Study by MIB (Figure 18). The Urban Study fulfils multiple policy documents, such as Bratislava 2030, Height Zoning regulation, Brownfields study and the Urban Housing Policy Approach 2020-2030.

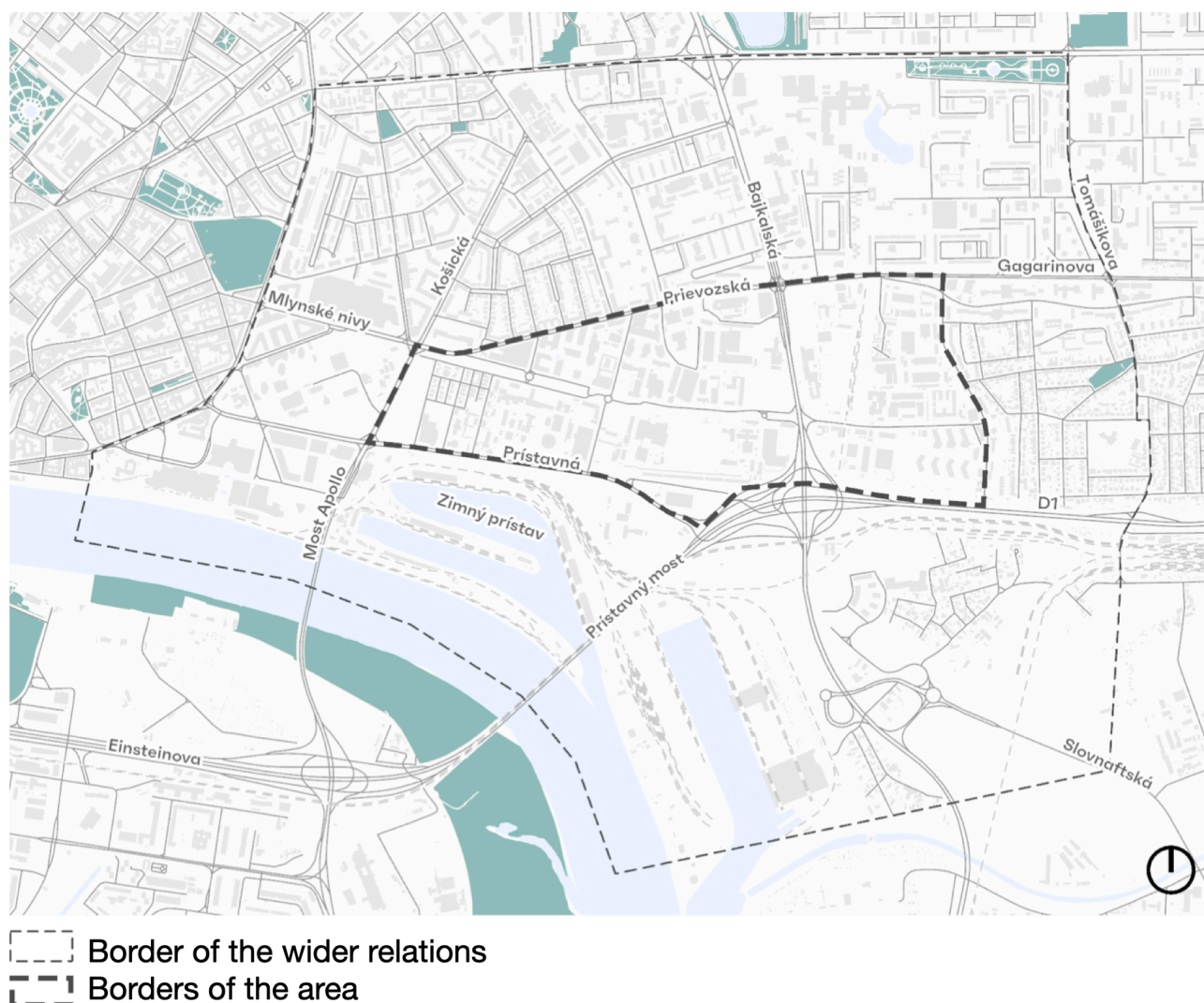


Figure 17: The Urban Study area and its wider context (Metropolitný Inštitút Bratislavy, 2022).





Figure 18: Visualization of the new neighbourhood Mlynské Nivy based on the Urban Study (MIB, n.d.).

