Master's thesis

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Urban regeneration for whom? Conflicting discourses in the revitalisation of Mexico City's Historic Centre: a critical analysis

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The Metropolitan Cathedral in Mexico City. Source: Molet, 2019

Summary

This thesis focuses on the conflicting ideological discourses regarding urban regeneration. It is based on a case study of the urban regeneration project carried out in Mexico City's historic centre in the past two decades. Through a discourse analysis of the most recent policy plan regarding this project, pertaining to the period of 2017 until 2022, the influence of the two main opposing urban regeneration discourses is traced; these discourses are conceptualised as, on the one hand, the *neoliberal* discourse, and on the other hand, the *social justice*-oriented discourse. The following research question is answered:

What ideological urban regeneration discourses have influenced Mexico City's 2017-2022 urban regeneration policy plan?

In order to do assess the respective discourses' influence on the policy document, the social and discursive context that this policy document should be viewed in is carefully established first. This is done through a review of these two discourses' representation of urban disadvantage (i.e. problem framing), and argumentation on how to alleviate this disadvantage (i.e. solution framing), at global, Latin American and Mexican scale. These global and Latin American discourses, divided into two ideological opposites, form the theoretical framework, and are established based on academic literature. The review of the neoliberal and social justice discourses' expression at the Mexican level forms part of the analysis, and is based on narrative review of academic and media sources discussing the urban regeneration process in question in Mexico City's centre. The main part of the analysis is formed by a detailed text analysis of the 2017-2022 policy plan for Mexico City's centre, which' representation of circumstances, values, means and goals in urban regeneration was scrutinised.

The analysis found that the policy plan incorporates elements from both discourses, at all scale levels. Nonetheless, the neoliberal discourse stream was evidently of most influence. The urban regeneration plan was overwhelmingly framed through the lens of heritage preservation and restoration; the conservation of the historic centre's architectural as well as intangible heritage is the document's central theme, and constitutes both a primary goal of the policy plan and a means to achieve other goals, such as the promotion of tourism and the attraction of new residents. This strategy for alleviating urban disadvantage, along with its problem and solution framing, aligns with the most common (neoliberal) Latin American urban regeneration strategy since the 1990s. Its focus on the aestheticisation and reordering of public space, aiming, in part, to attract new forms of capital and to improve security, also corresponds with the globally prevalent neoliberal urban regeneration discourse, and is also supported by agents of the neoliberal discourse at the Mexican level. On the other hand, the policy document also showed influences of the social justice-oriented urban regeneration discourse stream; it placed emphasis on the importance of guaranteeing use value and diverse use of space, facilitating residents' right to appropriation of space, and their right to co-produce space through participatory planning workshops.

The research concludes that the neoliberal urban regeneration discourse has been institutionalised to a large extent in Mexico City, which is especially salient given the city's government's left-wing political orientation. More research on the underlying reasons for, as well as the implications of this discourse's dominance is suggested.

Keywords

Urban regeneration; discourse analysis; Mexico City; Latin America; gentrification

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El mundo que queremos es uno donde quepan muchos mundos.
- Subcomandante Marcos

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"An inclusive city includes penthouse-tenants," proclaimed Rotterdam alderman Bas Kurvers in a recent interview on his housing policy (König, 2020). The approach revolves around the encouragement of more socially mixed neighbourhoods, particularly in low-income areas. This statement and others surrounding the urban regeneration process in several Rotterdam neighbourhoods have yielded significant controversy, as the municipality is accused of "chasing the poor out of the city" (Van Staalduine, 2019) and purposely gentrifying low-income neighbourhoods (El Hamidi, 2021). A billboard placed by activist group Recht op de Stad ('right to the city') protested the recent demolishment of 524 units of social housing, to be replaced with a mix of social and private sector residences; it read "Rotterdam. Inclusive city. Is it happening?", parodying the city's marketing slogan "Make it happen".

The example above perfectly illustrates the conflicting conceptions of what and whom urban regeneration should prioritise, and the discourses framing them. The term 'inclusive', which anyone could seemingly rally behind, is here given different meanings. In the former interpretation, it signifies inclusion of all walks of life, including more privileged groups, at the neighbourhood level; in the latter, it refers to the protection of the interests of marginalised groups. This framing of problems, solutions, and goals through the application of discourse is central to this thesis, as the role of conflicting discourses surrounding urban regeneration will be analysed. Of course, this discursive debate is not limited to Rotterdam, where this thesis was written; rather, it is relevant globally, with different regional and local specificities. This research will focus on the case of Mexico City, within the context of both the global and Latin American debates on urban regeneration.

1.1 Problem statement

As stated, many policy debates exist globally on the topic of urban regeneration. For example, the neoliberal urban planning paradigm has normalised the promotion of social mixing as an urban regeneration instrument, which has led to widespread resistance against perceived negative effects like resident displacement (Lees, 2008). Much academic research focuses on such consequences of urban regeneration policy, and the actions constituting this policy. While this, no doubt, is valuable, an under-highlighted aspect in research on urban regeneration is the discourse used to justify and legitimise policy. Discourse, here, is understood as the representation of circumstances, values, means, and ends, as well as argumentation based on these representations (Fairclough, 1992). Here, discourse analysis comes in, seeking to dissect these representations, their influence on each other, and especially on the conclusions attached to them; for, in formulating policy, the framing of existing problems and potential solutions to them is vital. While framing of urban regeneration policy has been researched to an extent in the Global North (e.g., Hastings, 1998; Matthews, 2010), this

argumentative turn in policy and planning research (Hajer & Hoppe, 2013) has not yet reached many cities in the Global South (Blatman-Thomas & Porter, 2018). This includes Mexico City, where I lived and studied for five months in 2019, and therefore selected as both academically and personally relevant case study.

Thus, this research aims to problematise and politicise the most recent policy plan for the regeneration of the centre of Mexico City, an interesting case for various reasons. As opposed to Rotterdam, which is led by a mostly ideologically neoliberal municipal coalition, Mexico City has had a left-wing government, vocal on social justice issues, for the entire time that the urban regeneration project in question has been in works. This project was presented as a collaboration between all sectors of society, seemingly void of ideological considerations. It forms part of a wider urban regeneration approach that has already been subject to heavy criticism in the past two decades, including academic research critiquing policy action and outcomes. No studies have been dedicated to the discourse used, however, which can provide valuable insights into the government's normative considerations in policy-making. Therefore, it is valuable to critically analyse the representation of urban deprivation problems and argumentation for their solutions; does the Mexico City government employ a social justice-oriented discourse, or rather rely on a neoliberal worldview?

1.2 The case of Mexico City

The case of Mexico City was chosen because of my personal affinity with the city, and because it is a highly interesting and relevant case for research aiming to develop discourse-focused research on cases in the Global South. The government of Mexico City introduced a new urban regeneration approach for its historic centre in 2001, which has since been steadily renewed every five years. From 1997 up until 2018, Mexico City's government was led by the social-democratic PRD party; the most recent urban regeneration plan, object of study of this thesis, was published in October 2018, two months before the PRD ceded power to the similarly left-wing Morena party, which split from the PRD in 2014. Mexico City's revitalisation approach falls in a wider Latin American 'return to the centre' (*volver al centro*) trend, which after a long focus on peripheral expansion in urban planning seeks to return focus to the existing built environment, particularly the colonial-era centres many Latin cities possess. These revitalisation programs, including the one in Mexico City, have mostly been proclaimed great successes by cities' local governments (e.g., Samaniego, 2018). However, they have also yielded widespread criticism; local governments are accused of having an implicit agenda of state-led gentrification (e.g., Contreras, 2014; see section 4.1.2). The positionality of Mexico City's government within this debate is salient, as it self-identifies as left-wing, but aligns largely with the *Volver al centro* approach, which leans towards more right-wing, neoliberal-style urban regeneration

(see section 2.3). The government's critics, in turn, have argued mostly from a more left-wing, social justice perspective, as Chapter 4 will show. This local political context, as well as the global, regional and local debates on urban regeneration, will form the background for this case study.

1.3 Research aim and questions

This research aims to assess the influence of opposing ideological urban regeneration discourses at global, regional and local level on the policy document *Plan Integral de Manejo Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México 2017-2022*. Herein, it seeks especially to dissect the presented understanding and discursive construction of urban decline, its causes, and solutions for it. The main research question will be:

What ideological urban regeneration discourses have influenced Mexico City's 2017-2022 urban regeneration policy plan?

The *theoretical* sub-questions, then, will be:

What is the value of discourse theory and discourse analysis for policy research?
What ideological urban regeneration mega-discourses exist globally?
What ideological urban regeneration grand-discourses exist in Latin America?

The *empirical* sub-questions will be:

What ideological urban regeneration meso-discourses exist in Mexico, relating to Mexico City's centre?
What urban regeneration discourses are used in Mexico City's 2017-2022 urban regeneration policy plan?

1.4 Academic and societal relevance

Discourse analysis can help uncover the assumptions and implications at the heart of policy decisions, which in turn can be harnessed to bring about social change. For example, stereotypes about disadvantaged populations can be deconstructed through the analysis of vocabulary used to describe these populations, and the implicit connections made between them and negative phenomena. By understanding such social constructions, and the role of language in them, the process of challenging and reversing them can begin, if necessary. While discourse analysis is only the beginning of this highly socially and culturally complex process, it is nonetheless a crucial step. Discourses, at all scale levels, influence each other, whether its agents realise it or not; and, probably more importantly, discourses, functioning as representations of reality, influence people's own interpretation of reality, in turn influencing their behaviour and actions (Foucault, 1980). Thus, discourse, while in itself only a representation of reality, indirectly has real, tangible consequences on that reality.

This means discourse is also of crucial importance to policy-makers, whom inevitably employ a certain discourse in formulating their policies. When creating policy for an issue such as urban

disadvantage at neighbourhood level, they might be under the impression that they are employing a neutral discourse; in reality, they are most likely in this case to rely on the dominant, hegemonic discourse on the issue they are discussing, sometimes without even being aware of other existing, counter-hegemonic discourses. Discourse analysis is based on the premise that every utterance of discourse (e.g. a policy document) is influenced by a certain worldview and interpretation of reality (problem and solution framing), as well as by existing discourses. Policy-makers, in my view, would be well-advised to take note of this, and use discourse consciously.

As Janoschka et al. (2014) found, research on negative consequences of urban regeneration policies, often conceptualised as gentrification, is already influential in Latin America. Urban activism in Latin America is effectively employing the term 'gentrification' politically, as a result of interlinkages between academics and activism. Nonetheless, the negative effects of urban regeneration are not always clear to see in the short term, nor are the problem and solution framings informing policy always explicitly stated. Therefore, Janoschka et al. (2014, p. 14) argue for a "reconfiguration of the semantic field of urbanism", with a larger focus on language and discourse:

> "Although concepts such as revitalisation have now become general signifiers for gentrification processes in Latin America, they are profoundly embedded in a set of material, economic, social and symbolic discourses that need to be disrupted. In this regard, the research that accomplishes resistance to gentrification and claims the right to the city has to challenge hegemonic discourses that hide gentrification behind a discursive smokescreen."

I strongly agree that discourse should receive more attention in urban and policy studies, and therefore would like with my thesis to respond to this call by researching Mexican policy discourse, and, where appropriate, challenging it.

1.5 Outline

After this chapter's introduction of the research topic, Chapter 2 will discuss the theoretical framework used, including the conceptual model. Chapter 3, then, will explain the methodological approach this research will take: a Faircloughian discourse analysis. The 4th chapter presents the results of my analysis, after which the 5th and final chapter will summarise, conclude and discuss this research's findings, and suggest possibilities for further research.

Table 1, inspired by Matthews (2010), displays the levels of discourse to be analysed in this research. The division of discourses into different levels was proposed by Alvesson & Karreman (2000), who named and defined these as follows:

- *Micro-discourses* are single texts, requiring a detailed study of the use of language;
- *Meso-discourses* are collections of texts at a local level, the study of which is aimed at showing broader patterns, sensitive to language use and context;
- *Grand-discourses* are assemblies of discourses, to be ordered and presented as an integrated frame;

- *Mega-discourses* are more or less universal connections of discourse material, creating to a degree standardised ways of constituting certain phenomena.

This research will work down from the mega- to the micro-level, zooming in at each step. The mega- and grand-level will be discussed in Chapter 2, as they are based on academic literature review, and the meso- and micro-level in Chapter 4, based on analysis of primary sources relating to the case study in question. For the mega- and grand-level, the general arguments for different approaches to urban regeneration will be reviewed. For the meso-level and especially the micro-level, the methodology will incorporate elements of text analysis, focusing on representations of reality as well as argumentation on how to deal with this reality.

Discourse level	**Corpus**	**Chapter**
Mega-level: the development of opposing urban regeneration discourses	Review of *global urban regeneration literature* (dominated by Anglophone stream)	2
Grand-level: opposing urban regeneration discourses in Latin America	Review of *Latin American urban regeneration literature* (Latin stream)	2
Meso-level: public debate on urban regeneration policy in Mexico City	Narrative literature review, including elements of text analysis, of *academic and media sources discussing urban regeneration in Mexico City*	4
Micro-level: text-level discourse in single policy document	Text analysis of *Plan Integral de Manejo Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México 2017-2022*	4

Table 2: Discourse levels and corpora for analysis

Chapter 2: Theory

This chapter will establish the theoretical framework of this research. It will address the relevance of discourse and discourse analysis for urban policy, the existing global mega-discourses regarding urban regeneration, and the grand-discourses of urban regeneration in Latin America. Finally, it will present the conceptual model.

2.1 Discourse and discourse analysis

Firstly, I will outline the most important concepts in discourse theory, given this research' use of discourse analysis as research method. This section (2.1) will answer the following sub-question:

What is the value of discourse theory and discourse analysis for policy research?

Discourse, in its simplest form, is "the sum of communicative interactions" (Sharp & Richardson, 2001, p. 193), and can be manifested through, for example, speech, text or images. For Michel Foucault, discourses are reflective of power structures within the context they are manifested in (Foucault, 1980). In his view, 'truths' are only true insofar as they align with the system of knowledge production they are produced within, in turn linked to power. Following this line of reasoning, a discourse is defined as "an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices" (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005, p. 175).

Discourse matters, and influences socio-spatial processes and policies. As Mele (2000, p. 630) argues, "discourses and symbolic representations, which frame collective meanings and attachments to place, cannot be divorced from socio-spatial practices but exist in relationship with them." Instead of assuming an entirely functionalist correspondence between culturally influenced representations of the city and processes of urban regeneration (and other urban policy processes), the relationship between the symbolic and the material must be taken into account (Mele, 2000). Herein, considering the role of media, the state and other actors in constituting the discourse constructing the city is paramount.

