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ID 1451 | CITY UNSILENCED: PUBLIC SPACE AND URBAN DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL SABINE KNIERBEIN

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1 NEW PLACES OF URBAN SOLIDARITY AND RESISTANCE

Around the world, the shrinking capacity of (formal) democratic process has left protesters and ordinary citizens with no other resort than to take to the streets, the emblematic space of the publics, for reinstating democracy. Shrinking democracy, coupled with economic restructuring, constitutes an underlying challenge facing cities and communities around the world. Public space, as a building block and medium of political engagement and social interactions, may represent an alternative space and a vehicle of resistance against systems of shrinking democracy. In its capacity as a vehicle for active democracy, public space in contemporary society deserves greater care, attention, and critical reflection. As movements evolve to confront new challenges, explore new opportunities, negotiate with new actors and circumstances, and utilizing new technologies and platforms, our understanding of the role and agency of public space as lived and political space must also advance.

This is precisely the objective of exploring the linkages between urban resistance and public space in the age of shrinking democracy. With this work and others to follow, we continue to explore public space as sites of renewed hope and possibilities in the quest for a more just, enduring, and democratic urban(ized) society.

2 EXPLORING URBAN RESISTANCE TACTICS AND THEIR SPATIALITY 2.1 SHRINKING DEMOCRACY

It was not too long ago that (liberal) democracy as a political system and preferred form of governance seemed to be an unstoppable force around the world. In what he calls democracy's third wave, Huntington (1993, p. 3) estimated that at least 30 countries made transition to democracy between 1974 and 1990, "just about doubling the number of democratic governments in the world." Prior to that, 36 countries were governed democratically in 1962 (ibid.). By the mid-1990s, the triumph of democracy, and human rights around the world were celebrated by liberal political leaders, scholars and activists (Alagappa, 2004). With the collapse of Berlin Wall, Fukuyama (1989) famously declared the "end of history" suggesting that the advent of Western liberal democracy had marked the endpoint of the sociocultural evolution in human history.

Today, such a hopeful and partly romantic view of political emancipation and democratic governance seems dampened by the influence of technocrat governance regimes and multinationals without clear oversight and direct accountability (Wilson and Swyngedouw, 2015). Under processes of economic globalization, democratic states have succumbed to increasing global competition, transnational flows of capital and labour, and policies that steadily dismantled regulations and institutions that once provided necessary social support and stability for societies, as well as opportunities for democratic participation and political accountability (Peck and Tickell, 2003). At the supranational scale, global entities such as the IMF, World Banks, WTO, and myriad other such organizations have "uploaded various state functions from the national scale" (Smith, 2009, p. 6), thus weakening democratic control at the state. Under processes of globalization, Low (1997, p. 242) argues, "a politics of place no longer seems possible at the scale of the national state."

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, instead of traditional state institutions, cities and regions are now governed by what Swyngedouw (2010, p. 5) describes as "a proliferating maze of opaque networks, fuzzy institutional arrangements, with ill-defined responsibilities and ambiguous political objectives and priorities." Decisions affecting local communities are being made from an unknown distance, behind closed doors, by networks of actors and entities, under laws, practices, and loopholes beyond the comprehension of ordinary citizens. Local democratic processes are only as effective as electing politicians who have limited power under a system that operates above the local institutions.

Participatory democracy and oversight, to the extent that it has existed, is replaced or hollowed out by new alliances of political and commercial interests. Healey (2010, p. 69) calls this "a kind of network governance, in which linkages are developed between some key government arenas," which makes it much more difficult to identify where decisions are located, resulting in a loss of spatial transparency. Likewise, Swyngedouw (2010, p. 2-3) argues that urban governance has shifted so profoundly in the beginning of the 21st century that a new form of governmentality has risen, "one that is predicated upon new form and informal institutional configurations – forms of governance that are characterized by a broadening of the sphere of governing, while narrowing, if not suspending, the space of the properly political." Or, as Merrifield (2014, p. viii) has put it: "One of the defining features of democracy in modern times is its lack of democracy."