### Urban Housing Policy Approach 2020-2030 and Methodology

The study reacted to Bratislava's Urban Housing Policy Approach 2020-2030, which aims to analyse housing and propose priorities for affordable options (Metropolitný inštitút Bratislavy and Hlavné mesto Slovenskej republiky Bratislava, 2021). One strategy is cooperation with private parties due to *magistrát*'s limited resources, for which a Methodology was introduced (Hlavné mesto Slovenskej republiky Bratislava, 2021). The Methodology argues that such changes to the City Spatial Plan that increase the potential for higher profit for the private owners should happen under certain conditions. Previously, such amendments added no value to the municipality. The Methodology aims to set transparent, predictable rules and a firm legal framework for cooperation, ensuring fair contribution fees for the private investors in the area. The outcome is mutually beneficial: more commercial apartments for investors and more social housing for the *magistrát* without direct financial input, unlike purchasing or self-construction.

### Benefits of the Urban Study

The Urban Study's priority was to coordinate the interests of landowners and the public in transparent conditions, resulting in a coordinated, planned construction of the area. The change in the City Spatial Plan will bring twice as many apartments/residents to the area, thereby addressing the housing shortage issue. The study features detailed analyses of demography, the new proposed densities and infrastructure, ensuring that the community's needs are met. Amenities and services are thoroughly studied: social care, sports, green and blue infrastructure, culture and education and health facilities; see Figure 19 for illustration.