Tan & Altrock (2016), then, emphasise the importance of formulations of solutions and problems in urban policy (urban redevelopment strategies, specifically), and the role of discourse herein. As they argue, "the problem cannot be defined until the solution has been found; in other words, problem understanding and problem resolution are concomitant to each other" (Tan & Altrock, 2016, p. 248). They then pose that, since the problems giving cause to urban regeneration policy are often caused by broader societal and planning problems, they fit Rittel and Webber's (1973) conception of 'wicked problems'. As such, the problem boundaries and definition are not set in stone. Here, discourses come in, as they function to frame the problem, distinguishing particular aspects of the situation more than others (Hajer, 1993). In other words, problem framing is the social

construction of problems through discourse, by different actors (Tan & Altrock, 2016).

Discourse *analysis*, then, dissects exactly how discourses function and are applied to different ends, such as for problem framing. It is an increasingly popular research method in studies on urban policy, and focuses primarily on the way different groups present a certain narrative or version of events, often for political reasons (Jacobs, 2006). Traditional policy research is focused on uncovering the role of modes of bureaucratic organisation and practices of management and organisation; discourse analysis, rather, seeks to expose the power relations and ideological considerations at the heart of policies (Jacobs, 2006).

One of the most used strands of discourse analysis methodology for urban governance research, as identified by Lees (2004), was developed by Norman Fairclough (1992). Here, discourse analysis is "a tool for uncovering certain hegemonic ways of thinking and talking about how things should be done that serve certain vested interests" (Lees, 2004, p. 102). Thus, it seeks to expose the ways in which discourse functions to conceal ideological considerations and legitimise, in the context of urban governance research, policy. In practice, this involves the scrutiny of discourse in e.g. policy documents to discover narrative structures, the framing of issues, which normative stances on issues are taken for granted, and which are closed off. This methodology, which will be used for this research, will be elaborated upon in Chapter 3.

2.2 Discourses of urban regeneration

'Urban regeneration' is a concept signifying the confrontation of multi-dimensional urban issues: economic and social problems, architectural and environmental deterioration, and depopulation, often in central areas (Delgadillo, 2020). It can be defined as a "comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area" (Roberts, 2000, p. 17). Moreover, it is usually area-based, and initiated, funded, supported and/or inspired by the public sector (Leary & McCarthy, 2013). In this research it is understood to be different from urban renewal, which includes the demolishment and physical replacement of buildings; urban regeneration, rather, works from the existing urban and social fabric.

Different distinctive normative conceptions of how urban regeneration should be exercised exist. This section will outline the two dominant, opposing ideological conceptions of urban regeneration, as they have developed in both literature and policy. Thus, it will answer the sub-question:

What ideological urban regeneration mega-discourses exist globally?

The discourses guiding these conceptions can be seen as 'global discourses', as they have become influential at various scales of government internationally (Brown, 2014). They have been

incorporated by discourse coalitions, meaning actors with shared interests and/or values (e.g. private sector actors and neoliberal political parties) have co-opted them, and they have to an extent been institutionalised in urban regeneration processes globally. The distinction made here, between a dominant neoliberal stream and a counter-hegemonic social justice-oriented stream of urban regeneration discourses, has been made before myriad times in academic literature (e.g., Bunyan, 2014; Delgadillo, 2020; Porter & Shaw, 2009). This binary division is, of course, a simplification of the diverse landscape of paradigms guiding urban planning and urban regeneration; however, it is necessary to structure the analysis and keep it feasible. The conceptualisations of the two streams' dominant ideas, then, are based on an interpretation of narrative literature review methodology, which will be outlined in section 3.3.1. Sources were found through the search of academic literature databases with keywords such as 'neoliberal urban regeneration' and 'inclusive urban revitalisation', as well as through 'snowballing', meaning finding relevant sources through other sources' bibliographies.

2.2.1 Urban regeneration: a neoliberal conception

The neoliberal urban regeneration model can be seen within the wider paradigm of neoliberal urban planning, which has become increasingly popular globally since the 1970s, and the '90s especially (Vives Miró, 2011). The neoliberal planning paradigm advocates the deregulation of markets and the free functioning of market forces, as well as the privatisation of property and tendering of social resources and services through public-private partnerships. Within this context, the concept of *governance* has arisen as the synthesis of public and private actor forces; public actors seek to collaborate with private actors to 'manage' the city. The neoliberal approach to urbanism and planning has increasingly pit cities against each other in a global competition to attract capital investment; the idea here is that the creation of wealth is beneficial for the entire population, through the well-known principle of 'trickle-down' economics (Vives Miró, 2011). This approach to urban policy and planning has been dubbed the *entrepreneurial city* by Harvey (1989).

Neoliberal urban regeneration, then, often seeks to 'rebalance' the population of disadvantaged, stigmatized neighbourhoods, through the idea of social mixing (Cameron, 2003). The influx of higher-income households in a neighbourhood is here expected to have a positive effect on social capital, social cohesion and economic opportunity within the community (Lees, 2008; Freeman, 2006). Moreover, middle-class incomes are argued to be stronger advocates for public resources, and to financially support a stronger local economy (Schoon, 2001). As such, social mixing has become an explicit policy goal in countries around the globe in order to instigate an 'urban renaissance' in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. It is achieved through adapting and diversifying the housing stock, for example through demolishing cheap housing and replacing it with higher-end

buildings, or through sponsoring renovation of housing. It is further associated with the encouragement of homeownership, which is argued by proponents to encourage economic self-reliance, entrepreneurship and community pride (Blomley, 2004). Hereby, the problematic, transitory former neighbourhood community of non-homeowners is gradually transformed into an active, responsible, socially heterogeneous group (Lees, 2008). Social climbers can in this scenario upgrade housing within the neighbourhood, rather than having to move elsewhere, further strengthening social cohesion and combatting socio-spatial segregation.

Neoliberal urban regeneration is also characterised often by a focus on security, sanitation and regulation; in order to 'clean up' neighbourhoods, activities associated with disorder and sometimes crime such as loitering, panhandling, harassment and public drinking, but also homelessness, as well as other signifiers of 'bad neighbourhoods' such as litter, broken windows and graffiti, are discouraged and combatted (Chaskin & Joseph, 2010). Examples of measures taken to this end are the placement of security cameras, anti-homeless measures such as armrests in the middle of public benches, or increased police presence. In this context, the outward signifiers of disorder and "incivility" (Chaskin & Joseph, 2010, p. 7) are associated with more fundamental issues of crime and safety, and argued to incite undesirable behaviour in local youth. This argument is called the 'broken windows thesis', as it claims that disorder (signified, for example, by broken windows) leads to crime and that maintaining the level of order deemed appropriate for the neighbourhood is an effective way to prevent and reduce crime locally (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). Of course, this desired level of order is subjectively determined, and often shifts in the process of the regeneration of a neighbourhood.

Then, another prominent aspect of neoliberal urban regeneration discourses and strategies is a focus on attracting financial capital to the neighbourhood, which in turn is expected to have positive effects on the local economy. This might be done through, besides fostering social mixing, the promotion of tourism, business settlement and real estate development in the area; the development of policies promoting the latter is known as *boosterism*, and often also has the aim of revaluing land prices (Vives Miró, 2011). The promotion of these phenomena, in turn, is linked to the marketing and branding of cities and specific neighbourhoods. The strategy of 'cleaning up' neighbourhoods, besides crime prevention, is also linked to this cultivation of a certain image; a more aesthetically attractive and safer neighbourhood is here seen as more likely to attract capital in its various forms, which in turn will benefit the entire neighbourhood through trickle-down effects.

In sum, in the neoliberal conception of urban regeneration, business settlement, tourism, homeownership, sanitisation, securitisation and social mixing are presented as solutions for disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, the lack of productive use of land, as well as signs of physical disorder (broken windows) are pointed to as the problem to be resolved. The existent

population is seen as a major factor in producing these problems, and thus forms part of the problem; social mixing is presented as a solution. The outward image and thereby marketability of the neighbourhood are prioritised in neoliberal urban regeneration, as these are paramount in attracting wealthier residents (fostering social mixing) and private sector investment (creating economic growth). Finally, it is worth noting that agents of the neoliberal discourse, when making use of the term 'gentrification', tend to frame this process as a positive development, as opposed to its pejorative use by much of this discourse's critics, as will be discussed below (Lees, 2000).

2.2.2 Urban regeneration: a social justice conception

The neoliberal model of urban regeneration has yielded widespread controversy, criticism and resistance: 'on the ground', from low-income residents and activist groups (e.g., Freeman, 2006; Goetz, 2000; Pattillo, 2009) as well as on ideological and theoretical bases (e.g., Fraser & Kick, 2007; Galster, 2007; Lees, 2008). Many scholars, particularly from the 'critical' strand of urban studies, have characterised this model for promoting 'state-led gentrification', which disregards issues of social justice. They criticise the presentation of 'urban regeneration' and similar terms as a neutral, depoliticised and at times philanthropic solution to urban problem; they question to what extent the promotion of social mixing and capital investment benefits the original, low-income populations of 'revitalised' neighbourhoods, viewing these urban regeneration processes as the appropriation of urban space by more affluent residents and private sector actors (Chaskin & Joseph, 2010). Through the distortion of the housing supply and prices of services and goods, residents are here argued to be displaced directly and indirectly. The neoliberal urban regeneration approach has, in this view, inadequately met a range of social needs, such as the provision of land for socially desirable, yet non-profitable use, and the aid of socio-economically vulnerable groups. Moreover, this approach is argued to pay insufficient attention to the existing social fabric in neighbourhood communities, for example through causing displacement (Maculan & Moro, 2020).

With regards to problem framing, critics of neoliberal-style urban regeneration have problematised its 'pathological' discourse used to represent disadvantaged communities; a pathological discourse effectively holds communities responsible for their own situation, for example by blaming urban deterioration on population growth (Matthews, 2010). A wider perspective is required, for them, on the socio-economic, city-wide and national factors that result in urban decline and disadvantage (Carley & Kirk, 1998; Hall, 1997).

The 'broken windows thesis' discussed previously can be regarded as such a pathological discourse. In its equation of "the ill-smelling drunk, the rowdy teenager, or the importuning beggar" with "serious crime" (Wilson & Kelling, 1982, p. 29), it pathologises the needs of lower classes, particularly the homeless, Don Mitchell (2003) argues. He poses that the authorisation of police to

‘sweep’ streets of homeless, and the prohibition to sit, rest, sleep or even eat in certain places, prioritise aestheticisation of the city over its dwellers’ needs. Moreover, he criticises its basis in the proposition that avowedly innocent, legal, but ‘disorderly’ behaviour should be policed because of the potential for other people to commit crimes (Mitchell, 2003). In his view, a solution for unwanted behaviour by homeless people, then, is not to criminalise homelessness and move it elsewhere, but to tackle the social problems causing homelessness to begin with.

What alternative framework for urban regeneration do these critics of ‘state-led gentrification’, then, propose? The objections to the urban regeneration strategy based upon commodification, sanitisation and social re-composition of neighbourhoods are mostly rooted in assumptions about rights and social justice (Chaskin & Joseph, 2010). Henri Lefevbre’s conception of the ‘right to the city’ provides a relevant framework for grounding these objections (Lefebvre, 1968). It prioritises use-value and habitation in the city, and includes the right to *appropriation*, concerning access, use and enjoyment rather than ownership, as well as to *participation* in decision-making and the production of urban space (Chaskin & Joseph, 2010). Hereby, it contrasts with the urban regeneration strategies of privatising and commodifying housing and public space, as well as the privileging of exchange-value over use-value.

Proponents of a more sustainable urban regeneration model, then, propose a larger focus on citizen involvement in decision-making, echoing Lefevbre’s call for user participation in the production of urban space (Thurber, 2018). Local communities are argued to recognise the importance and value of local places for socialising, incorporating history, heritage and culture, promoting social networks, and stimulating local economic development (Ng, 2018). Resident mobilisation moreover is posed to prevent gentrification, seen here as a consequence largely of neoliberal urban regeneration policy, as well as to guarantee democratic urban planning (Maculan & Moro, 2020). Community participation alone, however, can never be a replacement or requirement for the state provision of adequate social services and resources (Matthews, 2010).

Moreover, advocates of the social justice model argue that through the neoliberal model’s commodification of space, the heterogeneity of the urban environment is compromised. In the vein of Jane Jacobs’ influential work (1961), they call for cityscapes based on diversity and multiple uses, including both physical and social heterogeneity (Granger, 2010). In policy-making, this translates to the regulation of renewal activities of the private sector through both hard and soft interventions, and making less land available for prestige initiatives. Moreover, more public land can be made available for community and non-profit initiatives, as well as for affordable housing (Granger, 2010).

In sum, the discourse employed by advocates of the social justice-oriented urban regeneration model is characterised by a focus on use-value over exchange-value, participation in decision-making and heterogeneous land use. Moreover, since this model and accompanying

discourse emerged largely in response to the perceived negative effects of neoliberal urban regeneration, critique and prevention of these are important, notably of resident displacement. Problems are perceived at a more structural level; a lack of public investment and lacking provision of services such as education are pointed to as causes of e.g. physical decay and poverty. The solution proposed is state provision of resources and improved services, in combination with collaboration with the local community and NGOs.

2.3 Urban regeneration in Latin America

Section 2.2 established the two primary strands of the globally relevant mega-discourse of urban regeneration. Given the origin of these two discourses, and especially the Anglophone source material here used, in the Global North, an assessment of the debate in Latin America is appropriate. Thus, the following sub-question will be answered:

What ideological urban regeneration grand-discourses exist in Latin America?

For this part of the literature review, both English- and Spanish-language sources were used, mostly by Latin American authors. The region-wide approach makes sense, because urbanisation patterns and discourses have been relatively similar across the region (Vassalli, 2020). The focus will be on urban regeneration of Latin American cities' historical centres, as these are characteristic of the region and have been on the forefront of the regional urban regeneration debate for the past decades. Mexico City's urban regeneration process under scrutiny in this research pertains to the centre, too, and fits in this regional (and, in fact, global) 'return to the centre' trend.

2.3.1 *Volver al centro*: neoliberal urban regeneration, Latin American-style

Many Latin American urban centres experienced strong devaluation and abandonment in the 1970s, '80s and '90s. These urban centres, marked by a colonially inherited architecture, were subsequently subjected to widespread urban regeneration projects, which' general strategy was synthesised by Rojas (2004) in his influential book *Volver al centro: La recuperación de áreas urbanas centrales* ('returning to the centre: the regeneration of central urban areas'). This strategy for revitalising the Latin American centres revolved largely around aestheticisation of public space, including the restoration of architectural heritage, the remodelling of squares and sidewalks, the relocation and eviction of street vendors, and an increase in security measures (Vassalli, 2020). Such measures aimed to develop their potential for cultural consumption and tourism (González Couret, 2015). Some were, in part, triggered by the inclusion of the historic centres on UNESCO's list of World Heritage (e.g. Mexico City, Quito, Lima, La Paz, Guatemala, San Juan). The protection and restoration of this heritage became a major theme in many government discourses on urban regeneration in the region, and was/is often framed as a 'rescue', using a nostalgic rhetoric; phrases such as ""a lost urban landscape" (…), "Quito's rebirth" (…), and "Colonial Lima shines again"" (Betancur, 2014, p. 5)

were not uncommon in policy documents detailing the urban regeneration processes of the 1990s and 2000s.