2.2 ARMAMENT OF PUBLIC SPACE

Cities have indeed become an important site in which processes and outcomes of de-politicisation can be witnessed, including shrinking democracy and evidences of restrictions for public life. Mayer outlines four dimensions of this new urban formation: (1) a process of urban upgrading driven by global developers and international investors; (2) gentrification-led restructuring of urban centres; (3) marketization of cities through branding, festivalization, mega events, and attraction of creative industries; and (4) the concurrent outsourcing of manufacturing to the Global South, coupled with the post-industrial cities of the North becoming "the playgrounds for the upper classes, serviced by armies of downgraded and increasingly precarious workers" (ibid. 2013, p. 9).

In the context of accelerating competition between city-regions and in effort to attract investment and capital, regulations have been relaxed and subsidies have been doled out to developers and investors. "Geobribes," Smith (2003, p. 80-81) argues, have been paid by the city to global corporations to attract

their investment. Healey (2010) notes that instead of responsible representatives of citizen's concerns, politicians are being "buttressed by self-interested officials and lobby groups, distanced from people's everyday lives." In some East Asian cities, including Taipei and Hong Kong, for example, city governments or redevelopment authorities have become complicit in expropriating properties for developers and bulldozing entire neighbourhoods under the banner of urban renewal.

In the decades since 9/11, the policing of city, cityscapes, and citizens has been further heightened by hyper-security measures including surveillance and control of both physical public spaces and cyberspaces that are meant to prevent and counter terrorist attacks (Low and Smith, 2006). In the United States, Europe and some Latin American countries, municipal police now increasingly resemble paramilitary forces with high-grade gears and equipment. In addition, zero-tolerance techniques have in turn been deployed by police forces around the world (Smith, 2003), and have been widely criticized by urban scholars for their ethno- racist bias and discriminative impact (Cahill et al., 2017). British police, for instance, has employed the use of drones to track down what they identify as "socially deviant behaviour", thus equivocally rendering any type of public encounter an eventual meeting of 'potential suspects' and perverting the original meaning of public space as a crossroads where an encounter in difference may take place every day. In times of shrinking democracy, security measures are increasingly used against not only potential terrorist threats but also political dissent as protests and occupation are quickly dispersed, or prevented in the first place. For example, anti- terrorist laws have been used against housing and anti-gentrification activists in post-Katrina New Orleans, environmental opponents of London Heathrow Airport expansion, and even Critical Mass gatherings (Smith, 2009). In Istanbul, many of the Gezi park activists face court trials, bearing firsthand the effects of the criminalization of active democratic practice.

So, are we not living in democratic societies anymore? Yes, and no. Democracy may still exist, and its formalities are perhaps no less than before, as evident in elections, council assemblies, public meetings, ballot measures, and other remaining institutional arrangements. The challenge before us is that such exercises, the actually existing democracy, appear to be empty, ineffective, and no longer sufficient or adequate in holding the hegemonic economic and political dynamics accountable at either the local, urban or state level. The clash between everyday needs and political systems which have lost a spatial connection to lived space or that manufacture new patterns of how everyday life should be enacted have become part of the problems facing urban societies around the world.

2.3 URBAN RESISTANCE AND PUBLIC SPACE

With communities displaced, jobs lost, pensions evaporated, cost of living rising, citizens harassed and killed by the police, and with no effective or available democratic process to hold back and reverse these trends, it is not surprising that communities in cities around the world are taking to the streets, squares, plazas, and other types of lived space to voice their grievances and to demand specific local policy changes in concert with global attempts to rearticulate general political mores. From mass assemblies in Brazilian cities, to occupation of the state capital building in Madison, Wisconsin, and protests in cities across Europe ordinary citizens have been engaged in a new wave of passionate protests and embodied resistance. Cities, it seems, have become again a catalyst for struggles to maintain, renew, and establish the democratic project, as it is here where the material impacts of abstract policies so viscerally materialize.

