Cities in the making: social movements, neo-liberal urbanism and critical practices

A conversation with Margit Mayer

Margit Mayer is Associate Professor at the Center for Metropolitan Studies at Technische Universität Berlin and has taught comparative and North American politics at Freie Universität Berlin since 1990. Her research focuses on comparative politics, urban and social politics and social movements. She has published on various aspects of contemporary urban politics, urban theory, urban activism and social movements. She co-edited *Urban Movements in a Globalizing World* (with Pierre Hamel and Henri Lustiger-Thaler, 2000), *Cities for People not for Profit. Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City* (with Neil Brenner and Peter Marcuse, 2012), and *Neoliberal Urbanism and Its Contestations – Crossing Theoretical Boundaries* (with Jenny Künkel, 2011). Currently she is co-editing a volume on *Urban Uprisings: Challenging the neoliberal city in Europe*, and writing a monograph on urban social movements and the state. She serves on the board of the International Graduate Program 'Berlin-New York-Toronto' organized by the three Berlin universities. She served as editorial board member of *The International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, and on the Editorial Committee of the book series "Studies in Urban and Social Change" (Blackwell). She has won the 2014 RJ-AvH fellowship for Göteborg University, Sweden.

We asked Professor Mayer to reflect on the reshaping of social and urban movements, in Europe and elsewhere, in light of recent political and economic changes. In this extended conversation, Professor Mayer discusses the novelty of social movements as collective organisation of everyday life, the heterogeneity and uneven distribution of protest, the contradictions of urban policies, and the new faces of neo-liberal cities.

The global articulation of urban social movements that flourished in the wake of the financial crisis and the ensuing austerity measures – such as the Occupy movement, the *Indignados*, etc. – constitute one of the defining features of what you consider to be *new* forms of urban activism. What is new about the way protest is organized and perceived?

The taking to the squares as both a form of protest and a solidaristic way of organizing everyday life was new and shared from Egypt all the way to the US. The drivers within these heterogeneous mobilizations have mostly been the well-educated young without a future in today's societies.[1] Though aided and accelerated by the new digital technologies of social media,

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[1] Mike Davis pointed to a revealing contrast between the 1968 movements and the contemporary ones: "The campus rebellions of 1968 in Europe and the US were spiritually and politically fuelled by the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, guerrilla insurgencies in Latin America, the Cultural Revolution in China and the

the assembleas of the *Indignados* in Spain (from May throughout the summer of 2011), of the *Aganaktismenoi* in Greece, and the Occupy movement in the US invoked citizenship rights in the very classical, original sense of the *polis*. The original definition of the polis/city – going back to Aristotle – is not based on conventional features of the urban such as density, diversity, and intensity of interactions, but on collective decision-making in the exchange of opinions and in democratic structures. This has been a crucial ingredient of the movements' practice and their demands, a reaction to the repeated experience that their justice concerns have been shunned and ignored by the established 'democratic' structures. While this demand for "Real Democracy Now!" – "¡Democracia Real Ya!" - seems vague compared with demands of most conventional social movements, it has been precisely this openness, which has allowed for extremely heterogeneous groups of people to participate in the protests, thereby creating a basis for gradual politicisation through joint actions. In fact in Spain the 15M activists explicitly distanced themselves from political parties as well as unions of the Left in order to defend the openness of the situation, thereby redefining the meaning of political action – which did not, however, prevent the 15M from developing a sharp critique of the neoliberal regime, austerity politics, and the power of corporations, thus going far beyond the liberal conception of democracy.

Through the prefigurative practices developed in the collective organisation of everyday life on the squares and plazas of Greek, Spanish and US cities, as well as the countless direct actions planned and carried out from the camps (such as occupying party offices, blockading the parliament, protests at detention centres, rebuilding raided squares, etc.), the movements gained cohesiveness and legitimacy. Even though they were temporary practices, these experiences of creating what has been described as "miniature polis, a little city in the making" (Kimmelman on Zuchotti Park) had lasting impacts, even after the clearing of the squares. Because after their eviction, the movements spilled out into neighbourhoods, where they continued to invent, practice, and consolidate these new common spaces for socialization and political action, thereby sparking a new *process*, in which countless small initiatives have emerged that are interconnected and supportive of each other. In thousands of *Asambleas* and neighbourhood councils across Spanish and Greek cities people no longer confront the consequences of the crisis as atomized and isolated individuals but are collectively taking control of organizing their lives.