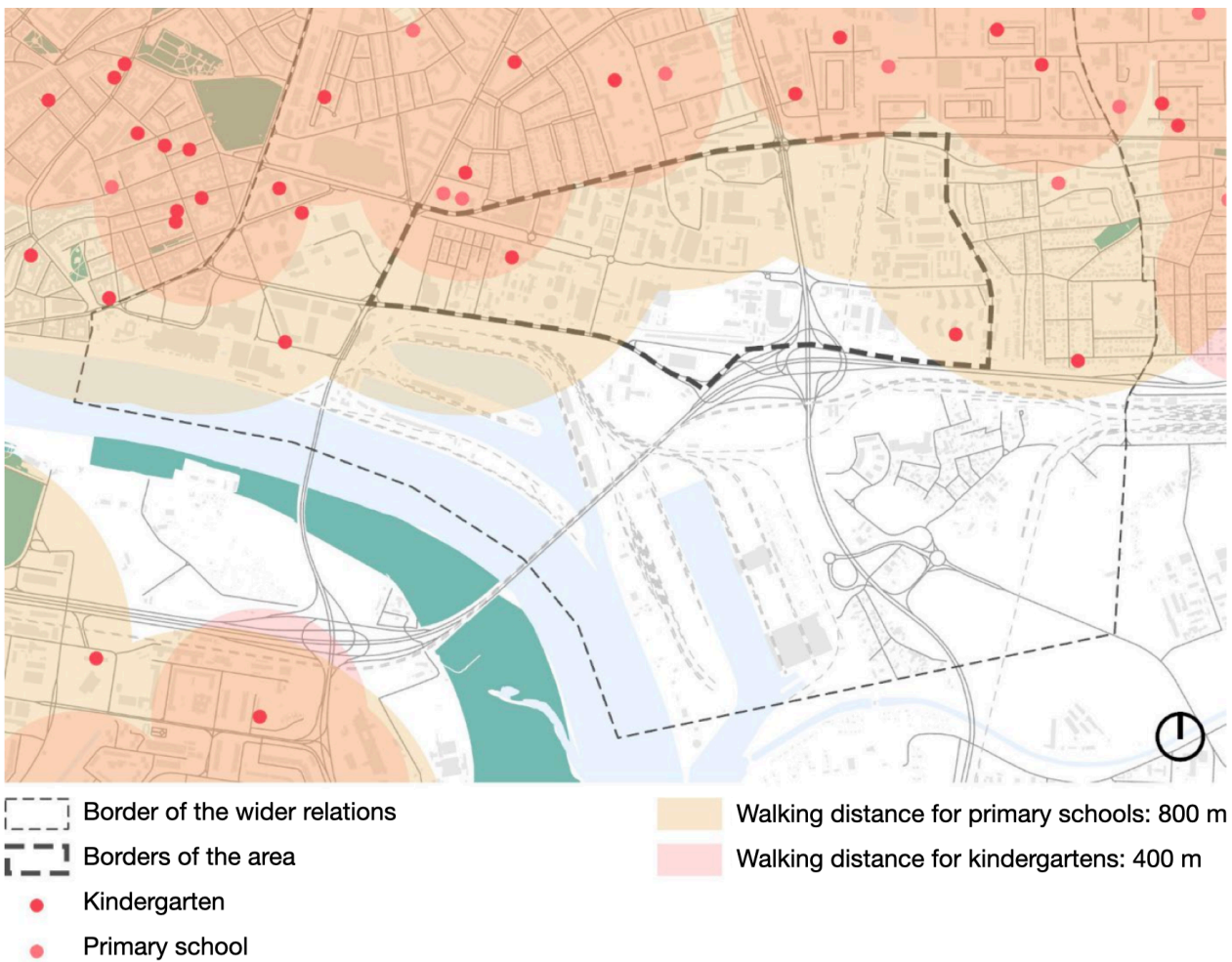


Figure 19: Education facilities analysis in the area (Metropolitný Inštitút Bratislavy, 2022).

### Contribution Fee

Urban Study has only an advisory legal position (Table 1), so the collaboration with investors was started voluntarily. To secure the study's intentions, MIB signed agreements with investors (Zmluva o spolupráci a poskytnutí príspevku na spracovanie urbanistickej štúdie), which entail the details of the collaboration, agreeing with the concept, and contributing to the area through the Contribution Fee (Figure 20) which will be spent in the area, or directly building amenities and services of a calculated value. Mr Berežný (2024), the head of the Spatial Planning Department at MIB and the study's Chief Researcher, claims that so far, the investors seem to be collaborative and see the benefits of this neighbourhood development strategy.

### The Contribution Fee

#### First Part of The Contribution Fee

$$PD1 = (1800 + (PP1 - 50000) * 0.018) * 20 \text{ [€]}$$

\*PD1 = floor area resulting from the Developer's request

#### Second Part of The Contribution Fee

$$PD2 = (1800 + (PP2 - 50000) * 0.018) * 40 - PD1$$

\*PD2 = The second part of the contribution fee  
 \*PP2 = floor area resulting from the Urban Study positively negotiated with the city council  
 \*PD1 = the first part of the contribution fee

Figure 20: The calculation of the contribution fee, visualized by the author (Zmluva o spolupráci a poskytnutí príspevku na spracovanie urbanistickej štúdie).

### Critique

The Urban Study and Methodology bring a positive change in paradigm, which so far has the support of both leaders in public administration and private developer companies. The main critique is that the agreements between *magistrát* and developers about contribution fees lack legal power. National law about spatial planning should be changed to allow Spatial Plan amendments to be conditioned by a fee. Currently, the investor could deviate from the contracts after plan changes. However, the study's precedential Ekoindeks was incorporated into Bratislava and Košice's spatial planning law (392/2023 Z. z. vyhláška), suggesting potential national impact. A new Spatial Plan could minimise future negotiation disagreements.

### **3. Prague's Institutional Framework**

#### Process Description

##### **Methodology for Investor Participation**

Prague's City Spatial Plan from 1999 has a strong tradition of dedicated functions in certain city areas (IPR Praha, n.d.), with numerous amendments. Recognising its importance, a team of Mr Hlaváček, a Deputy Minister for Territorial Development in Prague, developed the Methodology for Investor Participation (Hlaváček, 2022), approved by Prague's City Council in 2022. The methodology aims to regulate negotiations and cooperation between Prague's *magistrát* and private parties through voluntary agreements during Spatial Plan changes. It addresses Prague's affordable housing shortage, noting that new districts require substantial public infrastructure investments, such as schools, parks, and public transport. As neither the city nor municipal districts have sufficient funds, investors must contribute to these infrastructure projects, Mr Hlaváček claims (Hlaváček, 2022). The methodology's core principle is that if an investor's requested plan change significantly increases their land value, they must return part of their new revenue as a contribution fee. This approach benefits investors by creating a more transparent, stable, and predictable project environment.

##### **Metropolitan Plan**

The newly drafted Metropolitan Plan of Prague, which underwent public and private participation, is being prepared for City Council approval and will create a comprehensive vision for the city (IPR Praha, n.d.). As with many city spatial plans, the document entails a text and graphic version of the proposed spatial regulations. This one is, however, more detailed, as it divides the entire territory of Prague into "locations" (Figure 21) explained in "cover sheets" and regulates them specific to a parcel (Portál Hlavního města Prahy, 2022). Each cover sheet regulates the area in 9 areas, such as greenery, transportation, or rate of land use.

