Discourses are more than representations of the world; they articulate “ways of thinking, behaving and, eventually, being" (Nicolini 2012, p. 190). The Foucauldian approach considers discourses to be subtle mechanisms of dominance producing and reproducing truths that frame reality and orient behavior in particular ways. This approach emphasizes the connection between discourses situated in a specific context and the larger social structures that frame them (Fairclough 1985). It also emphasizes the role of power in the production and reception of discourses and in perpetuating inequality (Van Dijk 1993).

Interpretive frames (in addition to categorizations, narratives, and metaphors) are structural properties of discourses that contribute to how they influence our perceptions and practices (Karlberg 2012). This means that similar discourses may express completely different meanings under different frames. So, frames can be understood as ways of organizing information and understanding the world. They determine what and how we see. They are unconsciously acquired and may be embedded in, produced by, and distributed through discourse. These frames include formulations and symbolizations based on particular sets of ideological representations: ways of talking are based on ways of seeing. Ways of talking and ways of seeing are inseparable since ways of seeing (social norms) are part of the 'knowledge base' that contributes to the orderliness of ways of talking (discursive norms) (Fairclough 1985).

The importance of discourses and frames in determining understandings (i.e. knowledge) of realities and ultimately orienting behavior is fundamental in the planning world, where theorists and practitioners are concerned with the translation of knowledge into action. This paper deals with discourses framed under neoliberalism that are produced and reproduced by a variety of actors. These discourses lead to specific actions while making other options unthinkable.

In particular, this paper critically analyzes discourses related to the production of exclusionary enclaves on the outskirts of a large city in Brazil. These discourses frame and reproduce truths that ultimately legitimize practices of exclusion. The analysis aims at identifying the implicit and explicit content and linguistic properties embedded in discursive practices that produce and reproduce features associated with macro social structures and ideologies such as neoliberalism. This requires analyses of micro written and verbal communication with a special focus on implicit propositions, linguistic structures, and naturalized ideologies that may be linked to macro social structures - reproducing, accepting, justifying, rationalizing, or challenging them.

Using data collected through participant observation, archival data, and interviews with urban designers, planners, public officers, developers, real estate agents, residents, academics, and community members, I conducted analyses fowling the critical discourse analysis (CDA) method (Van Dijk 1993 and Fairclough 1985) as well as the method utilized by Feldman and Almquist (2012) to reveal implicit messages. The findings from these analyses were considered under macro ideologies, particularly those pertaining to the social contest frame (Karlberg 2012).

I present two composite narratives that represent two dominant discourses enacted by actors who, despite having diverse professional and personal interests and backgrounds, reproduce similar discourses emphasizing the positive fiscal and environmental outcomes of these spaces. Then, I deconstruct both the content and structure of the narratives as to reveal implicit messages, taken for granted assumption, ideological frames, and linguistic properties that construct realities and orient actions in particular ways. For instance, structuring these discourses in terms of oppositions, specifically the dichotomy ‘problem vs. solution’ masks the complexity of the relationship and limits the emergence of alternative ways of seeing and doing.

The analyses also suggest that despite enacting similar discourses, actors’ motivations and feelings vary. The dominant discourses that legitimize the practices leading to the creation of exclusionary enclaves serve actors in different ways. Moreover, while some actors reproduce the discourses with a great level of confidence others express some frustration. Nevertheless, the content and structure of these discourses leaves little room for questioning and resistance.

The discussion of the findings presented here contributes to our understanding about how spaces with potential regressive outcomes (e.g., exclusionary enclaves) are created. More specifically, these findings reveal how knowledge is translated into action that might perpetuate inequality. They point to the importance of discursive practices, framing, and societal structures in shaping how we see, how we act, and ultimately what gets done in the city. In this particular case, the findings also reveal how dominant discourses legitimize practices of exclusion.

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