These self-empowering assemblies – in which experienced activists and people politicized for the first time in their lives have organized themselves together around problems of social reproduction – have led to various direct actions. For example in Greece, members of the

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ghetto uprisings in the US. Similarly, the *indignados* (...) have drawn primordial strength from the examples of Tunis and Cairo. In 1968, however, few of the white youth protesting in Europe (...) and the US shared the existential realities of their counterparts in countries of the South. Even if deeply alienated, most could look forward to turning college degrees into affluent middle-class careers. Today, in contrast, many of the protesters in New York, Barcelona, Athens face prospects dramatically worse than those of their parents and closer to those of their counterparts in Casablanca and Alexandria" (Davis, 2011: 4).

assembly would go around to households whose electricity had been cut-off due to non-payment of property tax, to reconnect them; thereby, they laid the groundwork for solidarity structures for years to come. After the 2012-2014 period of depression, many of the Greek movements made a strategic choice to reinforce their neighbourhood-oriented day-to-day work of mutual support and solidarity. They work in food kitchens, farmers markets, free markets to exchange clothing and other essentials, solidarity clinics, alternative schools, schooling for immigrants, and legal support to help people at risk of losing their homes, electricity and water – not only to organize much needed help and satisfy collective needs, but also to build self-managed spaces for public resistance against neoliberal politics and relations for changing the balance of forces against the existing exploitative structures (cf. Henley, 2015). While disillusionment with electoral politics after Syriza's policy U-turn in June 2015 has been widespread (the abstention rate in the September 2015 election was 45%), solidarity infrastructures have continued to grow. For example, there are now over 50 solidarity clinics in Greece, in Athens alone 15. Besides providing much-needed medical services, these self-organized clinics continue to pressure the government to provide better medical care and health care for all – including the undocumented. They fight against privatization of the health sector, but are also engaged in actions against racism and xenophobia, in refugee support activities and in campaigns for Kobane and Palestine. While locally organized in assembly structures, they are also networked nationally and across Europe with similar organizations.

This novelty, the building - through movement practice - of sustainable structures of solidarity, is illustrated even more spectacularly by the Spanish case. Two factors provided particularly conducive conditions: the extreme housing and foreclosure crisis created an enormous pool of *Afectados*, and many of the movements making up the *Indignados* shared a particularly autonomous, party-sceptical stance. When the housing bubble burst, beginning in 2007, Spain's foreclosure rates exploded (along with unemployment rates) and the number of evictions of people unable to pay their mortgages began to skyrocket. In response, the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) was created in 2009, and in 2011, PAH joined the coalition ¡Democracia Real Ya! in its call for the 15 May demonstration for a more participatory democracy no longer controlled by the two party system PSOE-PP. By late summer 2011 the assemblies of the 15M also decided to move their activities to the neighbourhoods and began to mingle more and more with struggles carried out by unions, social coalitions, and groups of the political Left – against cuts in health and education, labour market reforms, police brutality –, and other new groups – such as the *tides*[2] – have emerged in different sectors. Unlike in Greece, where Syriza had been formed out of pre-existing political parties, in Spain local electoral platforms were founded as a way to carry 'the spirit of the 15M' into the institutions: in 2014 a group around PAH spokesperson Ada Colau presented "Guanyem" (Catalan for "Let's win"), a grassroots initiative to develop a joint municipal program for Barcelona. The municipal elections in May 2015 brought a landslide: not only in Barcelona, where Barcelona En Comú

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[2] "Marea Blanca", the "White Tide", emerged at the end of 2012 against cutbacks in public health; the "Marea Verde" or "Green tide", in education.

won 25.2%, but also in Madrid (Ahora Madrid won 31.9 %), and in Valencia, A Coruña, Santiago, Ferrol, Zaragoza, and Cádiz alternative electoral platforms saw significant victories, gaining mayoralties and city council seats. The success of these municipal lists, as well as Podemos winning (primarily in urban areas with such open lists) overall 20% of the vote in the December 2015 elections, clearly rests on the broad mobilizations that people engaged in when they perceived that they *can* co-determine the politics to be implemented within their city.