Public space, indeed, has been central to recent movements. But public spaces are also important in the recent struggles in a different sense as the public realm has been not only the site but also the subject of contestation and struggles against neoliberal development and policies. As Mitchell and Staeheli (2006, p. 144) note, "as cities redeveloped, public space has become a key battleground (...) over the homeless and the poor and over the rights of developers, corporations, and those who seek to make over the city in an image attractive to tourists, middle- and upper-class residents and suburbanites." Public spaces increasingly redeveloped to maximize values of surrounding properties. They are often privatized or managed through so- called public-private partnerships to offload cost of operations from municipalities strapped by austerity measures. As such, public spaces today face not only increasing control for order and security but also threats from financial interests from both municipalities and corporations.

As public spaces come under pressure, they also serve as a vestige of active democracy—a space of expression, mobilization, and contestation. However, the altering role of public space in the changing

urban resistance remains under-theorized and poorly understood. Specifically, for many movement scholars, space remains primarily as a backdrop to discussion of movement strategies, tactics and larger structural factors facing resistance movements. For planning and design professionals responsible for the making of contemporary public space, protests and resistance are far from their project focus. In the worst scenarios, their work is often intended to facilitate surveillance and control, if not to deter mass assemblies in the first place. For planning and design scholars focusing on public space, there remains much more work to be done in unpacking the role of public space in supporting and engendering active democracy, e.g. through understanding the connections between urban movements and planning, or between urban resistance and planning. Frank and Fuentes (1990, p. 142), for instance, argue, “[a]lthough social movements are more defensive than offensive and tend to be temporary, they are perhaps the most important agents of social transformation...” It is this capacity for social transformation that, we argue, suggest the direction for a new, emancipatory politics of public space, and a scrutiny of the role that planners and designers could contribute to support the spatial emergence of roots for emancipatory politics.

It was precisely with this in mind that this research has brought together a diverse group of scholars (marked in the reference list with *) from different backgrounds doing research on diverse cases of urban resistance and solidarity in South America, Asia, Europe and North America. The paper draws on empirical findings from 16 cities, analysed through the prisms of diverse disciplines related to planning theory and urban studies. We look for resistance movements that share a common struggle against neoliberal policies and shrinking democracy but with different linkages to the notion and material manifestation of lived space.

3 SPATIAL GROUNDS OF RE-DEMOCRATISATION

In this section, we specifically examine four aspects in which public space serves as nodes of critical actions and reflections: (3.1.) public space as sites of mobilization and negotiation, (3.2.) public space as spaces of contestation and learning, (3.3) public space as space of rescaling and re-politicizing, and (3.4) public space as grounds of alter-politics.

Although scholars tend to situate the ascension of global resistance to patterns of neoliberal urbanism in 2011, “the year of dreaming dangerously” (Žižek, 2012), urban contestations against modes of neoliberal urban restructuring have been unfolding well before then. In Athens, civic uprisings against the upgrading, commercialization and privatization of public space against the backdrop of beautifying the city for the Olympic Games 2004 were already visible during the 1990s. On the other side of the globe, Santos examines the resistance by citizens of Cochabamba, Bolivia’s third largest city where citizens successfully rallied against the privatization of water and the consequent increase in water consumption costs between December 1999 and April 2000. The five-month resistance involved tens of thousands of protestors who ultimately succeeded in the de-privatization of a World Bank concession that was issued with the municipality in 1997 (Santos, 2007 (2000)). In 2001, Argentina was heavily shaken by an economic crisis in which the Piqueteros movement of unemployed factory workers (now unemployed due to flexibilization of labour patterns, e.g. in the global car industry) gained momentum, leading to massive acts of urban resistance and to the first signs of horizontal and collective organization against a neoliberal regime put in place under the Military Junta in the 1970s and 1980s (Rosa and Vidosa, 2017, Lorey, 2014). In South Africa, the Western- Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, initiated in 2001 served “as an umbrella body for a number of community organizations, crisis committees, and resident groups that emerge in Cape Town’s poor townships to resist [...] evictions and service cut-offs and demand their rights to shelter and basic services” (Miraftab, 2009, p. 36). These earlier sparks of resistance against discriminatory, exclusive, and often racialized practices under neoliberal policy regimes have been globally recognized. This scholastic blind spot regards large tracts has disregarded broad ranges of urban scholarship, empirical evidence, and theoretical framing for understanding grassroots insurgency against neoliberal governance and has (un)intentionally reified of such protest being ephemeral and episodic where challenges to neoliberal cultural or economic exports are diminished as growing pains to be overcome as a country or city undergoes neoliberalization, i.e. the introduction and implementation of neoliberal policy agendas. This two-pronged problem normalizes resistance in the context of a naturalized neoliberalism and significantly undercuts our ability to be critical practitioners and citizens.