Moreover, the plan distinguishes three types of sites: stabilised, transformational and development sites (Table 3). The goal of the Metropolitan plan is to turn transformation and development sites into stabilised ones and, therefore, densify the compact city of Prague. Furthermore, the plan divides amenities into commercial, civic and recreational (Table 4). The plan defines amenities' location either by graphic regulations (specific location on the plan) or through "parametric regulations" for transformational or development sites by specifying the percentage of the area for amenities. For these sites, amenities are defined by a point and a buffer in which those amenities have to be realised, and the minimum share of amenities – the coefficient "OVmin", is calculated individually based on demography analysis and spatial factors. For example, see Figures 22 and 23: a cover sheet of "location" Sídliště Barrandov neighbourhood, where the area is coherently regulated with stabilised and transformational areas, where coefficients and indexes guide further development.



Figure 21: Locations in Prague's Metropolitan Plan (Portál Hlavního města Prahy, 2022).

Table 3: Description of the three types of sites in the Metropolitan Plan of Prague (Textová část Metropolitního plánu).

Site	Description	Target Character
<b>Stabilised</b>	“a location with an established character”	“derived from the existing character”
<b>Transformational</b>	“a location with a disturbed or unsustainable character, in which extensive or total changes in the formation of the territory or its use are proposed under the conditions”	“not derived from the existing character, but is newly designed.”
<b>Development</b>	“a location in which the creation of a new character of the territory is proposed under the conditions.”	“not derived from the existing character of the open landscape, but is newly designed.”

Table 4: Description of the three types of amenities in the Metropolitan Plan of Prague (Textová část Metropolitního plánu).

Type of Amenity	Description
<b>Commercial</b>	“especially buildings, other structures and land used for trade, services and employment opportunities”
<b>Civic</b>	“in particular buildings, other structures and land used for education and upbringing, social services and family care, health services, culture, public administration, protection of the population, etc.”
<b>Recreational</b>	“especially buildings, other structures and land used for recreation, relaxation and sports.”



Critique

A positive change development also occurred in Prague with new policy documents and analysis from IPR Prague and Methodology for Investor Participation used to fund amenities and services in certain locations. The Metropolitan Plan promises clearer rules to ensure public interest. The downside of Prague's approach is that even with the new Metropolitan Plan, the city does not have the tools to turn the Methodology into a legal tool to condition Spatial Plan amendment. A change in law is necessary so that the methodology is legally binding.

## Discussion

### Bratislava: Reflecting on the Lack of Coordination

The first case study was selected for its lack of amenities and services and uncoordinated and questionable governance process. *Magistrát's* leadership aimed to improve the process, and hence, a new methodology was introduced in Urban Study Mlynské Nivy Zone. Table 5 contains an overview of the processes from the mentioned case studies.

Table 5: Comparison of processes in the first two case studies (made by the author).

	Chalupkova-Pribinova Zone	Urban Study Mlynské Nivy Zone
<b>Change to the City Spatial Plan</b>	Based on private parties, no compensation for the public administration	Based on coordinated agreements and compensation for the public administration
<b>The relationships between the public administration and the private sector</b>	City authority outsourced the Spatial Plans of the Zone and then did not approve it, enabling the private sector's plans to go through.	Coordinated, mutually respectful and transparent
<b>Amenities and Services</b>	Questionable analysis, not sufficient and no clear link with the reality	Thorough analysis of many sectors, GIS maps with buffers, and proposals for new ones
	Missing, might be built in the remaining parcels	Planned to be built at the same time as new residential development, assigned per parcel
	Not planned exactly per parcel	Assigned per parcel
<b>Example: Education</b>	Not sufficiently planned, public administration <i>mestská časť Staré Mesto</i> only reacts to the missing amenities	Analysed the situation, placed facilities to a specific parcel
<b>Coordination Agreements</b>	None	Yes
<b>Fee's</b>	Development fee	Development fee + contribution fee

Figure 24 revisits the conceptual model and interprets the position of the case studies (the model is not based on empirical data). Chalupkova-Pribinova Zone's position reflects the failure of the public administration to ensure a coherent development with amenities and services, which, therefore, mainly benefitted the private sector, profiting from high-rise residential/office buildings. On the other hand, public interest in the area was the priority in Mlynské Nivy Zone, where strong leadership from the public administration and responsible handling of the City Spatial Plan as a tool resulted in balanced interest for both private parties and the needs of the area.