The *Volver al centro* strategies not only aimed to 'clean up' the urban centres, however; attempts at 'redensification' or 'repopulation' of the areas also had and still have a central role, following the population flight of the 20th century's final decades. To this end, the housing supply was dramatically increased in many city centres through encouragement of private sector construction in these areas. For example, in Mexico City the policy *Bando 2* (2002) disallowed construction of housing in the city's periphery for several years, and eased legal procedures for housing construction in the centre (Tamayo, 2007). Other cities' approaches differed practically, but followed the same logic of reliance on the private sector to carry out the centres' redensification with a highly open and flexible framework of action (Vassalli, 2020).

In conclusion, the promotion of tourism is one of the key elements in the Latin American dominant neoliberal urban regeneration discourse, which is not as prevalent in the Anglophone mainstream (Janoschka et al., 2014). This encouragement of tourism is exercised through the aestheticisation of space, characteristic of neoliberal urban regeneration globally, and in the Latin American cases often including a focus on architectural heritage preservation. Besides physical improvements, this aestheticisation also includes securitisation and sanitisation measures, which affect locally relevant phenomena such as street commerce. Finally, neoliberal urban regeneration is also characterised regionally by a strong focus on redensification of city centres, exercised through the deregulation of housing markets and promotion of private sector housing development.

2.3.2 The Latin American call for urban social justice

More or less parallel to the global resistance against neoliberal urban regeneration policies, the *Volver al centro* approach of aestheticisation and private sector development has yielded widespread protest and criticism, through a pronounced anti-gentrification discourse. Janoschka et al. (2014) conceptualise the urban regeneration policies that re-stage the architectural heritage of Latin American city centres as 'symbolic gentrification'. They note that several Latin American authors have seen the private-sector housing developments and promotion of retail and consumption as a strategy to bring local elites and middle classes back to the city centres (Hiernaux, 2006; Bélanger, 2008). These authors view the expulsion of street vendors from central areas as a symbolic preparation of central cityscapes for gentrification. Herein, they argue, some of the centres' charming elements are destroyed, and the heritage sites are 'musealised' (Monterrubio, 2009; Nelle, 2009). The 'cleansing' of centres from informal trade, here, is seen as a violation of long-standing traditions of commercial use of public space, as lower-class traders are displaced to accommodate tourism (Janoschka et al., 2014).

With regards to Latin American governments' approach to redensification of inner cities, some authors have been critical of the resulting distortion in housing supply, argued to lead to displacement and exclusion (Janoschka et al., 2014; López-Morales et al., 2016). National and transnational private sector housing developers are here posed to benefit disproportionately from exploitation of the rent gap in city centres. They construct housing for the affluent middle- and upper-class populations, while existing residents are displaced through rising rents (López-Morales et al., 2016). Small-scale landowners, too, are "systematically dispossessed" (Janoschka et al., 2014, p. 12), as a small group of professional developers accumulates capitalised ground rent. Meanwhile, the implications for the urban and social fabric of city centres are ignored. Deregulation of rents and construction is blamed for these issues.

In conclusion, the regional counter-hegemonic discourse on urban regeneration clearly reflects its global counterpart in its critique of policies argued to cause gentrification. A main theme in the region is the preservation of heritage as a pretext for urban regeneration, often accompanied by other interventions in the urban image such as the relocation of informal trade. Critics perceive this aestheticisation as a strategy to commodify public space, based on a discourse romanticising the colonial era. The method of combatting depopulation, then, based on private sector real estate development, is argued to cause social exclusion and resident displacement.

2.4 Conceptual model

Figure 1 displays the conceptual model for this research. The two independent variables are the respective opposing ideological discourses of urban regeneration. These each consist of a mega- and grand-discourse, which have been outlined in this chapter, and a meso-discourse, which will be established in Chapter 4. These discourses at global, regional and national level, together constituting the two main discourse streams, form the social and discursive context in which the 2017-2022 revitalisation plan for Mexico City's centre is located; the goal of this research is to determine the influence of the two opposing discourses on this micro-discourse, which is the dependent variable. Both discourses streams are expected to have a significant influence on the micro-discourse; the regeneration plan, like all policy documents, should be considered an utterance of institutional discourse (as opposed to e.g. media discourse) (Buhler & Lethier, 2020). This term refers to a discourse produced by an institution, "emanating from a collective entity presented as indivisible while being the product of a negotiation between various points of view" (Ibid., p. 2185). This research will dissect this negotiation, and retrace the influence of the different points of view. Given the case's apparent alignment with the (neoliberal) *volver al centro* blueprint, the neoliberal discourse stream is expected to be found to have had the largest influence. However, elements of the social justice discourse stream are also expected to be included.

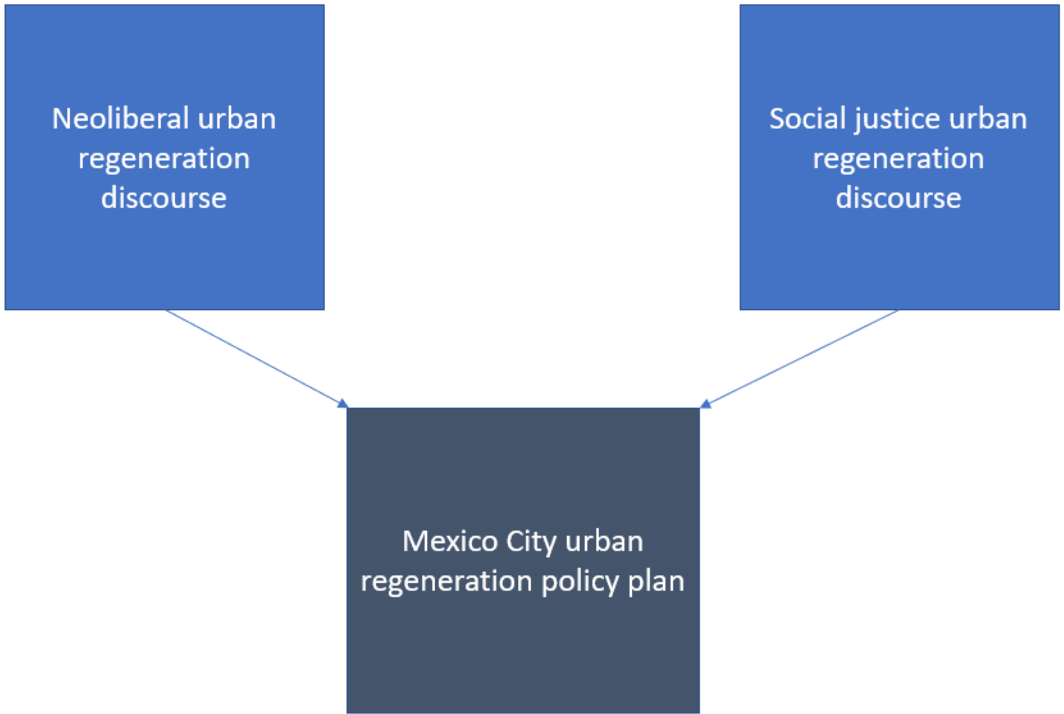

Figure 1: Conceptual model

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will outline this research' methodology, which is based on a Faircloughian discourse analysis, as developed in *Discourse and Social Change* (Fairclough, 1992). While this methodology is nothing new, it is not as prevalent in urban governance research, especially in certain settings in the Global South, as discussed in Chapter 1. Thus, this thesis in part seeks to develop the debate on methodology in UG literature, by innovating through the use of a postpositivist worldview and methodology.

3.1 Research design

Faircloughian discourse analysis is based on a synthesis of, firstly, an analysis of the social and political context influencing the object of research, and secondly, linguistically oriented text analysis. These are divided into three dimensions of analysis (see Figure 2): social practice, discursive practice, and text analysis (Fairclough, 1992). Here, 'social practice' investigates the influence of larger discourse streams, in relation to wider power structures and ideology. Then, 'discursive practice' analyses the processes in which policy texts are framed, such as the context in which statements are made and how pieces of text link into other debates. Finally, text analysis scrutinises the vocabulary, grammar and argument structures used in the object of analysis. Fairclough's approach was found to align very well with Alvesson & Karreman's (2000) division of discourses into different scale levels, outlined in Chapter 1; thus, it was decided to merge these two ways of ordering discourses in this research.

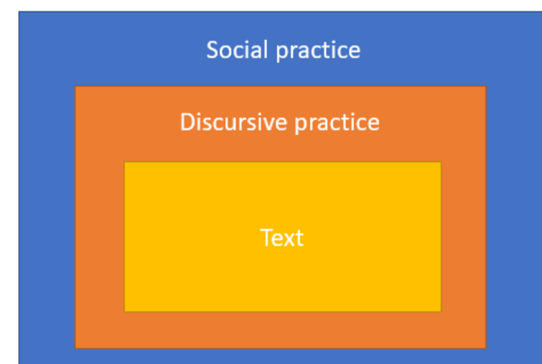

Figure 2: Fairclough's dimensions of discourse

In practice, this analysis approach translated into a careful establishment of the social and discursive contexts in which the policy document to be analysed is located, followed by textual analysis of the primary source. Chapter 2's outline of the primary ideological and discursive currents in urban regeneration, as they have developed in the 21st century globally and in Latin America specifically, has already provided the social practice dimension. Chapter 4's analysis of the discursive practice, building on this, provides an account of the representations of and reflections on the urban regeneration process in Mexico City's historic centre in academia and media, since the start of the process in 2001. The different ideological stances in this local debate were seen as guiding discourses, or 'discursive practice', influencing the final object of study: the policy plan for the historic centre for 2017-2022. This policy plan was, finally, subjected to a detailed text analysis.

3.2 Research instruments

3.2.1 Case selection

The *Plan Integral de Manejo Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México* (Integral Management Plan Historic Centre Mexico City) for 2017-2022 was chosen as primary source of analysis because it is the most recent instalment in the policy series detailing the local urban regeneration process of the past two decades. Therefore, it gives the most up-to-date depiction of the government's stance on the centre's state, and its vision for its future. This made it a highly logical choice for analysis; it is the synthesis of the discourses at different scales that have shaped the urban regeneration debate in Mexico City's centre up until now. For the establishment of the social and discursive context that the policy program was issued within, sources from academia and Mexican media were used. Here, academic sources were expected to provide experts' views on the urban regeneration process, from both ideological perspectives, and media sources were expected to reflect more perspectives on the revitalisation from different segments of Mexican society, as well as valuable insights into the discursive norms regarding representation of certain groups, such as street vendors.

3.2.2 Data collection

This section will discuss the data collection criteria and processes for the academic and media sources. The primary source, the policy document, was freely available online, and found through a simple Google search.

3.2.2.1 Academic sources

The academic articles for the discursive practice's analysis were found using Google Scholar. The selection criterion for the articles was their relevance to the urban regeneration process in Mexico City's historic centre; the search terms used were terms such as 'urban regeneration', 'Mexico City', 'gentrification', 'rescue program' and 'Historic Centre', in different combinations. The same terms were also used in Spanish to find Spanish-language articles ('regeneración urbana', 'Ciudad de México', 'gentrificación', 'programa de rescate', 'Centro Histórico'). The articles had to be published between 2001, the start of the new regeneration's approach, and 2018, the year of publishing of the new *Plan de Manejo*. In this way, articles irrelevant to the new regeneration approach were ruled out (from before 2001), as well as articles that could not have impacted the 2017-2022 *Plan de Manejo* (from after 2018). The articles found were relevant in different ways to the regeneration project; for example, some articles discussed specific housing policies, while others described the gentrification effects perceived by residents as a result of commercialisation efforts, or the symbolic significance of the program. After reading the abstracts of the articles found, a selection of thirteen articles was made, for the sake of time management. This selection was based primarily on equal representation

of the most prevalent themes in the overall data pool, and attention was also paid to using articles from different years, spread out over the 2001-2018 time frame, and by different authors.

The initial data pool and selection revealed an overwhelmingly united academic front criticising the government's practices; all the articles found took an oppositional stance towards the regeneration policy program. To balance out the ideological positions discussed in the narrative review somewhat, sources supporting the government's position were actively looked for. After widespread searching through databases and relevant articles' bibliographies, and subsequent consultation of a Mexican academic and expert on the topic, the 2011 book *Centro histórico: 10 años de revitalización* was the most fitting source found, as it was not published by the government itself. It is a publication from one of the foundations financing the revitalisation, consisting of contributions by various Mexican academics and politicians. It was selected to represent the neoliberal discourse of urban regeneration in this context, by lack of availability of a more strictly academic source, void of converging interests.

3.2.2.2 Media sources

The texts from media coverage were also found online, through Google's website-based search option. The websites of two Mexican newspapers (*La Jornada* and *El Financiero*) were searched for texts covering the Historic Centre and, specifically, its urban regeneration program, again published between 2001 and 2018. Given the limited initial findings, the term 'Historic Centre' was also used in combination with the themes found to be prevalent in the academic literature, such as 'gentrification', 'security', 'cultural heritage', 'tourism', 'displacement' and 'redensification' (all in Spanish). The articles were subsequently skimmed and selected for their perceived relevance to the regeneration program and/or its consequences.

Periódico	*Ideología*
El Heraldo	—26
El Financiero	—13
Reforma	—11
El Diario	0
Economista	0
El Sol	10
Novedades	11
Uno Más Uno	12
El Universal	25
Excélsior	33
El Nacional	41
El Día	48
La Jornada	52

Figure 3: Mexican newspapers ranked by ideological position on a scale of -100, signifying extreme-right, to 100, signifying extreme-left. Source: Rodelo & Muñiz (2017), based on Lawson (2002)

The two newspapers were selected because they are both publications with high reach and high circulation, based in Mexico City, and considered relatively influential on other newspapers and politicians, especially *La Jornada* (Rodelo & Muñiz, 2017). Moreover, they are of opposing political orientation. As found by Lawson (2002), *La Jornada* is the most ideologically left-wing newspaper of Mexico, consistent with its reputation as "the voice of Mexico's anti-regime left" (p. 68). *El Financiero*, on the other hand, is one of the country's more right-leaning newspapers, reflecting a more economy-oriented perspective and conservative values (Lawson, 2002). Figure 3 shows Lawson's findings. It was originally intended to use *El Heraldo* instead of *El Financiero*, as it is considered more influential, but most of its articles were found to be

inaccessible to non-paying users.

In total, 69 *La Jornada* articles were selected for analysis, after roughly the same amount had been discarded from the initial source material collected due to lack of relevance to the regeneration program. *El Financiero* was found to report less often on the historic centre's regeneration process and its effects, as the data collection process yielded 22 relevant sources, picked from an initial selection of around 50 articles. It should be mentioned that the selections of articles were not comprehensive, and many articles concerning the regeneration process were almost certainly not found through the key words used; however, the selections can be regarded as representative for the newspapers' overall representation of the regeneration program, as sources representing the different discourses on different aspects of the program were actively searched for, besides searching through neutral key words (e.g. 'security'). This method of data collection fit with the methodology of narrative literature review, which, while lacking a quantitative, numeric orientation, was more efficient and feasible timewise, and suited the purposes of providing the discursive practice-context for a discourse analysis better.