In the light of these examples, 2011 can be conceived rather as a culminating point when resistance in the Global South spilled over to the North, reflecting the enhanced material inequalities related to the neoliberal policies. In particular, the global economic crisis in 2008 had further exacerbated the decline of employment, continued the decay of welfare states, and posed serious challenges to the dismantling of speculative housing investments all around the world. However, the impact of the neoliberal model cannot be framed in only economic or material terms, as its social, cultural and political dimensions have reached far beyond what is calculable and palpable. Contemporary interpretations of neoliberalism argue it has actively produced a political crisis where its capacity for economic predation has hindered civic control and responsiveness (Monbiot, 2016). Such mitigations can be seen in the reduced ability of voting to change political course, the conflation of civic advancement with capitalistic advancement, and growing acceptance of neoliberalism across the political spectrum, which further enhances voter disenfranchisement and the exploration of viable alternatives (ibid.).

As a result of fundamental social, economic and political changes, basic urban routines have become unsettled. Increasing urban inequalities in cities around the world is furthered by the de-politicization of politics through consensus-based liberal democracy; this has shut out citizens and left decisions to government managers, politicians, and specialists operating in a multilevel governance where actors who have not been democratically legitimated can increasingly assume power (Wilson and Swyngedouw, 2015). Meanwhile, as economic stability plummeted, discontent directed at the commodified nature of public life and public space has increased, as more and more educated, formerly middle-class individuals and groups joined the so-called urban subaltern (Bayat, 2010; Roy and Ong, 2011). But, is this the primary narrative to understand why we currently witness a new continuity of public space-based resistance? Hasn't public space always been a frontier between class interests, and a field for struggle against all sorts of inequality?

Public space has come into focus during recent struggles where the restructuring of multiple interrelationships between civil society, state, and markets unfolds. As part of this restructuring, we see increased attention to the roles that cities play, as the (conception of) modern nation-state faces a crisis (Appadurai, 1996). With focus on the crisis facing the modern nation-state, the political formation of many Western liberal democracies is receiving more criticism. As Mouffe (2000) has stated, liberal democracy has always been based on a democratic paradox between the liberal and the democratic strands of political thought: "On one side we have the liberal tradition constituted by the rule of law, the defence of human rights and the respect of individual liberty; on the other the democratic tradition whose main ideas are those of equality, identity between governing and governed and popular sovereignty. There is no necessary relation between those two distinct traditions but only a contingent historical articulation." (ibid., p. 2-3)

The paradoxical dynamic between freedom (liberal tradition) and equality (democratic tradition), which the Keynesian welfare state was still able to generally maintain, contributed to the fact that sporadic civil unrest would not gain global momentum or permanence during more recent welfare-state provisions, as the social material well-being was still secured in the Western world (Purcell 2009). This sustained paradox has been accompanied by another dilemma (cf. ibid., p. 144f), i.e., liberal democracies have long been adept at managing and legitimating social inequality. Their characteristic separation of the public and private spheres allows them to claim the existence of a formal political equality even when manifest social inequality is present. Under Keynesian policies, that equality deficit was mitigated by significant material redistribution and the meaningful inclusion of organized labour in public decision-making. Yet those accommodations were central targets of the neoliberal agenda and were significantly eroded. As a result, neoliberalism has increasingly exacerbated this democratic deficit that has long troubled liberal democracy (ibid.).