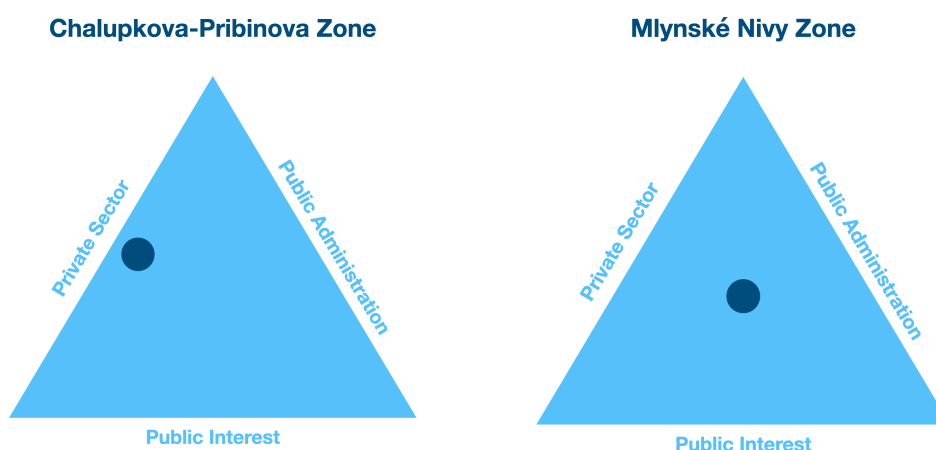


Figure 24: Revisited conceptual model comparing the first two case studies (made by the author).



For comparison, education was vaguely touched upon in the Spatial Plan of the Zone, thus creating issues in the future for *mestská časť Staré Mesto* that now mitigates the lack of kindergarten and primary school places. On the contrary, Urban Study Mlynské Nivy Zone analysed the demographics, calculated the demand for these facilities and dedicated specific locations in the area, and agreed with the landowners to develop the facilities alongside their development.

One of the key differences between the cases is that in the Chalupkova-Pribinova Zone, all of the spatial planning documents were composed by private companies, while the public administration (*magistrát, mestské časti*) only approved of them. On the other hand, Urban Study Mlynské Nivy was prepared internally in MIB, a public administration organisation. So far, MIB has produced multiple high-quality policy documents and employs experts in the field of urban planning. In the future, this stronger, proactive leadership role of the public administration (Buček, 2016) could help advocate for the public interest. For that, working in public administration needs to be an attractive alternative to the private sector for professionals (Hlavné mesto Slovenskej republiky Bratislava and Metropolitný Inštitút Bratislavy, 2022).

### ***Similarities and Differences Between Bratislava and Prague***

Table 6 provides a comparison overview of Bratislava and Prague's organisational and institutional frameworks. The two cities have a reasonably similar background and share similar policy progress. Both cities implemented a methodology to use amendments to the City Spatial Plan to regulate new developments and hence fund new amenities developments, which puts them in the same spot in the conceptual model (Figure 25).

*Table 6: Comparison of Bratislava's and Prague's organizational and institutional framework (sources Analysis part).*

	<b>Bratislava</b>	<b>Prague</b>
<b>Capital city of</b>	Slovak Republic	Czech Republic
<b>Number of inhabitants</b>	435 000 (Hlavné mesto Slovenskej republiky Bratislava and Metropolitný Inštitút Bratislavy, 2022)	1 309 000 (Czech Statistical Office, 2024).
<b>Organizational structure</b>	<i>Magistrát</i> and 17 <i>mestské časti</i> (city districts)	<i>Magistrát</i> and 57 <i>mestské časti</i> (city districts)
<b>Contributing Organizations: Spatial Planning</b>	Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava (MIB)	The Prague Institute of Planning and Development (IPR Prague)
<b>City Spatial Plan</b>	Approved by Bratislava City Council in 2007	Approved by Prague City Council in 1999
<b>New City Spatial Plan</b>	Works expected to start in 2024 (TASR, 2024)	New Metropolitan Plan of Prague is drafted and being prepared for City Council approval soon (IPR Praha, n.d.)
<b>Methodology for City Spatial Plan amendments</b>	2021 – Methodology of Spatial Plan Amendments in the Interest of Building Prerequisites for the Development of Rental Housing and Increasing the Availability of Housing	2022 – Methodology for Investor Participation