3.3 Data analysis

The two methods of data analysis used were narrative literature review (of media and academic sources) and text analysis. This section will describe these respective methods of analysis.

3.3.1 Narrative literature review

Narrative literature review is a method for synthesising existing knowledge. It is a type of literature review, and differs from the more rigidly defined 'systemic literature review' method. As opposed hereto, narrative reviews are quite loosely defined, and therefore not as time-consuming. Following the data selection and filtering, as described above, the sources were critically assessed for their judgement and representation of the urban regeneration process in Mexico City, and the arguments made and representations offered were coded per theme. The general trends perceived, then, were outlined and reflected upon in relation to the discourse streams identified in Chapter 2.

A main criticism of narrative reviews is that they are sensitive to bias and subjectivity. In this research, this bias is prevented to an extent through triangulation, as the discourse currents identified are present at different discourse levels (mega-, grand- and meso-). This distinction, which mirrors the opposing sides of the political spectrum, functions to group the diverse, competing ensemble of discourses surrounding urban regeneration. Of course, the categorisation of these discourses into one stream or the other remains to an extent a matter of subjectivity, and is a heuristic device to create some order in the complex web of discourses.

3.3.2 Text analysis

Text analysis, then, looks at vocabulary, grammar and text structure, highlighting how and why specific wordings are used by policymakers. The 'ideological work' (Fairclough, 1992) performed by the text is assessed; how is the reader nudged to interpret the text and the observations of social reality discussed? Besides observations of reality, argumentation on action to be taken is reviewed in text analysis; as Fairclough & Fairclough (2015, p. 189) argue, "people do not represent social groups or processes for the sake of it (nor do they narrate or explain events as an end in itself), but do so in the course of producing an argument, or justifying or criticizing a standpoint, as a possible basis for decision and action". As they pose, arguments have a Value premise, a Goal premise, a Circumstantial premise and a Means-Goal premise, all attempting to support a Practical Claim (or Conclusion). Here, the existing situation, often perceived as a problem, is the Circumstantial premise. A desirable new situation is represented by the Goal premise, informed by norms and values determining what is desirable: the Value premise. The Means-Goal premise determines how to reach this goal from the current situation, and thus constitutes a solution. These premises add up to the Conclusion. For the arguments made in the policy document under review, arguments were assessed for their use of these different premises, and how these premises pertain to the two discourse streams; for example, a prevalent reference to social inclusion as a Value premise was interpreted as a co-optation of the social justice discourse.

Then, texts can also be analysed at the level of vocabulary and grammar, which are employed in certain ways to represent these premises. In the scrutiny of the policy text, the use of linguistic instruments for certain representations was also looked at. Examples of such instruments are equivalences, meaning the use of lists that make very different phenomena appear similar and/or related (Fairclough, 1992). For example, structural factors beyond the influence of socially excluded residents (e.g., poor housing) might be lexically equated to personal issues (e.g., drug addiction), allowing the government to conveniently neglects to mention its own agency and responsibility in providing better housing (Matthews, 2010). This is also an example of how a pathological explanation for urban disadvantage can occur.

In sum, the method of text analysis consisted of a critical review of both representations of reality and argumentation based on these representations, the former often constituting the Circumstantial premise for the latter. The latter were also considered to be informed by Value, Goal, and Means-Goal premises, all of which were placed in the context of the social and discursive context. This method of analysis was applied primarily to the policy text, but elements of it were also incorporated in the review of media texts' representation of issues.

3.4 Operationalisation

In analysing the representations and argumentations employed in the local media and in the policy document, Table 1 in the appendix served as a guiding instrument. This table, synthesised from Chapter 2's findings, presents the opposing ideological framings of the different premises in urban disadvantage cases.

3.5 Limitations and ethics

The social constructionist world view of this research has implications for the level of 'objectivity' it can achieve; because knowledge is seen as inevitably socially produced, the analysis itself must also be a construction, as the result of the researcher's world view (Hastings, 1998). Different constructionist researchers have dealt with this observation differently. Some have argued that it may be sufficient to simply acknowledge the constructive nature of research and findings; others have included lengthy self-descriptions to allow the reader to judge their positionality (Hastings, 1998). I have opted for a combination of these.

Having acknowledged already the inherent subjectivity present in research, I will now shortly reflect on my personal positionality with regards to the research topic. As I am not Mexican, and I have no personal connection (e.g. relatives living in the centre) to the policy process under scrutiny, I see myself as relatively unbiased. Nonetheless, I have a normative bias, as I am of the opinion that policy-makers should prioritise social justice matters and the inclusion of marginalised groups in urban regeneration policy. I am not at all a proponent of neoliberal urban planning, as I deem it to aggravate existing inequalities and create wealth almost exclusively for the already privileged. In writing this thesis, however, I aimed to describe the respective discourses on urban regeneration as objectively as possible, so that the reader may develop their opinion within the different debates; only after having reviewed the discourse used in the policy document in light of the different existing discourse streams, I will also criticise elements I perceive as problematic, arguing from a social justice-oriented perspective.

This research's validity, then, is of course limited by this inherent subjectivity. Nonetheless, validity is provided by the theoretical triangulation approach, based on the concept of context (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This context, consisting of three scales of discourse, lends legitimacy to the relationships that I establish in my analysis between utterances of discourse and larger discourse streams. For example, my link between the policy document's argument for more surveillance and the neoliberal discourse stream is validated by the appearance of the surveillance argument at all three levels (global, regional and local) of the neoliberal discourse stream. Reliability, too, is strengthened through this triangulation approach, as well as by the number of sources used; 91 media sources were used, providing a comprehensive perspective on the discourses relied upon by

the two newspapers used. For the review of academic sources, 13 sources were used; while this number is relatively limited, representativity was ensured, as explained in section 3.2.2.1 (*Data collection: academic sources*).

A limitation of this research is my non-fluent command of the Spanish language, which is used in the primary sources used for this research. Thankfully, I was able to use Google Translate for all my analyses, and I found my Spanish was good enough to clear up any unclarities. Similarly, having lived in Mexico only for five months, I was only to a limited extent informed about the nuances and particularities of the Mexican public debate on urban regeneration and its consequences. My understanding of it, thus, was mostly limited to the narrative literature review's findings. However, this shortcoming might also be interpreted as contributing to my unbiased interpretation of discourses in this debate as they are; my perception of these discourses and their agents is not coloured by pre-existing opinions I would have of them.

With regards to the sources used, then, a limitation was found in the amount of types of sources that could be used to establish the social and discursive context, for reasons of time and space. For example, I did not consider the discourse used in other policy documents issued by the Mexico City government, which would have provided valuable context for the use of certain representations or arguments in the policy document in question. Nonetheless, such sources were not deemed as relevant as sources from academia and media, as these provide a different perspective than the government's own.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter will detail the results of my analysis, focusing on the various discourses surrounding the urban regeneration process in Mexico City's historic centre and the discourse used in the most recent policy document pertaining to this process. Section 4.1 and 4.2, focusing on the discourses that constitute the public debate on Mexico City's centre's regeneration process, will answer the following sub-question:

What ideological urban regeneration meso-discourses exist in Mexico, relating to Mexico City's centre?

4.1 The *Centro Histórico*'s revitalisation in academia: a narrative literature review

The narrative literature review, as discussed in the section on data collection (3.2.2.1), found a highly critical academic front, condemning the Mexico City government's policies in unison. Table 4 in the appendix displays the most prevalent themes in the fourteen selected sources (thirteen critical academic articles and book chapters, and the publication discussed in section 3.2.2.1), and the stance taken towards them in the respective articles. As it shows, all but one of the sources used were critical of government action vis-à-vis the themes they discussed. Of course, the simple classification of these stances into 'supportive' and 'critical' does not always represent the nuanced position taken by authors in relation to, for example, heritage preservation; while the idea of preservation was generally supported by authors, it was often its prioritisation over other, for them more important issues that they criticised. This section will review the main arguments made by the authors in relation to the most prominent different themes (highlighted in bold), discussing the hegemonic, neoliberal discourse first, followed by the critical, social justice-oriented perspective.

4.1.1 Neoliberal urban regeneration in Mexico City: a discourse of heritage and preservation

As discussed, the publication chosen to represent in this part of the analysis the hegemonic urban regeneration discourse, which the government relies upon, was the publication *Centro Histórico: 10 años de revitalización* by the *Fundación del Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México*. As opposed to the other sources reviewed, this publication focused primarily on the importance of and progress made in the preservation of the centre's heritage.

The publication reserved a central role for Mexican sociologist José Iturriaga, whom already in 1963 wrote about the need for **heritage preservation and restoration**, and in 2001 was included in the government body overseeing the regeneration. At its instalment ceremony, Iturriaga echoed his writing from 1963, claiming that "Mexico should sell scenery and culture, which give us prestige and strong currency, not exhaustible resources"; this speech was also included in the Fundación del CHCM publication, with this particular quote highlighted (Fundación del CHCM, 2011). This book, much like Iturriaga's writing, spoke nostalgically of the centre's past, its artistic splendour, and its rich

social life, which provided the main argument for its revitalisation. Various prolific contributors, such as Mexican President at the time Felipe Calderón, art historian Guillermo Tovar de Teresa, philosopher Carlos Monsiváis, and businessman and important financer of the project Carlos Slim, employed similar discourses of history, culture and patrimony to stress the importance of the centre's revitalisation. Descriptions of the actions carried out relating to heritage preservation and recovery constituted the largest section of the book.

Figure 4: The renovated Metropolitan Cathedral, located on Mexico City's central square. Source: Fundación del CHCM, 2011, p. 85

Iturriaga's emphasis on promoting **tourism** to attract capital could also be found in the book, as it mentioned the revitalised economic function of the 'rescued' centre, both in terms of commercial activity and attraction of tourists; "from being a criminal and abandoned area, it has become an attraction for tourists and citizens of all ages", cardinal Norberto Carrera proclaimed (p. 11). The actions described in the book were also primarily aimed at attracting visitors to the centre, often through promoting consumption of culture, such as the creation of a 'cultural corridor', the opening of 87 hotels and hostels (6,920 rooms), commercial plazas and centres, bars, 200 restaurants, and over 50 museums, and the publishing of tourist guides for walking, murals and literature. Some sections from the walking guide were also included in the book.

With regards to **security**, some actions argued to have improved security were discussed; these consisted primarily of expansion of the police force and surveillance measures. One sentence was dedicated to the establishment of an anti-corruption program, which was not further elaborated upon.

Finally, the **recovery of public space** was another major theme in the revitalisation actions described in the publication, such as rehabilitation of pavements, fountains, squares, streets, and murals, with myriad pictures provided, such as Figure 3. With regards to street commerce, journalist Jacobo Zabludovsky reflected that "freeing [the centre's most central area] from street vendors, in a single night and without violence by relocating them to commercial areas, has been one, perhaps the most notorious for its roots and economic and social complexity, of the positive changes that continue to be achieved in our centre" (p. 15). Other authors, including Slim and Monsiváis, too praised the consensual and efficient relocation of street vendors, whom were presented to have stood in the way of the area's redevelopment.

4.1.2 The Mexican social justice perspective: united in condemning gentrification

The CHCM foundation's publication's discourse of celebration and unity could not contrast more starkly with the sharp criticism of both Mexican and foreign academics. While several academics contributed to the abovementioned publication, they did not independently produce any academic material in support of the regeneration program; instead, their colleagues fiercely critiqued the policy strategies used, which most of them classified as 'neoliberal' and promoting gentrification.

Firstly, quite some authors criticised the **general framing of problems and solutions** in the regeneration process. Several authors argued, echoing the global social justice-oriented discourse, for a more structural framing of the problems plaguing the historic centre (Davis, 2007; Nemeth-Chapa & Zetina-Rodríguez, 2017); the strategies currently employed are merely combatting symptoms, they posed, and lack a comprehensive understanding of the complex problems. With regards to solutions, Müller (2011) highlighted the discrepancy between, one the one hand, the government's stated goals of social inclusion and governance based on resident's wishes and needs, and on the other hand, their determination to regulate and order urban space, which already constitutes the imposition of a certain set of norms and values regarding the use of space. Contreras (2014), similarly, perceived the entire project as rooted in the will of the political and economic elite, and argued for a paradigm shift.

Relatedly, the general premise of the revitalisation, **heritage preservation**, was problematised. Several authors interpreted the municipality's fixation on aestheticisation of the centre as a desire for commodification of national patrimony, resulting from the globalised competition between cities (Müller, 2011; Parra, 2015). "Cities take a central role in globalisation, and renovation / rescue / regeneration are localised as strategies to "commodify" space, that is, to turn it into a saleable object, and thus make it available to capital" (Müller, 2011, p. 20). The relocation of undesirable practices such as street vending was seen in this context (Parra, 2015; Müller, 2011); Nemeth-Chapa & Zetina-Rodríguez (2017) argued in this regard that street commerce is a part of the centre's patrimony as much as its architecture, as it has been a local tradition since before the Spanish conquest, and should therefore be preserved as such. Finally, Müller (2011) argued that the valorisation of buildings' historicity leads to the neglect of their social functions, as buildings are prioritised over the people that inhabit them; UNESCO and its designations of 'World Heritage', here, were seen to represent this perspective on buildings and space vis á vis their users.

Then, the perimeters for intervention defined at the start of the regeneration process (see Figure 4) reminded Contreras (2014) of the colonial social division between the Spanish and the indigenous, wherein the former inhabited the centre and the latter the surrounding area. With the higher priority given to perimeter A, this division returns, Contreras posed. Parra (2015) pointed to the socio-cultural dimension of exclusion linked to changes in land use; he posed that the government aims to gentrify the centre by introducing a user of higher status (Parra, 2015). The government's promotion of culture-oriented consumption, through e.g. museums, the area's bohemian atmosphere and its avant-garde art, was here seen to cater to the modes of consumption of the educated, culturally sophisticated classes; this representation of the centre is, of course, also linked to the discourse of architectural heritage preservation (Parra, 2015).