Taking into account that, on the one hand, these movements have been consolidated and replicated on different scales in a sort of *globalization* of urban forms of activism – from China to Turkey, from Greece to Cairo –, and that, on the other, the political and social consequences of these protests are often unforeseen, do you think that we are, or will be, witnessing a "fear of protest(ing)", a banalization of protest or, on the contrary, its continuous re-adaptation?

While the novel protest forms I just described have indeed been broadly shared, the geography of protest is highly uneven, even within Europe, where the Northern European countries have seen far smaller and more short-lived versions of squares or occupy movements than Europe's South. Authoritarian regimes such as the ones in Egypt or Turkey seek to suffocate and repress all such forms of activism. Even Spain's last, conservative government passed, in July 2015, "La Ley Mordaza" to clamp down on precisely the *Asambleas*, eviction blockades, and protests near state institutions, i.e. the forms of urban activism that have been characteristic of the anti-austerity and real democracy movements. And France has used the Paris attacks of November 13 as pretext to control civil society and dissident movements. Any predictions as to how protests will develop in the future will have to take these varied local conditions into account, but I see neither a 'fear' nor a banalization of protest – rather that it will take different forms, harnessing whatever the local situation provides or allows for. While adversaries and targets are easier to identify and mobilize against in austere and repressive situations, presumably stable Northern European countries, where crisis consciousness is not as widespread, are less conducive to massive mobilizations and therefore see only scattered, small-scale activism – even if the political system may not be as repressive.

In your work, you argue that most activist mobilizations in the context of neoliberal urbanism in European cities are made up of two sides of a racialized and socially stratified barricade. How does this polarization translate into different 'languages' of protest – more radical, more pacifist, for example?

Indeed, in some of my earlier work I have highlighted the different strategic positions, which, for example, movements of 'urban outcasts', communities of colour, or informal workers occupy within the post-industrial neoliberal city, as opposed to movements made up of groups that manage to benefit in some ways from urban neoliberalization policies such as 'creative city' programs. Sub-cultural artists, creative workers, or even anarchist squatters have held some

leverage within such contexts, as city managers have seen them as charging their spaces with 'cultural capital', which, in the scheme of 'creative city' policy, then becomes transformed by investors into economic capital. Formerly squatted buildings, open spaces, and other 'biotopes', which countercultural activists spiffed up or precarious artists made interesting, have thus often been harnessed by clever city officials and (especially real estate) capital as branding assets that contribute to the image of 'cool cities' or 'happening places' (cf. Mayer, 2013 and 2016). This 'need' of cities to brand themselves as culturally vibrant in order to succeed in the interurban competition has bestowed such activists a certain leverage that they may use to gain concessions, as the actions of Hamburg activists to save the historic Gängeviertel have shown.[3] Movements driven by more or less precarious (sub)cultural activists have also flourished thanks to specific 'vacant space' or 'breeding ground' policies, but in the long run many either became incorporated after having secured their own (however 'politically correct') space, or were themselves displaced along with other residents who can no longer afford the up-scaled, pricier environment. Increasingly, due to the intensifying austerity policies, these comparatively privileged movement groups have themselves become more precarious, therefore the barricade is no longer clearly split or polarized in this way.