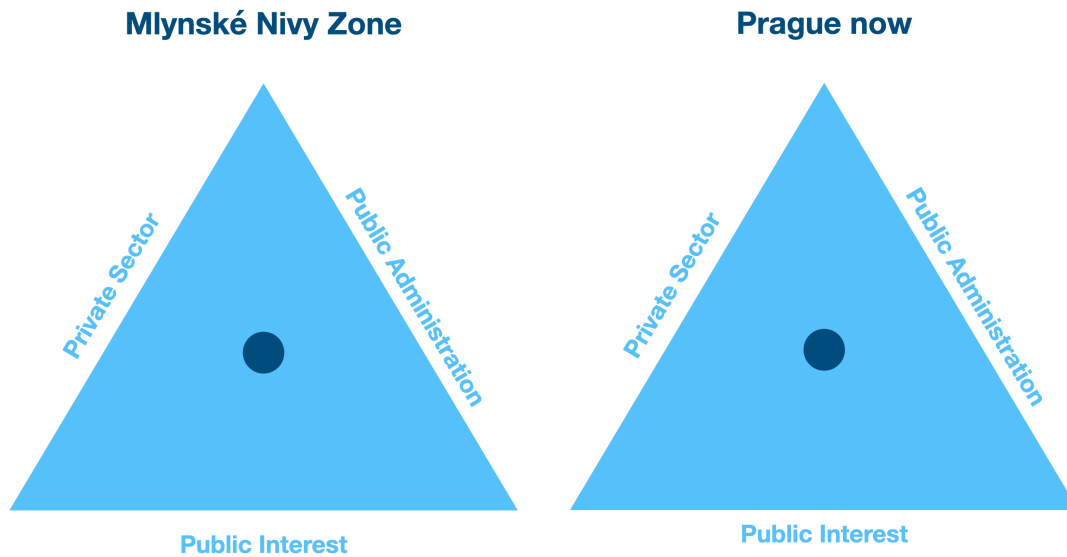


Figure 25: Revisited conceptual model comparing the Mlynské Nivy Zone and Prague's current state (made by the author).

The biggest inspiration Bratislava can take from Prague is their new Metropolitan plan, which uses a modern framework and approach to the development in transformation areas. The level of detail of the Metropolitan Plan is comparable to Bratislava's spatial plans of zones, with a critical difference that Prague defined as the whole city and not only specific areas. The plan leaves no doubts and space for manipulation. Its definition of amenities' types, locations, sizes and indexes are clearly defined in 3 different kinds of sites, which puts the public interest first (Figure 26). Such a detailed definition of amenities and services is neither in Urban Study Mlynské Nivy nor the City Spatial Plan of Bratislava. Consequently, the city does not have to negotiate the predefined rules in the area with private parties beforehand. Such a system could inspire Bratislava to make a new spatial plan in the following years (TASR, 2024).

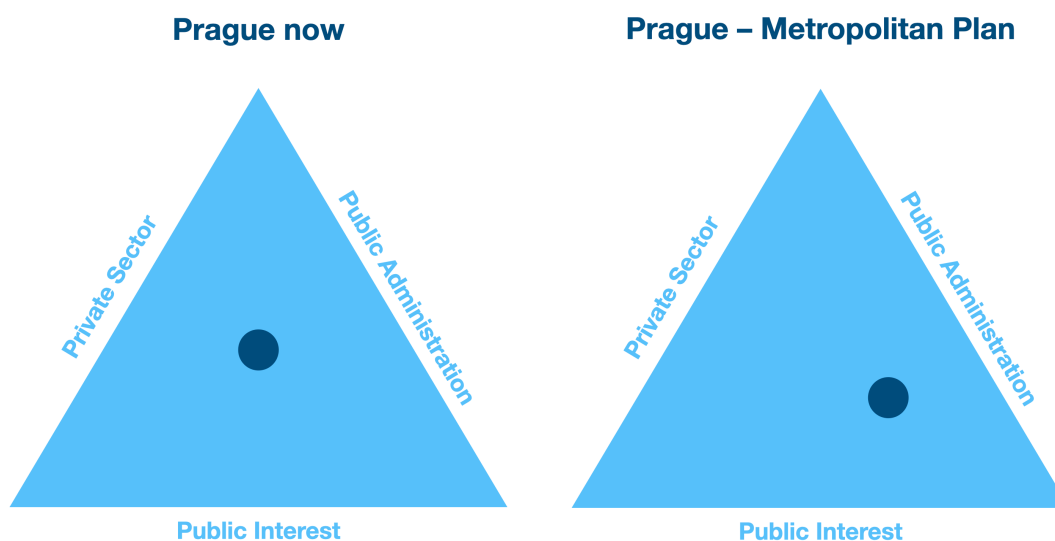


Figure 26: Revisited conceptual model comparing Prague now and the new, not yet approved Metropolitan Plan (made by the author).