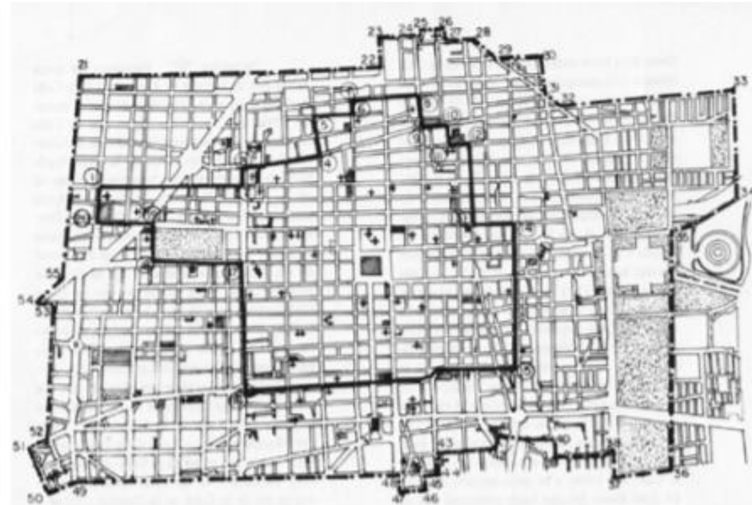

Figure 5: Perimeters A (inner) & B (outer) of the Historic Centre. Source: Pareyón, 2009, p. 38

The municipality's market-oriented approach to the goal of **redensification**, then, was also subject to widespread criticism in the literature, although the goal in itself was supported. Many authors argued that this approach has led to the displacement and social exclusion of low-income residents in the centre (Monterrubio, 2011; Müller, 2011; Olivera & Delgadillo, 2014; Parra, 2015; Vassalli & Sánchez, 2009), evidenced by Delgadillo (2016A) using data showing the altering demographic composition of the area and the dramatic increase in rents. Delgadillo (2016A) further posed that the government has purposely instigated this gentrification of the area, both in terms of population and land use, through pointing out the 'selective modernisation' of the centre, with the areas fertile for commercial exploitation receiving much more attention than the more residential quarters (Delgadillo, 2016A). For these reasons, several authors (Delgadillo, 2016A; Müller, 2011; Parra, 2015) saw the government discourse of social inclusion and sustainable development as a rhetorical façade that hides the implicit gentrification agenda. Moreover, García-Peralta & Lombard (2009) claimed that due to market deregulation policies, "more than 80 per cent of land [in the centre] ended up in the hands of 14 estate agents" (p. 46), contributing to rising rents. They argued that the main beneficiaries of the housing policy were/are the local landowners and housing developers; the resulting increase in middle- and high-income housing had the displacement and social exclusion of low-income residents as effect.

Another prominent theme in the literature was the **securitisation** that Mexico City's centre has undergone throughout the regeneration process, which has attempted to combat the issues of

crime and insecurity in the area. This securitisation creates, for Becker & Müller (2013, p. 78), "the hegemony of security and (dis)order concerns regarding the "proper" use, design, and (re)ordering of urban space". In practice, this translates into the application of 'zero tolerance' policing, as recommended in 2003 by former New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani's consultancy firm to the Mexico City municipality; Becker & Müller, as well as Davis (2007), were highly critical of this approach to crime, and the broken windows thesis underpinning it. Rather than combatting structural issues causing crime, they argued, securitisation targets "informal and marginalised economic survival strategies of the urban poor and other practices that threatened the preservation of neoliberal urban aesthetics" (Becker & Müller, p. 83). According to Davis, the centre's securitisation has further limited public access to the centre, already constrained by the threat of crime, through the fear of police misconduct. She disapproved of the lack of blame placed on police offers for co-producing the crime problem through corruption and grants of impunity to criminals. Moreover, she pointed out the common abuse of power by police officers, which, in the consultancy firm's report, was seemingly blamed on citizens as much as on police officers, and little proposals were made to combat it.

Finally, with regards to **citizen participation**, Contreras (2014) found the mechanisms included in the 2011-2016 regeneration plan to be lacking. As he showed, the component of the 2011 *Plan de Manejo* detailing the citizen participation plans claims that the plan seeks to create awareness among citizens about the patrimonial value of the streets, buildings and public spaces in the centre. For Contreras, this speaks of a paternalistic attitude from the state towards the people; it "supposes the need to educate in a way of being a citizen, showing them, on the one hand, their rights, and on the other, demanding the modification of some of their socio-spatial practices" (p. 10). Thus, through determining the agenda of the regeneration and offering citizens only a marginal, largely pre-decided role, the elite imposes its own vision of the centre, legitimised through the citizens and through the state, according to Contreras. Monterrubio (2011) and Müller (2011) similarly argued for more and better citizen participation mechanisms.

4.2 Mexican media representations of the regeneration and its effects: a narrative review

As discussed in Chapter 3, besides academic sources, sources from two Mexican newspapers were also analysed. It was found that most articles, from both the left-leaning newspaper *La Jornada* and the more right-wing *El Financiero*, mostly assumed a perspective as neutral as possible to the regeneration program, in which the government's perspective was taken as exit point for the description of events and/or developments. As this way of representing the regeneration process aligns with the hegemonic discourse, these articles were interpreted as supportive of the neoliberal discourse. Nonetheless, plenty of articles were also found that represented perspectives critical of

the government's acting, such as those of evicted residents of the centre. Moreover, several opinion pieces co-opted arguments from the critical discourse stream. The main themes found to be discussed in the articles were: **general accounts** of the regeneration program; the **preservation of architectural heritage**; the centre's **redensification**; the government's approach to solving **security and crime issues**; and the **reordering of public space**. Regarding all these themes, except for security, the discourse was generally supportive of government action, although critical notes were often also made, and sometimes entire articles went against the hegemonic discourse. These general trends, and the exceptions to them, will now be presented again per discourse stream, per theme.

4.2.1 Representation of the hegemonic discourse: echoing government officials

As mentioned, both newspapers mostly assumed an uncritical perspective to events and developments regarding the **general regeneration process**, opting to exclusively cite government representatives rather than also providing additional perspectives. For example, *La Jornada*'s reports on the publication of the book *Centro Histórico: 10 años de revitalización* and on the presentation of the 2011-2016 regeneration plan give factual accounts of the book's contents and of the event (MacMasters & Ramírez, 2011; Torrijos, 2011). Besides events, a frequent trigger for both newspapers' coverage of the regeneration process was the announcement of new public investments in the centre; here, too, the government discourse was co-opted (e.g., Ramírez, 2012). Interestingly, while *La Jornada* tended to report on the entire range of goals pronounced by the government, *El Financiero* only named the actions of physical regeneration and restauration, such as infrastructure improvements and architectural preservation (El Financiero Editorial, 2013B, 2015B, 2016; Montes, 2014).

Figure 6: Image accompanying La Jornada *article on heritage preservation. Source: Ramírez, 2012*

With regards to **heritage preservation**, many *La Jornada* articles were found applauding the progress made in rescuing the historic centre's architecture from decay. Such articles echoed the government's preservationist discourse, stressing the centre's status as UNESCO World Heritage site, and were often based primarily on interviews with government officials (e.g., Samaniego, 2018). At times, these articles also mentioned other elements of the regeneration program, such as the pedestrianisation of streets and the involvement of private investors. One article quoted an UNESCO official declaring Mexico City "an example of coexistence for other cities in Latin America", praising both the progress in heritage conversation and the life situation of the centre's users and residents (Ramirez, 2012). Articles by both *La Jornada* and *El Financiero* also reported on properties still at risk, co-opting the

problem framing of architectural deterioration; the latter cited an architect asking the government for more resources for preservation, claiming that a great effort had been made in the past decade, but only 15 to 20% of buildings in the World Heritage area had been recovered yet (El Financiero Editorial, 2012; Gutierrez, 2015; Llanos, 2010).

Then, *La Jornada* was also found to report at times on the population growth in the centre. Here, the **redensification** results were celebrated, and placed in the context of other positive results of the regeneration program; "the facilities granted by the capital's administration have allowed the recovery of expropriated buildings for the benefit of street vendors, as well as the rehabilitation of others with the support of the private sector, with which the Living in the Centre program was promoted" (Gomez, 2013A, p. 31). In the same article, a government official was quoted arguing the redensification process has not generated social exclusion, "because no one has tried to remove its original inhabitants, who today enjoy a better urban environment and security" (Ibid.).

Despite focused searching on the topic, no articles by either newspaper were found discussing, in a positive manner, the effects of the **security** measures in the centre. Nonetheless, the issue of security was named by both in many articles with a different focus as part of the problem framing, as a policy goal, or as one of the areas in which improvements had been made (e.g., Gomez, 2013A; Sanchez, 2007; Sanchez, 2005; Flores, 2008).

Then, a common topic of discussion was the **reordering of public space**, such as the pedestrianisation of streets, and the relocation of street vendors. Again, in the case of both newspapers, these articles often were guided by interviews with government officials. The discourse towards pedestrianisation was positive; it was presented, for example, to support "the democratic enjoyment of public space" (Gomez, 2013B, p. 45). The relocation of street vendors was also generally supported by both newspapers; for example, articles by both newspapers used the word 'liberate' (*liberar*) to refer to a street being closed off for so-called *ambulantes* (Sanchez, 2006; El Financiero Editorial, 2013A). The *La Jornada* article also detailed how the relocation happened in agreement with the street vendors, and that they would receive financial support. A 2011 *La Jornada* article, discussing the return of street vendors to an area previously cleared from them, framed the vendors as obstructing the enjoyment of heritage; they were described to have "occupied and saturated" streets, making it "practically impossible to walk in some sections" of this World Heritage area (Llanos, 2011, p. 36). Saliently, other practices of the informal economy, such as street prostitution and parking assistance and/or vehicle watching, were also portrayed through a negative discourse, as they were equated to issues of

Figure 7: Image of renovated street accompanying La Jornada *article. Source: Gómez, 2013B*

insecurity (Gomez, 2013B; Gomez, 2013C). *El Financiero*, moreover, linked the presence of street vendors to architectural deterioration in the centre (El Financiero Editorial, 2012).

4.2.2: Representing the other side of the coin: histories from below

Both newspapers also offered more critical perspectives on specific aspects of the revitalisation project and its consequences. Firstly, an opinion piece in *La Jornada* by Velazquez (2002) critiqued the idea of **redensification** through private sector-led development, "based on the millionaire pocket of businessman Carlos Slim", who played a major role in said development. He insinuated that the recovery was aimed merely at "the people who can pay the price for the beauty of (…)" "(…) the so-called Historic Centre" (Velazquez, 2002). En passant, he mocked the preservationist discourse embedded in the designation of the centre as 'historical', which was introduced by José Iturriaga himself. Other *La Jornada* articles also marked the repopulation plan as exclusive, citing neighbourhood residents; they pointed to the government's failure to live up to their discourse of inclusion (Esquivel, 2011; Alvarado, 2016B). Ramírez & Flores (2015, p. 35) discussed a report claiming the "urban development policy of recent years (…) privileges the interests of developers and large commercial companies over the general interest of its inhabitants", generating "exclusion and urban segregation, uprooting and silent displacement of communities". Bolaños & Duarte (2007) discussed the investment of several businessmen, including Carlos Slim, in one of the centre's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods; the article included perspectives from local shop owners, who feared being left out because the government would favour certain groups. Flores (2006), finally, discussed business owners in the centre accusing Slim and other investors of using "gangster practices" to acquire properties, including violent evictions. Complaints filed to the government were said to have yielded no results. *El Financiero* also reported on the changing land prices in the centre, albeit from a less critical perspective, and without explicitly linking the developments to government policy.

Many *La Jornada* articles also discussed the topic of home evictions, taking stance against the phenomenon. For example, Flores (2016, p. 37) discussed the municipality's eviction of dwellers forced due to housing prices to squat properties, and criticised the increasing commercial use of properties in the centre "under the pretext of repopulating the area". Other articles described in detail the state-sanctioned, violent evictions of families in the centre, providing residents' perspectives on the government's actions (Alvarado, 2016A; Esquivel, 2012; Alvarado, 2016B; Sanchez, 2016). The view of the state authorities as cooperating with real estate

Figure 8: Image accompanying La Jornada *article on home evictions. Source: Alvarado, 2016A*

developers to commodify the centre, to the detriment of residents, was frequently represented in these articles, too.

The extensive **security measures** taken by the government in the centre, then, were represented in a dominantly negative manner by *La Jornada*. One long opinion piece discussed the "global trend of control and social exclusion" that is camera monitoring, with specific focus on Mexico City and its centre. Surveillance cameras were argued not to have "a real effect in fighting crime", and to rather function as a performative measure (Servín, 2013, p. 41). This and other articles discussed the zero tolerance-security strategy recommended by Rudy Giuliani to Mexico City's government, resulting in "the illusion of strategy", the harassment of low-income residents, and a "real estate reactivation" in the area (Ibid.; Rascón, 2007, 2008). Rascón (2007), discussing more specifically the illegalisation of informal street practices in Mexico City, critiqued in an opinion piece the government's dismissal of these practices as "a pretext for crime", and of their practisers as "lazy", as well as the government's negligence of the underlying problem of unemployment. He argued that the aesthetically beautiful centre "should scare us", as it represents a shortcut past the structural and inclusive changes needed economically and socially (Ibid.). A year later, the same author furthered his argument against securitisation, claiming it breeds "segregationist real estate development and expulsion of impoverished sectors" (Rascón, 2008).

Finally, one *La Jornada* article found represented the perspective of police officers and street vendors on the securitisation measures (Servín & Cruz, 2013). The "selective justice" of the measures was critiqued here by vendors, and the cyclical process of removal and relocation of the latter was lamented by police offers (Ibid., p. 4). *El Financiero* also featured some representation of street vendor's perspectives, despite its general support of their relocation; in one article detailing their eviction from a certain square, their demand to be assigned a new location was discussed, and another article was entirely dedicated to the same request several months later, acknowledging that the work "gives them their daily sustenance" (Rodea, 2015A, 2015B).

4.3 The 2017-2022 *Plan Integral de Manejo*: a text analysis

Having elaborately established the social and discursive practice, the time has come to move on to discussing the final method and object of analysis: the text analysis of the *Plan Integral de Manejo del Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México 2017-2022* (Autoridad del CHCM, 2018). Through this analysis, the following sub-question will be answered:

What urban regeneration discourses are used in Mexico City's 2017-2022 urban regeneration policy plan?

Through a careful reading of this document, it was found that both the dominant neoliberal discourse stream and the counter-hegemonic social justice discourse stream had a significant influence on the representation of Circumstantial, Value, Means-Goal and Goals premises in the Plan. The following sections will dissect these representations, starting with those aligning more with the neoliberal discourse. Then, the representations more parallel to the social justice discourse will be discussed, and finally, certain representations will be problematised from a social justice perspective.

The upload of the *Plan de Manejo* to a word counter website revealed that the most prevalent word in the document, after neutral words such as 'centre' and 'urban', was 'heritage' (*patrimonio*). Table 2 displays the 10 most used words in the document that could be linked more easily to either of the discourse streams (thus excluding neutral terms). As it shows, words associated more with the social justice discourse stream's prioritised themes (e.g. [citizen] participation) were less prevalent than those relating to the neoliberal discourse stream (e.g. tourism).