Instead, social stratification, while still characteristic, is becoming more fine-grained and capillary. The movements struggling for the needs and rights of marginalized and excluded urban residents have always held a less privileged strategic position: they have always confronted the repressive and punitive side of the neoliberal city, now with ever fewer integration or even activation programs held out for them. This side of the barricade has become even more heterogeneous than in the past, when it already spanned the very different life worlds of different immigrant communities, various racialized groups, and de-industrialized, informal, as well as low-wage workers and those locked out of the labour force altogether. As austerity policies intensified, their ranks have swelled to include the newly evicted due to foreclosures, as well as the newly indebted and other austerity victims, i.e. more and more formerly middle class groups, students, and people with college degrees but without (commensurate) employment. All of these newly asset-less groups are present in the new movements, their different socializations, cultural backgrounds, and political ideas frequently clashing as the assemblies reached out into neighbourhoods, schools, hospitals, and to direct actions at banks and protests around political institutions.

So what constitutes on the one hand a huge achievement when compared with earlier waves of urban movements – that more different groups from across the social spectrum are involved in anti-austerity struggles and movements for a more just city –, presents, on the other hand, unfamiliar and tough challenges, because the heterogeneity of backgrounds, socializations, and

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[3] The Hamburg government had already sold this historic cluster of buildings for upgraded and high culture use, but when around 200 activists and artists organized a weeklong event of exhibits, concerts, and performances, for which more than 3.000 people showed up and supported the demands to save the buildings for precarious cultural producers as well as for the community, it could not very well evict the squatters along with their art. After all, the city was branding itself as a centre of culture and the arts (cf. Not in Our Name/NION, 2009).

interests creates tensions and frictions in collaborating. It's not that specific social demographics or different degrees of exclusion correspond with specific (more or less radical) languages of protest. Rather, each local struggle reveals its own, specific challenge of schisms or distances in need of bridging, of differences in need of respecting. This point requires some examples to illustrate how social, cultural and economic inequalities within movements play out, revealing certain patterns across very different contexts.

When white, leftist Occupy activists took to black neighbourhoods to support families threatened by eviction, they were not always welcome. Communities of colour, many of whom "have been in this struggle for a long time", would view "anarcho-hippie kids" with their ideas of horizontalism, seemingly unstructured decision-making processes, and disruptive tactics as unhelpful to their situation of systemic deprivation and constant exposure to police violence (cf. King, 2012).[4] Many movement organizations in America's communities of colour have achieved some degree of stability on the basis of the classic community organizing model and its non-profit sector. A result of this has been, in the stark words of an observer, "to separate so many dedicated day-to-day organizers, now dependent on annual grants for their meagre salaries, from the wild-eyed, unkempt and often un- or underemployed who have historically been the conscience of progressive movements" (Gunderson, 2011). It takes a lot of collective effort, good will, joint practice, and mutual support – as is carried out across the US both in traditional community organizations such as Vida Urbana/City Life (in Boston) or Causa Justa/Just Cause (in Oakland/San Francisco)[5], as well as in newly formed ones such as Occupy Our Homes[6] – for the newer and older activists to actually get to know each other, respect their different cultural and social background, and identify collectively shared goals and practices.

Just how difficult the overcoming of such distances is has also been experienced – and analyzed - by German Right to the City (RttC) activists, who set out to support and mobilize low-income white and immigrant tenants in Wilhelmsburg, a de-industrialized district of Hamburg, which the city seeks to upgrade for valorization processes. Three scholar-activists describe the attempts of their group to politicize the conflicts triggered by the up-scaling and to support the low-income social housing residents against the city, the housing corporation, and against incoming gentrifiers in a recent journal of action research (Birke *et al.*, 2015). The difficulties start with local residents usually having a strong interest in stopping the downward spiral their neighbourhoods are caught in, so they tend to put up little resistance to upgrading strategies. The initiative Working Group on Urban Restructuring (AKU) constituted itself deliberately because this poor neighbourhood "lacked a voice by which to protest the displacement of less