With the rise of neoliberal policies, an imbalance between liberty and equality has been created with a strong focus on liberty, while issues of equality have been increasingly neglected (Mouffe, 2000). In order to maintain its form of governance, the neoliberal political economy needs to actively modulate the political and social instability and crises it generates: That is why neoliberal policy agendas and their makers increasingly seek to link their goals and projects with democracy (Purcell, 2009). To solve this frustration, community development with a focus on public space—the 'soft spaces of neoliberalism' (Houghton et al., 2013; Lebuhn, 2017)—has in many cases operated as an essential enabling moment for neoliberal projects. In the field of planning and designing for public spaces in particular, formal participatory modes of communicative and collaborative planning have been applied that often tend to use consensus-building

and majority-decisions, while bearing the risk to (in)advertently flatten the contradicting voices (often of minority or marginalized groups) calling for a more radical and egalitarian democratic project and reality (Purcell, 2009).

As more economic and political pressure is put on public space, accompanied by social and ethnic polarizations, it comes as no surprise that the realm of public life is the territory where one can witness intensified class reconfigurations, discrimination, and societal struggles (Tyler, 2015). Tensions in public space, in this sense, need to be understood as seismographs of an over-accelerated and fragile neoliberal political economic model. This model has undermined the long history of urban commoning and has rendered public space a highly competitive field. In this field, political parties dominate representational space and access to voters; companies strive for higher revenues or civic legitimization; and civil society seeks reorientation in a landscape of power in which 'the political' tends to become absent. It is in this context that acts of public space based resistance need to be examined, as they not only disrupt the neoliberal taming of public life but also reinvigorate deep relationships between public space and lived democracy.

3.1 PUBLIC SPACE AS SITES OF MOBILIZATION AND NEGOTIATION

The use of public space as a site of mobilization and negotiation is one of the main processes that occurred in cases throughout our research. Cities are where the material impacts of neoliberal governance on the social lives of many dwellers becomes noticeable, as a critical mass of people not only take actions but also engage in a deeper understanding of the changes occurring in their society and ways to mobilize and find voice. Recent acts of urban resistance have brought a new generation of protestors to light, people who have never before been active in street (or other types of) politics, including groups that usually would have moral values and positions quite opposite from one another, e.g. LGBT representatives and conservative Muslims (Yiğit Turan, 2017) or left- and right-wing activists forming political coalitions (Kaika and Karaliotas, 2017).

These recent instances of urban resistance combine a place-based and context-specific approach to resistance with new ways of political identity formation through horizontal and worlded networks (Knierbein and Gabauer, 2017) and more global claims for egalitarian democracy (Kaika and Karaliotas, 2017). Meanwhile, a belief in the power of open dissent, civil disobedience, and active resistance against (quasi)authoritarian forms of governing is gaining force. Consensual solutions have found a smaller impact on changing the political landscapes as a new power balance between mainstream society and increasing minority power in diverse cities challenges consensual deliberation as hegemonic tool of majorities to govern minorities and marginalized groups. Within diverse groups consensus is practiced along with dissent as a valuable form of decision-making. In some cases, power structures inherent in the group (formation) are explicitly reflected and reworked, indicating the active presence of negotiation (Lorey, 2014).