	Word (translation)	**Count**
1	*Patrimonio* (heritage)	146
2	*Cultural* (cultural)	110
3	*Seguridad* (security)	99
4	*Comercio* (commerce)	94
5	*Conservación* (conservation)	68
6	*Turismo* (tourism)	65
7	*Inmuebles* (real estate)	63
7	*Vivienda* (housing)	63
9	*Habitabilidad* (liveability)	56
10	*Participación* (participation)	51

Table 3: Most prevalent words in the Plan Integral de Manejo*. Word count by: countwordsfree.com*

4.3.1 Assertion of the neoliberal discourse: a familiar narrative

The influence of the global and regional neoliberal discourses on the document was evident, as well as that of the dominant Mexican discourse discussed in this chapter; for example, Carlos Slim and José Iturriaga were celebrated in the introduction as important contributors to the centre's revitalisation. This section will review the reiterations of this discourse stream in the document, sorted again per theme.

4.3.1.1 Heritage preservation as prime Value premise

Indeed, the statistic of 'heritage' as one of the most common words in the document corresponds with the discourse employed. Heritage preservation was overwhelmingly presented as the prime Value and Goal premise underpinning the plan, which made no effort to hide this: "the preservation of the layout and the morphology of the historic city were always the starting point" (Autoridad del CHCM, 2018, p. 17). Already in the first paragraph of the introduction to the Plan, the cultural and historical value of the centre was asserted twice, as it was referred to as "the founding heart of (…) the valley of Mexico" and "the largest and most complex World Heritage site on the planet" (p. 11). Later, the Value premise of heritage conservation was asserted again (p. 46):

> "In the [*Plan Integral de Manejo*] 2017-2022, the fundamental value of the preservation of cultural property prevails in a transversal way, with the certainty that it is about safeguarding our past today and in the future. The basic foundation of the plan is the recognition of the exceptional universal value (…) which makes the [Historic Centre] a unique site due to its archaeological, historical, aesthetic and patrimonial value."

The World Heritage status of the centre was also consistently mentioned and referred to throughout the document, functioning to legitimise the Value premise of preservation.

4.3.1.2 Tourism as a Means-Goal premise

The discourse of heritage preservation was often combined with a discourse framing the expansion of commercial and tourist activity in the centre as a solution for its problems. For example: "[the Historic Centre's] loss of identity began to be reversed with intense dissemination campaigns on the history of the ancient city and its enormous commercial, tourist and cultural offer" (p. 14). In a similar way, the diversification of land use in certain areas was advocated, "to finally promote economic and social development in areas that are not entirely visible to visitors to the centre and that have great potential" (p. 55). Here, again, encouraging tourism constitutes a Means-Goal premise, this time servicing the Goal premise of 'economic and social development'.

Later, heritage preservation and tourism were presented as Means-Goal premises for each other, as the preservation of heritage was partially intended to "strengthen tourism potential":

> "(…) in addition to consolidating the relationship between culture and tourism through the conservation of architectural and urban heritage, as culture is an increasingly important element of the tourism product, and at the same time tourism is a means to generate income that supports and strengthens cultural heritage" (p. 50).

4.3.1.3 Abandonment as problem, redensification as solution

Another narrative firmly established in the text, again emblematic primarily of the hegemonic Latin American urban regeneration discourse, was the framing of depopulation as an important (undesirable) Circumstantial premise, with redensification as Goal premise. The introduction listed the harmful effects of inoccupancy of buildings: "physical deterioration, breakdown of community ties, real estate speculation and waste of enormous urban potential, to name a few" (p. 13). The solution, as it had been carried out so far, was framed as follows:

> "One of the first steps, then, was to limit the misuse of buildings through fiscal means and stimulate with new association mechanisms their recycling, restoration and conservation, to promote new economic, educational, cultural uses and, above all, create a housing offer aimed at various social sectors" (p. 14).

Here, a diversified housing offer was mentioned as an important Means-Goal premise, which could be interpreted as alluding to the social mixing discourse, although supposed benefits of social mixing such as increased economic opportunity were not mentioned.

The problem of insecurity, then, was also attributed in the introduction to "the collapse of urban life" (p. 14) in the centre until the early 21st century. It was claimed to have been relieved significantly "in areas where the recovery of habitability conditions was progressing" (p. 14). Again, on p. 18: "Another effect [of repopulation] was that it went from being an extremely unsafe polygon,

to being one of the safest areas of the city in the recovered areas;" and again on p. 56, where repopulation was advocated to "activate public life to improve security and prevent violence through intensive and continuous use of open spaces". Similarly, the "gradual regeneration" of "community ties and the social fabric" (p. 14) was accredited to the repopulation of the centre.

As a Means-Goal premise, in order to move from the problematic Circumstantial premise of abandonment and decay to the Goal premise of repopulation and rehabilitation, private sector investment was found to be presented as a partial solution. For example, on p. 14, the streamlining of bureaucratic procedures for private investment in physical works was presented as a key contribution to the centre's physical recovery. On the other hand, the plan also stated that "the public administration will promote and equitably support social and private participation in strategic urban projects (…) and the recycling and rehabilitation of housing, especially that of social and working class interest" (p. 42).

4.3.1.4 Improvement of security through maintenance of order

Unsurprisingly, the improvement of security in the centre was another main goal of the Plan. The line of reasoning of the broken windows thesis could at times be discerned; for citizens to help combat crime, it was argued, "(…) participants must fully know the criminal information (key points of deterioration and high crime incidence, as well as places of the public space with appropriation of it by different social actors, which generate devaluation, outsourcing and slumming)" (p. 82). A paragraph later, promoting "the proper use of public space" was advocated, "since it is an effective way to inhibit criminal behaviour, crime and the feeling of fear caused by degraded and undervalued public space" (pp. 82-83). Saliently, 'criminal behaviour' and 'crime' were here mentioned separately, and a 'proper use of space' was established to exist.

Certain surveillance standards were proposed, here, too:

> "The neighbourhoods and streets of [the Historic Centre] (…) must be patrolled and monitored, according to their quadrant of action and by their control and monitoring centre C2-Centro, with criteria of accessibility, orography, crime rate and number of inhabitants, and reaction time by elements of the preventive police of Mexico City, in the event of a risk or emergency situation, which must remain in the range of two minutes and 50 seconds on average" (p. 83).

The evaluation mechanism proposed, in turn, was a periodic review using comparative and statistical analysis.

Moreover, the security program consisted of seven specific projects: "Police stations; Tourist police; Safe footpath; Business and citizen security; Anti-Graffiti Unit; Operative Rake, and Operative Lightning Flash" (p. 83). Most saliently, the 'tourist police' project here involved providing English, French and Italian language classes to police officers, as well as "courses on the attractions and

tourist products of Mexico City, specializing in the Historic Centre" (p. 117), implying security improvements also constituted a Means-Goal premise for the promotion of tourism. Other projects' actions included the establishment of more police stations, the "provision" of "security and surveillance" (p. 117) around educational facilities, the dissemination of workshops and material for safety and for life preservation in the event of a crime, the prevention and undoing of graffiti vandalism, and social programs for homeless and addicted people.

4.3.1.5 The recovery of public space as a Means-Goal premise

Alongside the discourse of heritage preservation, the rehabilitation of public space was consistently framed as a solution for the centre's problems. The recovery frame was often linked to the heritage discourse – for example: "a new underground network of urban infrastructure was expanded, streets were pedestrianized, and hundreds of facades were restored, revealing a previously hidden historical landscape" (p. 14). Moreover, it was often presented as means to the end of redensification; for example, the public space recovery work of the 2000s was argued to be the reason that "for the first time it was possible to stop the depopulation of the Historic Centre" (p. 18) in between 2005 and 2010.

4.3.2 Co-optation of the social justice discourse: defending the right to the city

Despite the prevalence of the neoliberal discourse, iterations of the social justice discourse could also be found at various points.

4.3.2.1 Valuing use-value, heterogeneous use and appropriation of space

One of the more prevalent expressions of this discourse was the frequent framing of increasing spaces' use-value as Goal premise. For example, in the introduction, "the idea of seeing the Historic Center as a living city and not as a "museum city"" (Autoridad del CHCM, p. 12) is named as one of the founding premises of the *Autoridad del Centro Histórico*, although seemingly at odds with the consistent prioritisation of heritage preservation. One of the main Value and Goal premises of the recovery of public space was also found to be the increase of use-value; this became evident, for example, on p. 55, where intervention in certain squares and gardens was advocated because they constitute "meeting, socialization and contact spaces for citizens, residents, workers or walkers". Environmental sustainability, through "environmental improvement" and lowering "energy use", was also argued to have the goal "to improve the quality of life", again displaying a prioritisation of use-value. In conjunction with this, the value of heterogeneous use was often asserted (e.g., pp. 39, 55). "The appropriation of public space" (pp. 97 & 98) was also mentioned multiple times as a Value premise to be promoted, directly echoing right to the city-values.

4.3.2.2 Inclusivity and equality as Value premises

Other Value premises prevalent in the document were those of inclusivity and equality, aligning with the social justice ideals. For example, on p. 76:

> "It will be necessary to include a study to attend to the adequate circulation of people with disabilities and the elderly. A very important criterion (…) is (…) an inclusive urban landscape, that is, one that has the necessary infrastructure for the enjoyment of all citizens."

On pp. 14, 56, 81 & 98, the same Value premise was brought forward: to "guarantee full accessibility in the urban space", and to "emphasise the respect for human rights and gender equity". There was also a "Citizen Coexistence program", which "proposes to promote projects related to community life to strengthen the social fabric and promote inclusion processes" (p. 92). With regards to the execution of certain plans, citizens were also included. For example, in the battle against crime, "to make the citizen who inhabits and travels the [centre] a participant and not just a spectator, building a close link between space and individuals" (p. 82). Finally, a program of attention for "street populations" (p. 99) was also included, signalling a concern with homeless people's well-being beyond their disturbance of the public order.

Then, social exclusion and/or resident displacement was repeatedly asserted to be a policy consequence to be avoided (pp. 14, 15), and "special attention to the housing needs of current residents and those who have decided to return to live [in the centre] in recent years" (p. 39) was mentioned. Elsewhere, it was stated that recent government interventions have been focused on "regularisation of (…) the offer of housing for rent and sale for the population of middle and working class sectors (…). It is necessary to reactivate, redefine and strengthen public programs and tools to give a new impetus to housing" (p. 43). Here, seemingly, the call for a more inclusive housing policy was heeded, although ambiguously, without promising specifically to 'regularise' the lower-income housing supply.

4.3.2.3 Democratic representation and citizen participation as Goal premises

Similarly, citizen participation and its incorporation in policy were common themes throughout the document, reflecting one of the main demands for good urban regeneration from the global social justice mega-discourse. The intrinsic value of citizen participation was stressed: "in the Historic Centre the greatest plurality of actors in the city is concentrated, whose voices are fundamental in the process of preparing this document" (p. 19). For this reason, the municipality organised participatory planning workshops in the preparation of the *Plan de Manejo*. Two pages were dedicated to detailing the citizen demands expressed during these workshops, and these were frequently alluded to throughout the document (e.g., pp. 51, 58, 62, 91). The fields of action, moreover, aligned with the concerns expressed by the citizens; this included a greater attention

given to Perimeter B, which' residents "feel that the authorities have ignored them" (p. 19). The Plan also emphasised that the government "will respect and support the various forms of organization, traditional and typical of the communities (…) of the city, so that they participate in urban development under any form of association provided for by the Urban Development Law" (p. 42).

4.3.3 Problematising representations and argumentations from a social justice perspective

While this inclusion of values and goals from the social justice discourse would be supported by this discourse's proponents, they might also argue some representations and argumentations in the plan are problematic and/or harmful. This section will review these, thus arguing not from a neutral perspective, but one informed by the social justice discourse stream.

4.3.3.1 Hegemony of the heritage discourse

While the preservation of cultural and historical heritage is certainly a noble goal, the priority discursively ascribed to it in the document was at times problematic. The dominance of the preservationist discourse, at times, leaves the reader wondering if the *Plan de Manejo* is, in fact, a plan for integral urban regeneration, or merely for heritage preservation. For example, on p. 27, the general objective of the Plan is defined to be "a dynamic and open instrument (…) to achieve a greater commitment and participation in the management, conservation, rehabilitation and sustainable development of the historical, architectural and cultural heritage of the CHCDMX". Strikingly, no mention is made of any urban regeneration or development besides that of heritage. Similarly, on p. 18, the public investment ("equivalent to approximately 550 million dollars") in the centre's regeneration is presented as "the largest local investment in the country and the continent in the recovery of historical heritage", implying the enormous investments in e.g. the recovery of public space served only to reinstate the centre in its former glory, rather than to benefit its residents and users.

Similarly, on p. 72, the pedestrianisation of streets is argued for, not based on the Goal premise of improving e.g. sustainability or liveability, but that of "favouring access to the different cultural facilities and important squares or monuments from the Historic Centre". In the same vein, on p. 66 it is argued that irregular activities in public space, such as religious festivities, require regulation mechanisms, contributing to "consolidating traditional trade, given the symbolic value it possesses". Again, it is implied that a certain phenomenon should be preserved not for its intrinsic, but for its symbolic value. The document is filled with such examples, which imply action is primarily oriented at heritage preservation, with other consequences as side-effects.

Another prevalent theme throughout the document was the application of the 'recovery'-frame to virtually everything, even regarding sectors such as tourism (p. 69) that did not necessarily constitute a large source of income for the centre before its deterioration; here, it appeared the

framing of plans as a recovery of the centre's former glory served mostly to legitimise the government strategy.

Heritage preservation, in turn, was at times also argued to service tourism, such as in the case of the rehabilitation of certain traditional markets:

> "This market (…), dedicated to the sale of exotic meats, cheeses and spices, is one of the three initial remodelling projects to promote its reactivation as a tourist attraction and gastronomy site. The project considers the construction of an underground parking lot and a *gourmet* restaurant area" (p. 63, emphasis original).

The depiction of this market's goods as 'exotic' could be interpreted as catering to the tourist gaze, in an 'Othering' of the market's merchants and their ware. Moreover, the construction of a parking lot and '*gourmet* restaurant area' seem to contradict the plan's pronounced goals of limiting car traffic in the centre and preserving its original character. Thus, here it became clear that the preservation of heritage goes hand in hand with its commodification and commercial exploitation, signalling what Janoschka et al. (2014) call 'symbolic gentrification'.

4.3.3.2 Exchange-value over use-value

Relatedly, at some points, a prioritisation of spaces' exchange- over use-value was implied; on page 44, one of the measures proposed to stimulate investment in the rehabilitation of buildings was "the establishment of a specific tax on the disuse of the constructed area of the Historic Centre that is not intended for residential use". Thus, it was implied that the use of buildings is to be encouraged if the building might be used commercially, while potential residential use is less important, contradicting the goal of repopulation. And, on p. 61, the Goal premise of making "a profitable economy (…) of the urban recovery process" was established, with Means-Goal premises towards this end constituting "profitable investment" in "the maintenance of public space, architecture and infrastructure". Here, the regeneration is conceived of as an investment requiring long-term profitability, implying a focus on exchange-value over use-value.