4   Cf. People of Color/#OccupyWallStreet <http://pococcupywallstreet.tumblr.com/> or <http://groups.google.com/group/POC-working-group>. Also see http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/article/872003/%23ows_joins_with_muslim_groups_and_stop_stop_and_frisk_to_protest_nypd_in_nyc/#paragraph5
5 See http://www.clvu.org for the former and http://www.cjjc.org for the latter.
6 See http://occupyourhomes.org and http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=7792

well-off residents that was occurring within the context of gentrification processes" (Birke *et al.*, 2015: 197), but also to confront the city's marketing strategies. The group involved itself in a variety of the local conflicts (over the neglect and disrepair of these quarters and the terribly inadequate services provided by the social housing company), staged various campaigns together with the residents (many of whom had come to Germany as 'guest workers') against the housing company (which sold many of the buildings to a hedge-fund-directed real estate corporation), and in 2012 even addressed – together with the tenants – the city's politicians who claimed there was nothing they could do about the abysmal housing conditions, and thereby managed to give visibility to the tenants' demands: "persons otherwise not perceived as 'political' subjects began to speak for themselves." The group also succeeded in inserting the demands of these tenants' struggles into the RttC network, which by 2009 had become a city-wide reference point, but only now began to acknowledge "the hierarchies of visibility and spaces of articulation available" to different groups in the city (Birke *et al.*, 2015: 216-217). Still, at the end of the day the group managed to attract only few residents to neighbourhood meetings and to involve only few local residents in their campaigns and actions. The activists self-critically describe their lack of adequate language and the unintended result of finding themselves turned into the residents' "representatives" or "advocates" rather than building joint struggles in an egalitarian fashion.[7]

The encounters between newly politicized and seasoned activists have been more frequent and thus more widespread in the context of the massive mobilizations in Southern European cities, but this does not mean that bridging the distances between them has been that much easier. In fact, leftist activists who have immersed themselves in the solidarity kitchens, bazaars, and clinics in Greek cities, describe a similar dilemma to the one confronted by the Hamburg RttC activists. The Athens activists also critically write about these solidarity spaces that, "(a)lthough they have been important daily spaces of sharing and socialization for the assemblies, more often meeting the needs of participants in the first person was not their beginning. Instead, they were trying to fill the gaps created by the collapsing welfare state whether they had it as their goal or not" (SKYA, 2015). And in the actions against the property tax on electricity, they found that many people treated them as 'Robin Hoods', who would come and solve their problem "although in a direct and militant way" – as there have been many more emergency calls for reconnecting the electricity than people participating in the struggle against the property tax (SKYA, 2015).

In the first case the activists lament ending up "offering unpaid work for areas of social production from which the state withdraws itself instead of demanding the extension of the social wage in a militant way and with a class content" and thus "reproducing logics of

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'volunteerism in humanitarian terms' even if this is not our intention". Solidarity structures thus morph into forms of *self-managing of poverty* on a small scale. In the second case, the activists also found themselves unable to change the balance of forces, and, if not creating then intensifying residents' delegation of problem-solving to the militant "Robin Hoods".

Because political activists often – not only in Hamburg or Athens – find themselves in the unwanted role of experts, social workers or advocates, which makes it hard to build joint, egalitarian movements, a protest initiated by migrant tenants in Berlin is instructive on various accounts. This struggle around a former public housing district in the district of Kreuzberg reveals how the distances between equally heterogeneous groups may be bridged, and, as a result, the struggle may turn into a broad, city-wide mobilization, in this case to bring rents down. Just like in Wilhelmsburg, many of the residents in the social housing district around Kottbusser Tor are former guest workers from Turkey, who, over the years, have helped turn the former 'problem area' into an attractive 'multicultural' district. To protest the rising rents in their housing complexes, the tenants in May 2012 occupied, with a *gecekondu*, the public space in front of their houses, invoking the informal settlements sprouting overnight in Turkish cities. Named after the central square around which the housing complexes are concentrated, Kotti & Co. quickly found support from neighbours and activists, who would bring food and volunteer for night shifts at the *gecekondu*. They also made themselves heard with noisy demonstrations every Saturday and soon became recognized as activist citizens, intervening into local politics, with support from planners, housing experts and political groups. To underscore their demands, they formed alliances across large swaths of the city by building links and organizing joint actions with other tenant groups, anti-eviction activists, and squatters. And they used the public attention they received[8] to scandalize the rising rents in formerly social housing across Berlin. Similar to PAH, the Kotti & Co activists have added legal counselling for problems with landlords and problems with the welfare office to their repertoire, and also mobilized for a public referendum on keeping housing affordable. The huge success in collecting signatures – the referendum garnered more than 45.000 signatures in support, where only 20.000 were required – pushed politicians to develop their own (watered down) law to keep rents under control.