Horizontality as a mode of mobilization, observed in the Latin American movements in 2001, has become a prevalent and effective strategy to self-organize and to develop new forms of resistance (ibid). It involves reflexive social regulations, new forms of organizing, and new modes of subjectivation, which might ideally lead to a collective and affective form of relations among protestors, while being used as an instrument for creating a social space in which participants feel empowered to speak and take part in common challenges. This is a space in which privileges and inequalities can be consciously addressed, and heterogeneity in the manner of speaking and in the opinions expressed has to be endured: Horizontal self-organization opens up a process in which conflicts and differences are not negated, but must be first recognized (ibid). It is important to note, though, that structural discrepancies are still enmeshed in these forms of horizontal mobilization. Specifically, there is a danger that horizontality and urban resistance mobilization might run risk of nurturing types of mimicry-resistance that are not progressive or striving for radical democratization at all, but try to interrupt communities and collectivization through pursuing a politics of fear (Knierbein and Gabauer, 2017). In these cases, urban resistance is instrumentalized by anti-democratic groups by fortifying boundaries between populations of different religions, cultures, ethnicities, classes, or gender (Chen and Szeto, 2017; Owens and Antiporda, 2017).

3.2 PUBLIC SPACE AS SPACE OF CONTESTATION AND LEARNING

The heartbeat of neoliberal governance is crisis produced through austerity mechanisms and processes of de- and re-institutionalization (governance). This model constantly (re)produces social, political and cultural divides, thus nurturing repetitive eruptions of urban resistance against increasing inequality, injustice and imbalances. Crisis is the seemingly inherent necessity through which neoliberal measures are legitimized and produced politically, thus rendering it a self-fulfilling prophecy. As crises and impacts of neoliberal governance unfold and threaten the public life and public spaces of cities, these sites are where the fissures and cracks of neoliberalism become visible and its continued evolution becomes contested.

The empirical case studies exemplify the power of public space scholarship that utilizes hybrid combinations of micro, meso, and macro analytical techniques to carefully analyse changing patterns of urban life at a local level within the context of macro neoliberal politics and economies, between formal policies and informal action. In the cases of Berlin, Tokyo, Warsaw and Poznań (Dimmer, 2017; Domaradzka, 2017; Lebuhn, 2017), for instance, activists have used formal means of participation and/or formal rights and law to claim a citywide or neighbourhood referendum, or to claim full information about legal and public authority-related legal procedures. Regardless of their results, the authors state that these processes have helped to facilitate learning in newly established political communities where the political claims had become more inclusive and focused, thus (a) trying to attract the wider city publics to engage with and support the activists' claim; and (b) to make a clear message possible during the referendum campaign.

Meanwhile, other resistance groups have not allowed parties or formal procedures to (entirely) co-opt and conquer their mobilization dynamics as shown in the cases of Athens, Istanbul, Hong Kong and Taipei, whereas in Vienna (Knierbein and Gabauer 2017), the emergence of a wider critique -and thus, of counter-publics- and more actively resisting groups was heavily supported by the more socially oriented political parties. The cases of Taipei (Chen 2017), Hong Kong (Chen and Szeto 2017), Madrid (Kränzle 2017) and Barcelona (Garcia-Lamarca 2017) show that activists have made their way straight into the political system during times of elections, thus renewing the governing bodies and challenging long-established political identities. In Barcelona and Berlin (Lebuhn 2017), activist groups have stated their goal to perform as an incubator for democratic control of the governance regimes in place, and have actively organized policy and legal recommendations to revert the legal and economic hegemony of existing governance networks.

3.3 PUBLIC SPACE AS SPACE FOR RESCALING AND RE-POLITICIZING

Chapters in this volume indicate that we are currently witnessing a moment in which the spatial scales of crisis require more complex ways to consider and engage the political through modes of urban resistance. Resistance tactics, goals, and claims need to connect and reorganize fragmented geographies of crisis, that is, resistance groups need to combine the quest for local human needs, urban equity struggles, regional justice mechanisms, national political contestations, supranational governance critique, and a struggle against the locally destructive impacts of global and virtual market forces, thus overcoming the "jumping scales of capital" (Swyngedouw, 2003, referring to Smith, 1984).