Both cities' countries stemmed from one legal system of Czechoslovakia, whose system of municipal funding remained almost unchanged. The countries collect the taxes and then redistribute them mainly based on the number of inhabitants, which is not an economic incentive. For example, Bratislava has proportionally the same budget as any village in Slovakia, even though the costs connected to a city of its size are much more significant: public transport, new developments or creating conditions to attract companies. To match Prague's annual budget, Bratislava's budget would have to be approximately 1,142 billion euros (three times more than now). In contrast, Bratislava's GDP is much higher than Prague's (Figure 27), yet the city gets a proportionally smaller budget. Such contrast between the cities' funds implicitly impacts the amenities and services to be maintained or built. As a city, Prague has more control over its investments as its capital expenditures are done through municipalities more than in Bratislava (Figure 28). Such a change for Bratislava would improve the current situation by building or maintaining amenities. However, political will on the national level is needed.

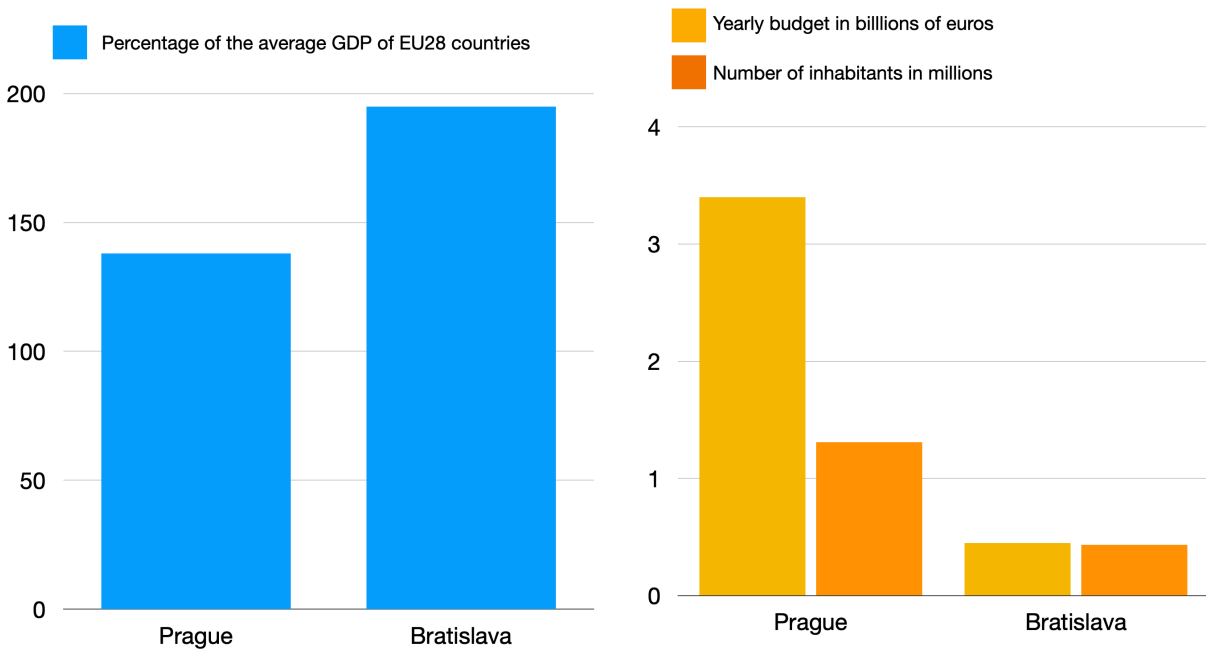


Figure 27: Comparison of Prague and Bratislava in GDP, yearly budgets and number of inhabitants (adapted from IPR Praha, (2020a), IPR Praha (2020c), Gubčo (2021), Czech Statistical Office (2024), Hlavné mesto Slovenskej republiky Bratislava and Metropolitný Inštitút Bratislavy (2022)).

## Capital Expenditures

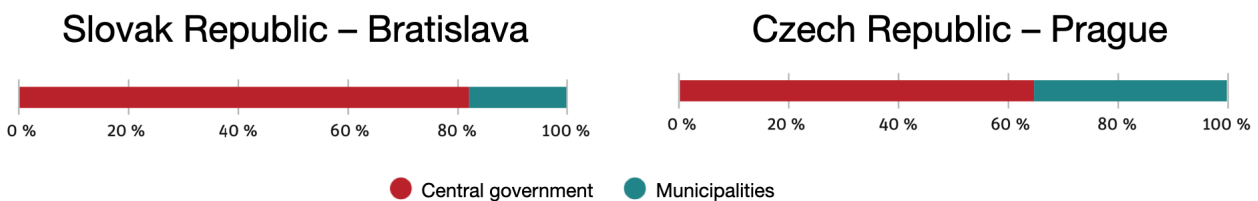


Figure 28: Capital expenditures sources comparison between Slovak and Czech Republic (IPR Praha, 2020a) (IPR Praha, 2020c).