But more remarkable even than the political success are the egalitarian relations this organization has been able to build, both internally and with its allies and other movements. First, the members of Kotti & Co dealt with differences amongst themselves. The core group being very diverse – some are religious, others socialists, there are Jews, Muslims, and atheists, some live conservative family lives, others are queer, some are academics, others carpenters, there are disputes and conflicts, e.g. about politics in Turkey – has learned to respect these differences, and build their politics on the basis of a consensus that rejects racism and high

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[8] Not just local but also national and international media have reported on the group (cf. http://kottiundco.net/kleine-presseschau/), and its activities have been documented in the films *Rent Rebels* (http://theprotocity.com/filming-cities-mietrebellen-rent-rebels/) and *Miete essen Seele auf* (http://www.weltfilm.com/de/filme/in-produktion/miete-essen-seele-auf).

rents. The next step was building bridges to other movement groups and progressive communities in Berlin. They found that joint campaigns and projects with 'classical' urban activists have become feasible on the basis of the fact that precarization increasingly shapes the living and working conditions of more and more formerly middle-class based groups, and that the problem of the high rents affects a majority of Berliners.

These cases illustrate how, in different cities, neoliberal urbanism has harmed and, increasingly, also mobilized broad sets of constituencies, each with their own organizing potential and their specific challenges. Aside from showing the necessity of overcoming reservations about each other's lifestyles, motivations, and interests, each situation also exhibits a pattern where political activists need to reconfigure their assumptions about how to build and grow movements. What role militant *vs.* pacifist repertoires, or different languages of protest, will play in this will be secondary to developing mutual respect for the reality and lived experience of each group: while for some political activists resorting to riotous action is just one of many tools within a broad action repertoire at their disposal, people of colour, informal labourers, or other stigmatized groups have good reason to avoid exposing themselves to aggressive security tactics, as their everyday existence is already vulnerable to excessive police violence. But when police killings occur in a context of systematic and racist harassment, spontaneous rioting may become an effective way to draw attention to their concerns, and has thus been labelled as the "language of the unheard" (cf. Katz, 2008; Thörn *et al.,* 2016).

As you have noted, one of the dominant features of city movements today is the strategic appropriation of their principles and rhetoric by the state and local administration. Does this political appropriation run the risk of emptying out the demands voiced by these social movements?

No, because only those principles and practices are hijacked that can be made useful within the neoliberal city (and even those get reconfigured in the process): countercultural, nonconforming, or insurgent practices for the "creative city"; multicultural, informal, open and tolerant rhetoric for the "open city"; ecological, *buen vivir* and environmental principles for the middle class-oriented "green" (or "resilient") city; precarious, 'poor but sexy', bohemian lifestyles for the "pleasure city", etc. But the demands for real democracy, an end to social inequality and polarization, curtailing the power of finance capital and large corporations, and even the demands to end racism and police violence are not taken over.

The fact that the list of norms and principles that have been usurped by the neoliberal project (and incorporated into neoliberal urbanism) is quite long (many more examples could be added to the list just mentioned) is a tribute to its capacity to tap into the post-1960s common sense, in which values such as cultural pluralism, autonomy, self-realization, individual freedom and self-determination have become prevailing ethical commitments. But since the (original) movements' demands do not envision these values to be realized in the context of competition

and entrepreneurship (where the 90% have to go into debt in order to "self-realize"), they will never be emptied out within this market system.