Similarly, at one point, the document seemed to celebrate the rising of rents, contradicting its stated goals of preventing social exclusion and/or displacement:

> "Commercial corridors that are now pedestrian (…) have registered an important boom in private businesses from the respective rehabilitation. Some of these segments (…) have been strengthened by the growing participation of modern commerce through diverse firms (…). The success achieved by Francisco I. Madero street, for example, has implied a strong growth and greater speculation in the rents of the premises, since this street is considered to have the second highest income per square meter [in the city]" (p. 66).

Thus, again, a prioritisation of exchange-value was signalled.

4.3.3.3 Citizen participation: a project for legitimacy?

A particularly salient expression of the heritage preservation discourse was found in the document's representations of citizen participation. In most cases, Contreras' (2014) argument, posing citizen participation mechanisms in the past of the regeneration project were excessively framed within the government's vision for the centre, was reaffirmed. For example, one of the plan's stated goals was to "create spaces of citizen participation for the conservation of heritage and the maintenance of public order" (p. 15), also alluding to the broken windows thesis. Indeed, most of the mentions of "citizen participation" refer to stimulating citizens' role in heritage preservation, rather than their role in formulating or evaluating policy.

Furthermore, the plan put quite some emphasis on the need to educate citizens about the "values and risks" (p. 51) involved in heritage preservation. This attitude might be interpreted as quite paternalistic, and even pathological, as citizens are seemingly blamed for the deterioration of architecture. This became evident, for example, when the aim was pronounced to "sensitize and train citizens on practices for the care of the heritage environment" (p. 91). Similarly, on p. 93, the text spoke of the need for "the dissemination of heritage values" among the population. And again, a project titled "Promotion of community life and cultural values" was described to aim "to promote dynamics of dissemination of heritage values and the organization of national and international events" (p. 93), displaying some discrepancy between name and purpose.

Emblematic for the apparently mostly performative function of the citizen participation discourse in the Plan is Chapter 4 ('Citizenship and culture'), which starts with a paragraph detailing the need to include "the perspectives of the various social groups that coexist in the [centre]" (p. 89). Most of this chapter is then dedicated to a plan to establish a "School of Citizen Training and Heritage Conservation", defining "a set of strategic actions related to citizen training, on issues of cultural heritage and forms of advocacy for its care" (p. 89). The section discusses including citizens in the management as well as evaluation mechanisms, and saliently, the importance of preventing that "institutional spaces determine or fully influence the dynamics of participation" (p. 90). While these are valid points, the irony lies within the pre-determined, government-imposed goal of the citizen participation processes: to improve heritage preservation. This quote also contradicts the Plan's general framework for evaluation, wherein no citizen council or other form of citizen representation is included (p. 34).

In sum, the apparent efforts of the government to impose its own priorities on citizens, under the pretext of 'participation', might lead one to think that the consistent reference to citizen participation is more of a discursive practice to gain legitimacy, than a genuine attempt at democratic representation. Exemplary is the only citizen cited in the plan, which unsurprisingly

discussed the centre's heritage value, in quite underwhelming fashion: "In the words of a neighbour: "It is a social space of great magnitude."" (p. 19).

4.3.3.4 Pathological representations of street vendors

Another problematic aspect of the Plan was its highly negative, and at times pathological representation of street vendors. In the introduction, when the deterioration of the centre in the 1970s and '80s was discussed, the following was stated (p. 12):

> "a prolonged economic crisis of almost 15 years and the change in the political structure of the city had caused street commerce to overflow a large part of the streets that made up the [Historical Monument Zone]. This phenomenon caused social deterioration and degradation to become unstoppable and other problems to become undetectable and unattainable."

Here, street commerce was seemingly pointed to as the cause for 'social deterioration and degradation', as well as the development of 'other problems', without further argumentation on the connection between these phenomena. Salient is the implicit nature of the connection made, using 'this phenomenon' at the start of the second sentence rather than explicitly stating 'street commerce'. Here, the reader is invited to perform what Fairclough (1992) calls 'ideological work', as they are cued to interpret the text in a particular way to produce a coherent reading.

On the next page, the relocation of street commerce was dubbed "a milestone in the revitalisation process of the Historic Centre", directly followed by: "For the first time, there was a holistic view of the 21st century Historic Centre in all its dimensions: urban, social and economic" (Autoridad del CHCM, 2018, p. 13). Thus, it was implied that it was the milestone solution of the street commerce problem that finally allowed this holistic perception of the centre. Again, no argumentation was provided for this bold claim, and again, the link between the sentences was implicit, to the extent that the only connection between the sentences followed from the positioning of the second sentence after the first, with these two sentences comprising an entire paragraph. The following two paragraphs, then, which extended the problem framing to the abandonment of the centre, were also implicitly linked to the event of the street vendor relocation: "The knowledge accumulated in recent decades was *also* systematized and updated for the first time" (p. 13, emphasis added).

Street commerce was also linked to insecurity, on pp. 65 and 83; the territorial organisation of street commerce was said to have caused "the invasion of public spaces, with consequent effects on the mobility and insecurity of people". Again, no argumentation was provided for this claim, which contradicts the supposed positive correlation between usage of public space and security established earlier.

Finally, another problematic aspect of the Plan's representation of street vendors was the apparent cognitive dissonance involved in its exclusion of street commerce as intangible heritage of

the area. It has, as has been pointed out previously, existed since before the Spanish conquest, and thus the discrepancy between the embrace of other, more aesthetically and commercially favourable local traditions (e.g., p. 47) and the defamation of street commerce is quite clearly politically motivated.

4.3.3.5 Persistence of the broken windows thesis

Finally, the broken windows thesis' reasoning regarding crime prevention was apparent at times in the Plan, as discussed. While this reasoning can be argued for, at times the improvement of security was clearly conflated with other goals. On p. 83, in the context of the plan's security program, the document unambiguously stated that "the Government of Mexico City has developed programs to improve the public image of the city's first and second cadres, through public security projects and actions, (…) among others"; here, it became evident that the focus on security was not in the least motivated by the need to improve the centre's *image*.

With regards to the recovery of public space, elements of the broken windows thesis' reasoning could also be discerned:

> "Many spaces already intervened in for their adaptation and revitalisation show deterioration due to inappropriate uses. (…) The deterioration and lack of maintenance and investment are evident in the public spaces of these areas (…) which also present expulsion practices, such as the consumption of alcohol and drugs, homelessness, informal commerce overflowing on public roads and criminal activities, which inhibit collective public life" (p. 53).

Here, an equivalence of undesirable practices, such as public drinking, and the deep-rooted issue of homelessness, with actual criminal activity was used. The use of public space for these practices was argued to be 'inappropriate', and said to signal deterioration, requiring 'maintenance and investment'. While it is obvious that criminal activities should be combatted, it is not so clear how homelessness can be prevented through the better management of public space. The observations stated also displayed some discrepancy with the results of the participatory planning workshops cited right afterwards; "some of the recurrences most pointed out by the inhabitants have to do with the lack of urban cleanliness, lighting and regulation of formal and informal merchants" (p. 53), showcasing again how the government seemingly used residents' input to legitimise the imposition of its own priorities (i.e. maintaining 'order').

Chapter 5: Conclusion and discussion

Having elaborated the results of the data analysis, the final chapter of this thesis will interpret and reflect on these results, and answer the research question, followed by a discussion of this research' limitations and implications, and recommendations for future research.

5.1 Conclusion

This research has sought to answer the following research question:

What ideological urban regeneration discourses have influenced Mexico City's 2017-2022 urban regeneration policy plan?

Following the answers found in Chapters 2 and 4 to the sub-questions embedded in this research question, it can be concluded that *discourses at all levels from both the neoliberal and social justice discourse streams were found to have a significant influence on the policy plan*, *with the neoliberal discourse, especially at the Latin American scale, as strongest influence*. Most elements of the strategy followed this discourse's problem and solution framing, with the emphasis on heritage preservation as most clear example. The social justice discourse (at all levels), then, was co-opted at times, primarily in terms of values, and elements of its criticism of the neoliberal discourse were incorporated (e.g. preventing displacement). A schematic representation of the respective argument premises (Circumstantial, Value, Means-Goal and Goal) in relation to the different policy themes, as presented by the different discourse streams at different levels and by the policy document, can be found in the appendix, in Table 5. This table, functioning as summary of the entire research, allows a clear overview of the influences of the different discourses' elements on the policy document; these respective influences will now be discussed in more detail, as well as the themes notably left undiscussed

Firstly, the majority of Circumstantial, Value, Means-Goal and Goal premises in the document aligned with those proposed at the respective discourse levels of the **neoliberal discourse stream**. As for the global *mega-discourse*, the idea of social mixing was alluded to, and particularly the broken windows thesis was quite prevalent. Signs of disorder in public space were brought forward often as Circumstantial premise for the Means-Goal premise of regulating public space more, both through surveillance and the education of citizens about the proper use of space. Here, one of the Goal premises was to increase security, but other effects such as aestheticisation were also implied to be desirable.

The Latin American neoliberal *grand-discourse* was also of clear influence, particularly through its focus on heritage preservation and restoration for the attraction of capital; in fact, this pretext for preservation was the one most firmly established and reiterated throughout the document. The capital targeted through preservation usually took the form of tourism, which was a

prevalent Means-Goal or Goal premise in the document's argumentation, in turn servicing the centre's economic development. Moreover, the *Volver al centro*-method of regeneration through promoting cultural consumption, of course linked to heritage preservation, was also present in the document. Then, the relocation of elements of the informal economy, primarily street commerce, also aligned with this grand-discourse, constituting a Means-Goal premise for a variety of goals, including increased security. Finally, the underpopulation of the centre formed an important Circumstantial premise for the regeneration, with real estate development forming part of the Means-Goal premise (for the goal of repopulation), parallel to the grand-discourse.

At the local level, then, the document also aligned with the hegemonic *meso-discourse*, represented primarily by the media, which mostly reflected and supported earlier policies' goals rather than vice versa (i.e. media output determining policy goals). The influence of important agents of the local discourse, such as Carlos Slim and José Iturriaga, could be seen in the document by their mention in the introduction, and Iturriaga's argument that Mexico should 'sell culture and landscape' clearly still underpinned the policy direction. Then, the representation of street vendors in local media and the document notably aligned, as both used the word 'liberate' to refer to the process of removing street vendors from certain streets; this way, local media legitimised the policy, and allowed it to pathologise street vendors. Similarly, local media co-opted the heritage frame, granting legitimacy to the policy plan.

The **social justice discourse stream**, then, was also co-opted at times; firstly, the ideals of Jacobs' (1961) and Lefebvre's (1968) influential work, emblematic of the global and regional *mega- and grand-discourses*, formed important Value premises at various points throughout the document. Use-value, diverse land use and social composition (in an alternative reading of the social mixing Goal premise), and appropriation rather than ownership of space were all important premises for action proposed. Moreover, citizen participation in the production of space was an important theme in the policy plan, meaning it heeded one of the most prevalent and important requests from the social justice discourse stream at the global and local level. Finally, the prevention of social exclusion and displacement were at various points included as Value premises.

With regards to the local *meso-discourse*, the document notably paid attention to the authorities' earlier negligence of Perimeter B in the regeneration. This discrepancy between Perimeter A and B had been pointed out by both academic and media sources, and was in the document said to be mentioned in the participatory planning workshops. Moreover, despite the presence of the broken windows thesis' reasoning towards crime prevention, there was not such a strong focus on 'zero tolerance'-policing as local sources suggested, and critiqued, in earlier policy plans. This signals that the unpopularity and criticism of the securitisation measures had been noticed by the government. The 2017-2022 plan's security strategy moved to a more subtle, citizen-

based form of supervising public space, although the focus on maintaining public order remained.

Perhaps more telling than the notable influences of the respective discourses on the document, however, are those elements that were not included in the document, particularly from the anti-hegemonic discourse stream. An obvious observation here was the non-use of the term 'gentrification'. Nonetheless, this process' most important negative effects, such as social exclusion and displacement, were asserted as to be avoided, although some statements in turn contradicted these goals. Then, more important than the non-use of this term used, usually pejoratively, to refer to this strategy to alleviate urban disadvantage, is the lack of attention paid to the structures perpetuating this disadvantage. This limited problem framing was the most important critique offered by the social justice discourse stream at all levels, and yet persisted in this document; rather than aiming to uncover and mitigate the reasons why, for example, so many citizens are forced to resort to street commerce for subsistence, the document instead opted to frame street commerce itself as cause for the centre's decline, even going as far as to state that it was its relocation that had finally allowed proper perception of the centre's problems. Due to an, in my view, excessive focus on palliative measures such as aestheticisation, and a neglect of potentially structural change through, say, better provision of education, improvement is likely to be superficial.

In the same way, the criticism from the grand- and meso-discourses, claiming the heritage preservation discourse served to legitimise the centre's commodification, remained relevant. The majority of projects described in the document were argued to service the Value premise of preservation, thereby requiring little further argumentation on their pretexts or potential consequences; the privatisation of property, argued to encourage owners to take responsibility for its preservation, is a clear example of this. Moreover, citizen participation was still seemingly used, likewise, as a legitimising discourse for the imposition of the government's vision, with heritage preservation as prime goal, through the framing of educating and mobilising citizens in preservation as citizen participation. This focus on the need to educate citizens about the value of culture and heritage, besides implying they are partly at fault for its neglect, also spoke of the persistence of a paternalistic, arguably elitist attitude from the state, which had also constituted a point of critique from the local academic discourse.

Plenty more points of critique and suggestions from the social justice discourse stream went unnoticed or ignored by Mexico City's policymakers. For example, the broken windows thesis' reasoning regarding public order and crime persisted, at times also supported by the heritage preservation frame. The role of police officers in perpetuating crime issues remained unattended to, with not a single mention of the word 'corruption'. The call to make more land available for community and non-profit initiatives was not heeded, and instead all promotion of culture went hand in hand with tourism. The monopoly of certain land-owners on property in the centre, including

Carlos Slim, was not discussed either, nor were the negative effects of the market-led densification strategy. These included the numerous evictions that, as described by local media sources, had taken place in the centre; the document did not mention these evictions at all, nor measures to prevent them or support their victims, despite the supposed prevention of displacement.

Thus, especially in light of the many elements from the social justice discourse stream that were *not* co-opted in the policy plan, it can be concluded that while both discourse streams were of significant influence, the neoliberal discourse was more dominantly asserted. These findings confirm the idea that policy documents are the product of negotiations between different discourses, which are combined to produce a cohesive utterance of institutional discourse. Reflecting on the theoretical framework, consisting of the binary division of urban regeneration discourses into a 'neoliberal' and a 'social justice' stream, I am satisfied with my use of this dichotomy, as it captures the most important ideological differences in urban regeneration approaches. While, of course, it is a simplification of the unlimited nuances and perspectives that exist within the discourses, I do think it is a very relevant division to guide discourse analyses. A salient observation is that the social justice discourse stream is represented much more strongly in academia, as could be seen in this research especially at the local level of analysis; meanwhile, the neoliberal discourse stream is more dominant in policy practice. This difference, in fact, contributes in my view to the relevance of this division, as I see the discourses to represent idealism (social justice) and pragmatism (neoliberal), respectively.