## **Limitations**

Several limitations restrict the strategies Bratislava can employ. Firstly, positive changes in regional governance often stem from proactive leaders and professionals. In Bratislava, Mayor Matúš Vallo has significantly improved the quality of institutions since 2018. He established high-quality policy institutions like the Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava and the Innovation Office and introduced a new city vision with the help of Bloomberg Philanthropies (Bratislava.sk, n.d.). In Prague, Deputy Minister for Territorial Development Petr Hlaváček initiated similar positive changes. These leaders attract skilled professionals passionate about public administration, which is essential for modern regional governance.

A critical factor is changing legislation to make the Methodologies a firm tool for new development regulation. Currently, they are only approved by city councils and lack national law definition. Neither Slovak nor Czech law allows spatial amendments to be conditioned by a fee, making these methodologies non-binding agreements. Changing the law to make contribution fees a legal municipal tool would secure their position, particularly in larger cities like Prague, Brno, Bratislava, and Košice. Another option is raising the current development fee regulated by *mestské časti* in Bratislava. However, political will for such additional costs remains uncertain, as seen in the Chalupkova-Pribinova zone's company-public administration connections.

Lastly, the challenge of funding amenities persists, leading to underfinanced public services. Both cities have developed methodologies for funding amenities and services through private investors, but this may only be a temporary solution to a more significant issue. The primary problem is the redistribution of funds for municipalities, currently based mainly on population size, without accounting for other factors in cities. The situation can improve by redistributing funding regionally, changing the formulas to account for the capital city factor, and setting different national priorities. Until then, these methodologies serve as a temporary solution, paving the way for comprehensive and sustainable systemic change.

## **Conclusion**

This paper explored current and new strategies to ensure coherent neighbourhood development in Bratislava. The paper used a comparative policy and legal analysis approach using publicly available documents. The emphasis was placed on the interplay between the private sector (developers, investors), the public administration, and the public interest. Three case studies were picked to answer the research question: 1) Chalupkova-Pribinova Zone as an example of failed coordinated development in Bratislava, 2) Urban Study Mlynské Nivy Zone as a pilot project using Bratislava's methodologies and 3) Prague's tools for neighbourhood development.

The results improved Bratislava's more coordinated approach to new neighbourhood development projects. Moreover, Prague and Bratislava learned from their past and developed methodologies for using City Spatial Plans as their main tool for cooperation and funding amenities and services through the private sector. Such positive development and responsible behaviour in public administration emerged with positive leaders guiding the change. In the future, new Metropolitan Plans with different approaches to coherent and detailed development of neighbourhoods could improve the position of the public administrations, giving them a strong role in guiding urban developments in their cities. Bratislava could apply this approach in its new Spatial Plan to be prepared. The main issues, however, still remain dependency on leaders in public administration, legal tools for Spatial Plan amendments and redistribution system of funds at the municipal level. The last two are heavily dependent on the national political decisions to make and not on the municipal level.

Bratislava faces several limitations if new strategies for neighbourhood development are to be employed. Positive changes in regional governance often come from leaders like Matúš Vallo in Bratislava and Petr Hlaváček in Prague. Furthermore, both cities rely on city council-approved methodologies unsupported by national law for developing amenities. Legislative changes are needed to enforce contribution fees from developers legally. Nevertheless, current methodologies are temporary fixes, and sustainable improvement requires redistributing municipal funds based on factors beyond population, ensuring adequate funding for public services and systemic change.

Further research could focus on the funding system of Slovak municipalities and how the redistribution system affects the development of the capital versus regional underdeveloped municipalities, similar to Prague's report (IPR Praha, 2020). Moreover, different forms of fair relationships between private developer companies and public administration should be studied to ensure coherent development with high liveability and public interest. Research into the feasibility of such relationships in a democratic setting and legal framework could provide a basis for future decision-making. Other countries might be researched and compared, too; however, the transferability of their urban development strategies might be limited by the legal framework of differences between the countries.

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