However, even the more limited demands voiced, for example, by cultural activists often do not lead to pacification, as the struggle over Hamburg's Gängeviertel referred to above illustrated. In many cities and also internationally, cultural producers have organized and struggle against the abuse of artists' professional integrity and the infraction of their labour rights. For example ArtLeaks organizes workshops and assemblies and provides the community with online tools available on http://art-leaks.org/. In Berlin, more than 2.000 cultural producers, curators and representatives of the local art, culture and educational institutions signed a manifesto demanding a public debate on the politics of urban development "within the context of the current transformation process of privatization and commercialization of public space" (Haben und Brauchen, 2012). Organizations such as Haben und Brauchen, which rally mostly around their material and professional interests as cultural workers, are increasingly concerned – in spite of their bargaining power and the sporadic concessions cultural workers receive – with their constituents' precarity. Other organizations, e.g. those embedded in the RttC network, go beyond their own interests and include the struggle against the growth-oriented entrepreneurial policy agendas that city managers pursue, explicitly rejecting policies formulated in their name (cf. Not in Our Name/NION, 2009).

The case of creative/cultural workers and the social movements they engage in is interesting as it reveals the ambiguity of dissent in the context of neoliberal urbanism. The very asset that bestows creatives the leverage and bargaining power in negotiations with city governments also demarcates its limitations: While the provision of affordable accommodation for artistic uses has become a widely applied and celebrated policy, "non-creative" labour is becoming even more marginalized and downgraded. Groups, whose space-making practices municipalities are *not* interested in, become seen as having no legitimate claim to the right to the city and become even more stigmatized. Since a key indicator of 'successful' creative city strategies consists in decreasing vacancy rates and increasing land prices, it is intrinsic to these strategies that they trigger the commercialization/sanitation of such neighbourhoods and the displacement of low-income earners – including members of the creative class. Thus, when creative city strategies "work", i.e. land prices increase, they eventually displace the very creative people they were supposed to foster, but even more rapidly the various vulnerable groups immediately affected by the austerity side of neoliberal urbanism: precarious and undocumented workers, the unemployed and homeless, and other groups who are deemed to have no 'assets' to contribute to aspiring vibrant cultural cities.

The city of Barcelona has recently been the stage of a protest where people opposed urban public policies and demanded "their" city back from its "commodification" for touristic consumption. Do you see this as another example of protests feeding on the motto "city for people and not for profit"?

Yes, absolutely! Since many cities nowadays compete to attract not just investors and wealthy and "creative" classes, but also tourists as a means to spur growth, particularly the "successful" ones have seen not merely an enormous influx of visitors, but the transformation of whole neighbourhoods due to mass tourism and the service expanding infrastructures around it. Blessed with its Mediterranean location, good weather, famed cuisine, exciting nightlife, and a lively counterculture, Barcelona has been particularly successful in drawing on the tourism market. Local politicians have nourished this development not just with supports for the transportation infrastructure and the food industry in order to expand mass tourism, but also by branding Barcelona as ideal location for the work/play interests of trade delegates, conference goers, and footloose yuppies on the look-out for attractive work-vacations. The municipality has installed city-wide wireless, and the cheap (i.e. low-wage) service sector is able to cater to all the cultural, gastronomic and entertainment wishes the different types of tourists might have. The impacts on urban space and the daily life of locals have been primarily negative, triggering protests against these boosterist tourism policies that prioritize profit and neglect the needs of the city's inhabitants (as vividly documented in the film Bye Bye Barcelona, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdXcFChRpmI&feature=iv&src_vid=eH7GBl_m-oU&annotation_id=annotation_726162499). Residents are losing their neighbourhoods, their city, their public spaces (which locals had frequently fought for in bitter struggles against the construction boom of the 1980s and 90s) to tourists, to a model that is to generate profit. Even countercultural and radical places and milieus become tourist attractions, and are marketed as commodities – from murals to squatted buildings, from Hamburg's Gängeviertel to Berlin's squatted buildings.[9] So, yes, the movements against the touristification of specific cities indeed also feed on the motto "cities for people not for profit" and reveal the same ambiguous pattern of dissent, as I described above, with regard to your question about the strategic appropriation of movement demands.

In many European cities, public policies devised around the banner of the "creative cities" brand – with its festivalization, creative capital and creative industries jargon – have geared towards the "entrepreneurial cities" lexicon – with its start-up labs, co-working spaces, etc. While this can be considered, as many authors do, as one and the same thing, how do you think this relates to a sort of re-fashioning of neoliberal semantics?