Urban public spaces are places where social densities and political identities meet, and where fragmented scales of resistance need to be reunited, from local solidarity with peers within one's comfort zone towards a much more global solidarity for egalitarian democracy. Contributors to our research have indicated that movements have occasionally shifted their focus from central public spaces to the neighbourhood scale (and narrow comfort zone), consequently risking to insufficiently address central political questions, and thus reducing the perseverance and impact of the movement (Kränzle, 2017). Certain local neighbourhood interventions can even serve as a pretext for cultural regeneration and symbolic capital accumulation, and thus gentrification. Others, however, have stressed that there are certain central and politically symbolic places in cities where the quest for more genuine political reform or revolution has been repeatedly posed over centuries. These squares and streets have witnessed a new spark of radically democratizing the urban, and inspired people to issue more fundamental political claims rather than narrow inquiries or local, interest-based issues.

Apart from this multi-scalar notion of resistance, and the potential of resistance groups to reconnect and re-politicize the "jumping scales of capital", we also find resistance as counteraction, response, and contestation against all types of unsettling: economic, cultural, ecological, social and political. Some of the

contributions emphasize attempts to re-politicize the many obvious and less visible relations between different scales and dimensions of crisis and resistance through radical dialectics (e.g. between housing and public space research in Barcelona). Several chapters highlight the vulnerability of younger generations to evictions and displacement from their everyday places either as a result of commodified public spaces (Maharawal, 2017) or through racialized broken-windows policing against communities of colour (Cahill et al. 2017; Owens and Antiporda, 2017). Such conditions provided in turn opportunities for engaged scholarship, participatory action research, and empowerment of disenfranchised actors to investigate and mobilize against such conditions and processes. Insights from Hong Kong, Taipei, and Vienna also leave us more hopeful, as the protests were mainly student-led, with an active and politicized student generation trying to push through social and political reform and change, while in the case of Vienna, a group of youngsters issued state critique through humanitarian aid for refugees, thus calling for global human rights and solidarity through local action in train stations. In times of a decreasing consensus about the prevalence of human rights, urban resistance struggles may become rooted in quite material and basic claims to guarantee the everyday survival of those who have been dispossessed, disenfranchised and disempowered (Knierbein and Gabauer, 2017).

3.4 PUBLIC SPACE AS GROUNDS OF ALTER-POLITICS

Cities have been historically understood as a collective actor, where different parts of urban societies constantly perform collaboratively, producing and using public space as urban commons. The neoliberal project, however, seeks to replace this collective and collaborative urban history with an economic narrative: the city as a competitive space. As a result, competition has been rendered as a key aspect of current democracies, as it is linked to appearance of transparency, efficiency, and so forth, even though the actual linkages are weak and superficially constructed. Furthermore, in the construction of an exclusive politics and a moral climate, the narrative of competition renders those that are not able to or do not want to participate in such competition as outcasts (Tyler, 2015). The various resistance movements presented in this book represent efforts to expose and intervene in the apparent cracks of this narrative and practice, not only to claim, but also to radically renew the democratic project.

As space is at the heart of the organization of changing political economies, it is worth reflecting on the spatial features of the acts of urban resistance. This work draws upon earlier thinkers who have articulated the collective production of spaces as truly democratic where constituents that previously had no part become now the key agents for renewing democracy (Rancière, 2010). Through the case studies from different cities and continents, we have gathered results that enable us to: (1) further differentiate those disempowered and disenfranchised and (2) to track how they relate (a) to public space and (b) through public space to make use of other spaces.