5.2 Discussion

Of course, this research has not been able to map all the discourses influencing the object of research, as, following complex system thinking, these would consist of all the utterances loosely related to urban regeneration ever made. Even then, the limitation of what constitutes and is relevant to 'urban regeneration' is at the same time heuristic and subjectively determined. A degree of subjectivity was, of course, also present in the selection of sources and the judgement of relevance and of influence of discourses on each other; these limitations are inherent to any discourse analysis, and are unavoidable given the researcher's own subjective perception of reality. Following this constructionist line of reasoning, in fact, any research is unable to reach true objectivity, as its methods, data collection, and analysis will always to a degree be coloured by the researcher's own positionality.

The acknowledgement of this inherent subjectivity ingrained in research and representations of reality, however, also arguably forms one of the greatest strengths of this thesis; it is this worldview that allows a truly critical reading of assertions of discourse (i.e. policy documents), which I believe has a lot to offer for urban studies. With my research, I have sought to contribute to extending the 'argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning' (Hajer & Hoppe, 2013) beyond its

origin in the West, and investigate the implications of its worldview in settings in the Global South such as Mexico. I believe discourse analysis, and concepts such as pathological discourses that form it, have an important role to play in the dismantling of deep-rooted power structures. I hope to have contributed hereto in said settings by, without seeking to impose my own interpretation of the local situation, showcasing how discourse functions to legitimise and to favour certain representations.

In my research and its preparation, I encountered very little Mexican academic research employing discourse analysis to criticise policy, although some authors criticised, for example, discourses nostalgic of colonialism. Most arguments against Mexico City's policy, however, as section 4.1.2 showed, related to methods and their consequences, rather than the representations and arguments underpinning these methods. For future research, therefore, I recommend researchers in Mexico to incorporate more elements of discourse analysis in their evaluation and critique of policy, including that in the field of urban regeneration. With regards to the implications of my research, it would be highly interesting to investigate the influence of certain representations in policy of, for example, informal economy practices, on those carrying out these practices, or the influence of the heritage preservation discourse on Mexicans' perception of heritage and its value.

Regarding the political dimension of policy-making, a salient observation is that the mostly neoliberal urban regeneration discourse used in the 2017-2022 *Plan Integral de Manejo* was employed not by a predominantly right-wing municipal coalition, as is the case in Rotterdam, but by a city government which has been led by a left-wing party since the start of the urban regeneration process. This signals that the neoliberal urban regeneration discourse has been institutionalised to a large extent in this policy environment. Therefore, it could be valuable to research the extent to which policymakers from Mexico City's government perceive of their own policies as left-wing, and are aware of the different existing discourses surrounding urban regeneration. Do they believe, as Margaret Thatcher once claimed, that there is no alternative to neoliberal governance? To what extent are they aware of the alternative provided by the social justice discourse stream, which' criticism of Mexico City's neoliberal urban regeneration approach, by a united front of Mexican (and foreign) academics, largely went unattended to in the 2017-2022 policy plan? Was their use of a dominantly neoliberal discourse a conscious decision, or do they perceive of their policy discourse as 'neutral'? Since this research has scrutinised only the final policy plan, without asking the policy-makers involved on their point of view on this, we can only speculate; more research could shed light on these questions, and further develop the 'argumentative turn' in urban governance research by blending research on policy formulation with social constructionist themes (i.e. discourse). Although this is beyond the scope of urban governance research, more research could also be conducted on the role of Mexican media in constructing narratives on urban disadvantage in Mexico City; for, as we saw, both left- and right-wing newspapers mostly co-opted the neoliberal framing of disadvantage,

for example through pathologising street vendors.

In conclusion, this thesis has contributed to the research uncovering how apparently politically neutral and/or socially desirable discourses can be used to legitimise less desirable policy goals, through argumentation based on certain representations of circumstances, values, means and goals, i.e. problems and solutions. Through an elaborate mapping of opposing discourses at different scale levels regarding a certain policy area, the interplay between these discourses could be discerned, as well as the translation of their negotiation into an institutional discourse. The critical reading of the policy document also revealed the persistence of several problematic representations and lines of argumentation, which this thesis has pointed out in the hope of exerting some influence on Mexico City’s next urban regeneration plan; for, to speak with Foucault (1980), language does not merely produce knowledge, but also power, and representation underpins domination – from Rotterdam to Mexico City.

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Annex 1

Table 4: Reading instrument for analysis

	Neoliberal urban regeneration	**Social justice-oriented urban regeneration**
Reason for urban disadvantage (Circumstantial premise)	Unbalanced socio-economic composition of population; weak local economy; prevalence of disorder; unattractive area for capital (e.g. high incomes, tourists, businesses) *In Latin America specifically*: Depopulation of the centre; negligence of historical heritage, particularly colonial architecture; overflow of street vendors	Structural socio-economic inequalities; government failure to provide adequate social services and resources; harmful stigmatisation of disadvantaged populations.
Solution for urban disadvantage (Goal and Means-Goal premises, based on Value premise)	Encourage *social mixing*: diversify local housing stock, encourage homeownership, sponsor renovation; *Securitise* and *sanitise*: discourage undesirable uses of public space and signs of disorder (e.g. vandalism), increase security measures; Promote *productive use of land*: promote entrepreneurship, tourism and business settlement in order to create wealth, and create a marketable, competitive area. *In Latin America specifically:* Promote *recovery of heritage architecture* to promote tourism and improve the public image; *Liberalise real estate market* in order to increase housing supply and instigate repopulation	Promote *use-value*: create diverse, multiple-use spaces, involve community in production of space, respect right to appropriation for all; Address *structural issues*: improve service provision, create integrated city-wide approach to prevent moving problems, and improve socio-economic situation of e.g. street vendors rather than blaming them for their own disadvantage; Promote *community involvement*: include community in policymaking, conceive of residents as stakeholders with agency.

Annex 2

Table 4: Themes discussed in academic sources reviewed, and the stances taken towards them. A blank space signifies the theme was not discussed.

Themes / **Sources**	Language	Heritage preservation	Promotion of tourism	(Private-sector led) redensification strategy	Securitisation	Street vendor relocation	Degree of citizen participation / representation	Policy suggestion
Davis, 2007	Spanish			Critiqued	Critiqued	Observed		
García-Peralta & Lombard, 2009	English			Critiqued				Government regulation of land market, integrated planning vision
Vassalli & Sánchez, 2009	Spanish			Critiqued				Government regulation of land market
Fundación del CHCM, 2011	Spanish	Supported	Supported		Supported	Supported		
Müller, 2011	Spanish	Critiqued	Critiqued	Critiqued	Critiqued	Critiqued	Critiqued	Citizen participation
Monterrubio, 2011	Spanish			Critiqued			Critiqued	Inclusive housing policies, citizen participation
Becker & Muller, 2013	English				Critiqued	Critique		

Olivera & Delgadillo, 2014	Spanish		Critiqued	Critiqued		Observed		
Contreras, 2014	Spanish	Critiqued		Critiqued		Critiqued	Critiqued	Citizen participation
Parra, 2015	Spanish	Critiqued	Critiqued	Critiqued		Observed		Inclusive housing policies
Delgadillo, 2016A	English			Critiqued		Observed		
Delgadillo, 2016B	Spanish			Critiqued				
Crossa, 2016	English				Critiqued	Critiqued		
Nemeth-Chapa & Zetina-Rodríguez, 2017	Spanish	Observed	Critiqued	Critiqued	Observed	Critiqued		Focus on use-value

Annex 3

Table 5: Circumstantial, Value, Means-Goal and Goal premises for arguments vis-a-vis prominent urban regeneration themes by opposing discourses at different levels, and by Mexico City policy plan. Reading from left to right, the correspondence between the respective discourses' framings and that of the policy plan can be assessed, which is addressed in the rightmost column.
Note: the themes identified here differ slightly from those used at other points, because here the entire arguments relating to themes are dissected; for example, the promotion of tourism or the removal of street vendors, which constituted common points of criticism and therefore were identified as 'themes' earlier, are here placed in their context, wherein they constitute a Means-Goal premise towards the larger goals of, respectively, boosting the local economy (and thereby improving residents' socio-economic situation) and reordering public space

Discourse scale		**Global**		**Latin America**		**Mexico-***academia*		**Mexico-***media*		***Plan Integral de Manejo***	
Policy theme	*Discourse stream* / *Argument premise*	*Neoliberal*	*Social justice*	*Neoliberal*	*Social justice*	*Neoliberal*	*Social justice*	*Neoliberal*	*Social justice*	*Argumentation provided*	*Corresponds most with*
Heritage preservation	*Circum-stantial*	*Not discussed in literature used*		Tangible and intangible historical heritage exists, and is largely in decay	Tangible and intangible historical heritage exists, and is largely in decay; this heritage includes traditional practices such as street commerce	*Same as Latin American scale; the social justice discourse, here, provided criticism of the neoliberal argument premises on various different grounds, but still offered the same alternative framing of the as its Latin American-scale equivalent*		*Same as Latin American scale*	*Not discussed in sources used*	Tangible and intangible historical heritage exists, and is largely in decay	Neoliberal discourse stream; heritage preservation is argued to be desirable primarily because it is a good way to attract capital
	Value			Heritage should be preserved, and can function to attract myriad forms of capital	Heritage should be preserved, primarily for the enjoyment of residents					Heritage should be preserved, and can function to attract myriad forms of capital	
	Means-Goal			Invest in heritage preservation and promote its consumption	Invest in heritage preservation					Invest in heritage preservation and promote its (tourist) consumption	

	Goal			Preserve heritage, and make it profitable	Preserve heritage without 'musealisation' or commodification					Preserve heritage, and make it profitable	
Socio-economic situation	*Circum-stantial*	Local economy is weak	Residents do not benefit (enough) from economy at all scales	*Same as global scale; promotion of heritage-oriented tourism is a major component of the strategy for economic development here*	*Same as global scale*	*Not discussed in literature used*	*Same as global scale*	*Not discussed in sources used*	*Not discussed in sources used as primary focus of articles, but neglect of structural issues was critiqued at times, using same argument premises as global scale*	Local economy is weak, primarily due to abandonment, deterioration of heritage architecture and public space, and presence of street commerce	Neoliberal discourse stream; a problem framing at structural level is missing, meaning the framing of the situation does not at all correspond with the social justice discourse stream
	Value	Economic development benefits local population	Fruits of economic development should be distributed justly, at local, urban and national level							Economic development benefits local population	
	Means-Goal	Promote business settlement and real estate development	Create mechanisms for redistributing wealth, including at city level (not just neighbourhood level)							Promote tourism and real estate development, alongside actions of heritage preservation and repopulation	

	Goal	Boost local economy, trigger trickle-down effects	Improve residents' situation through redistribution of existing wealth							Boost local economy	
Demogra-phics	*Circum-stantial*	Homogeneous, low-income population	*Not considered as linked to urban disadvantage in literature used*	Population is too small due to abandonment	Population is too small due to abandonment	*Not discussed in literature used*	*Same as Latin American scale*	*Same as Latin American scale*	*Same as Latin American scale*	Population is too small due to abandonment	Both discourse streams; the document mentions both streams' preferred means to the end of repopulation
	Value	Local economy is supported by heterogeneous population		Disuse of buildings is undesirable (for myriad reasons)	Disuse of buildings is undesirable (for myriad reasons)					Disuse of buildings is undesirable (for myriad reasons, e.g. decay, breakdown of communities, insecurity)	
	Means-Goal	Diversify and upgrade housing stock		Encourage (private sector-led) housing development, deregulate housing market	Invest in development of social housing, regulate housing market					Encourage equitable housing development through both public and private sectors; promote active use of buildings	
	Goal	Create socially mixed community		Promote repopulation	Promote repopulation					Promote repopulation	

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Security/ crime</td><td>Circum-stantial</td><td>Disorder prevails, triggering crime (broken-windows thesis)</td><td>Structural socio-economic disadvantage and inequality leads to crime</td><td rowspan="4">Same as global scale</td><td rowspan="4">Only very briefly discussed in literature used, using same framings as global scale</td><td rowspan="4">Same as global scale</td><td rowspan="4">Not discussed as primary focus of article in sources used; nonetheless, mentioned at times in other articles through same problem/solution framing as at global scale</td><td rowspan="4">Same as global scale</td><td>Disorder prevails in public space, triggering crime</td><td rowspan="4">Neoliberal discourse stream; broken-windows thesis reasoning prevails</td></tr>
<tr><td>Value</td><td>Crime is encouraged by signs of disorder</td><td>Crime is caused primarily by social issues</td><td>Crime is encouraged by signs of disorder</td></tr>
<tr><td>Means-Goal</td><td>Maintain order by increasing surveillance</td><td>State provision of resources and services (besides other elements of urban regeneration)</td><td>Maintain order through police and citizen surveillance, and promote proper use of space (incl. street commerce relocation)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Goal</td><td>Prevent and reduce crime</td><td>Improve socio-economic situation of residents, thereby preventing and reducing crime</td><td>Prevent and reduce crime</td></tr>
</table>

Public space	*Circumstantial*	Public space is disorderly and aesthetically undesirable	Space is increasingly privatised and commodified, at times in the name of urban regeneration	*Same as global scale, with added component of the presence of street vendors, seen to contribute to disorder and unattractiveness of public space*	*Same as global scale*	*Same as Latin American scale*	*Same as global scale*	*Same as Latin American scale*	*Same as global scale, with specific focus on street commerce as legitimate use of space*	Public space is disorderly and aesthetically undesirable	Both discourse streams; argument premises from both streams are used and combined
	Value	Attractive public space has desirable consequences for reducing crime and attracting capital	Use value, diverse use and facilitation of appropriation of space should be prioritised							Attractive public space has desirable consequences for reducing crime, attracting capital and repopulation; besides, use value and diverse use of space are important	
	Means-Goal	Improve & aestheticise public space, encourage private sector investment	Regulate private-sector activity, create spaces for (and by) residents through public investment							Improve & aestheticise public space, primarily through public investment	
	Goal	Reduce crime, boost local economy	Increase use value of public space, thereby increasing quality of life							Reduce crime, boost local economy, and create better spaces for residents	

Citizen participation in policy-making	*Circum-stantial*	*Not discussed in literature used*	Policy and space are mostly produced by policy-makers	*Not discussed in literature used*	*Not discussed in sources used*	*Same as global scale*	*Not discussed in sources used*	Policy and space are mostly produced by policy-makers	Social justice discourse stream; the importance citizen participation in decision-making is emphasised and reasserted throughout the document
	Value		Citizens' right to participation in decision-making and production of urban space					Citizens' right to participation in decision-making and production of urban space	
	Means-Goal		Facilitate democratic decision-making					Facilitate democratic decision-making	
	Goal		Produce spaces for residents, by residents; warrant right to the city					Produce spaces for residents, by residents; warrant right to the city	