The term "entrepreneurial city" has been around for quite some time: it was first coined by David Harvey (1989), then Tim Hall and Phil Hubbard edited a multidisciplinary analysis of this new form of city governance, entitled *The entrepreneurial city. Geographies of politics, regime and representation*, in 1998. Bob Jessop's chapter in this book ("The narrative of enterprise and

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[9] Cf. the conference "Protest and Resistance in the Tourist City" held in Berlin in 2014 [https://www-docs.tu-cottbus.de/fakultaet2/public/planungstheorie/Veranstaltungen/141103_P%26R_Info%26Schedule.pdf] organized by Claire Colomb and Johannes Novy and their forthcoming eponymous book).

the enterprise of narrative: place-marketing and the entrepreneurial city") did a great job in pointing out the systemic contradictions and constraints of this model (Jessop, 1998: 77-104). But this – and similar – critique/s have not stopped the widespread adoption of 'creative city' policies by city managers especially in de-industrializing regions. Instead, creativity has become a key concept globally signalling urban competitiveness, and a broad array of measures – from attracting knowledge-intensive services to subsidizing cultural and creative economies – were designed to foster a concentration of firms and activities in the areas of new media, new technologies, fashion, advertisement, tourism and cultural industries. Since not every city has the necessary assets to start out with, a new breed of urbanists has even emerged seeing an opportunity to develop – and sell – new policy tool kits to city managers confronted with the problems of economically ailing cities. While Charles Landry (2000) focused on the creative talents of indigenous, existing populations, which, if appropriately supported, he claimed could revitalize a city's public and social life, Richard Florida (2002) promised that, with the right tools, any city could become a creative city. Unlike with Landry's model, Florida's creative class was to be attracted from elsewhere, and for that, he argued, a city must be vibrant, diverse, and have an attractive cultural infrastructure – then jobs would follow. Both have made impressive consulting careers out of selling their 'advisory services' to cities around the world. City governments around the globe have come to define the construction of a "creative economy" as policy goal and have come to invest in "soft infrastructure" such as galleries, cafes, juice bars, bike paths, etc., as well as in programs seeking to keep artists and cultural workers in high-cost inner cities either by subsidizing their work spaces or allowing them to "squat" for limited periods in real estate in areas of transition, thus helping to prepare such sites for more lucrative uses. Since most of these kinds of investments are far cheaper and seem to bring results more easily and faster than investing in hard infrastructure such as luxury apartment towers, office buildings or freeways, the concept of the "creative city" came to be seen as a "quick fix" to problems of urban disinvestment.

Though we don't have comprehensive data to support the effectiveness of this strategy, local leaders everywhere are now preoccupied with culture: both, culture as a productive force bringing in those economy-rescuing "creatives", and culture as critical component of the "soft infrastructure" which is today a "must have" requirement in order to compete for mobile capital, jobs, upwardly mobile middle classes, and tourist spending. Different cities have different unique aspects of the material and symbolic landscape within their boundaries that become identified as radiating the "indigenous authenticity" necessary for attracting tourists, investors, or upwardly mobile groups such as tech workers for start-ups. As discussed above, local art scenes and urban underground cultures play big roles in city place-marketing campaigns as well as interim uses that get promoted and officially institutionalized into urban growth strategies. In addition, cities with universities and culturally vibrant neighbourhoods, such as Berlin and Barcelona, also directly subsidize start-up labs and co-working spaces in the hopes of thereby providing fertile conditions for tech sector growth. IT workers become increasingly concentrated in such culturally stimulating neighbourhoods, where they end up disrupting and displacing the

existing vibrant fabric – as the struggles over the San Francisco model have shown, where Silicon Valley tech workers have turned the Mission district into their playground. Neoliberal urbanism thrives on cultural creativity, but tends to destroy it – unless urban movements emerge, again and again, to defend and protect 'cities for people' and prevent covetous capital from ruining them.

Questions by Joana Mayer

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