For differently-motivated resistance groups, public space serves as the initial sites where many try to make their claim or state their dissent within their field, and to expand their political identifications to others. That way, they enable the embodied realm of lived space to become the key catalyst for the emergence of wider political dissent and the generation of new and alternative democratic projects. Lived space is thus where the picture of multiple fragmentations, failures, and fractures of the current global capitalism become traceable, connected, and where the potential cracks and spaces that escape neoliberalism's spatial conquista can be analysed, and explored. It is here where different types of publics and counter-publics meet and collide in the accessible urban spaces in cities worldwide in order to achieve adequate living conditions, where they intermingle and develop solidarity across different(ly) affected groups. Public space, thus, represents both an opportunity and a threat, as on the one hand it makes their struggle become (globally) visibly to gain supporters; on the other hand, public space is where their vulnerability is exposed, with a high (bodily) risk of being further stigmatized, marginalized, dispossessed, criminalized, or menaced (de la Llata Gonzales, 2017). At times, this includes the risk of losing one's life.

Urban resistance tactics have connected public space assemblies with direct actions into the private, public, or hybrid territories of capital accumulation to disrupt, offset, or interfere with the productive space of the current neoliberal economy. The unemployed, for instance, have re-appropriated vacant factories, container terminals, and office space to set up self-organized labour markets or collective industrial cooperatives. The unsheltered have de-privatized and re-housed empty buildings or have de-commodified private property through land action and adverse possession. The indignant have blocked banks and reclaimed bank assets into public and collective property. The un(der)represented have blocked

parliament buildings and emblematic public squares and streets to go beyond mere discursive claims. The unattended have used train stations as local hubs to stand together in global solidarity and to self-organize humanitarian support. The colonized have occupied former prisons emblematic of long histories of colonialism, thus symbolically unchaining themselves from a colonizing genealogy of oppression and inferiority. The non-consumers have developed new alternative modes of being in common and sharing common resources, while using both private and public properties. These resistance tactics link public space with the workplace and labour markets; public space with housing and homes; public space with the places of resource transfer and (missing) material redistribution; public space with the places where democracy ideally should be made (e.g. parliament; fora, agora); public space with mobility hubs and transport infrastructures; public space with places of oppression, terror and imprisonment; public space with sites of non-consumption or commoning.

Urban research on these dialectical relations between the aforementioned fields can help to identify a shift from anti-politics (demonstrations against certain issues) towards alter-politics (Hage, 2012), the affective strive for a politics of change. Alter-politics aims at practicing a radical hope for a democratic project that is stronger than the weak post-democratic model we witness today. It shows affective action for a collective and passionate capacity to long for alter-modernity (Hardt and Negri, 2009; da Silva Andrade and Huguenin, 2017), to collectively produce the commons through an affective political project dwelling in present realities. Alter-Politics takes “us outside of ourselves to see how we can be radically other to ourselves.” It “aims at finding a possibility of a different life outside a given order of things,” “generating new alter-modern spaces lying outside existing governmentalities” (Hage, 2015, p. 294, 296).

4 UNSILENT AND SILENT FORMS OF RESISTANCE AND SOLIDARITY

Bayat has depicted public space in Western democracies as part of the institutions of the modern nation-state, to which many of the urban subaltern in the cities around the world have no access. “Because modernity is a costly existence, not everyone can afford to be modern. It requires the capacity to conform to the types of behaviour and modes of life [...] that most vulnerable people simply cannot afford” (ibid. 2010, p. 59). As a highly-institutionalized realm, public space is one of these institutions of the modern urban world. This is why many of the urban subaltern tend to avoid public expression wherever possible. That way, they seek to escape the modern legal structure, which does not offer any resources or opportunities but confines their realm of everyday action (ibid.). As we take a worlded, critical perspective in examining different forms of resistance, it is also important to consider that silent, individual resistance can contribute to an understanding of the city as self-organized political project.

This paper has been concerned with ways through which such silence has been dispelled, by seeing and using the city and public space as a site of resistance and a catalyst for political change, where people bang their pots and pans, use goggles, umbrellas, and flowers to disrupt political silence and renew — a democracy in which “the spaces of democracy (spaces for the practice of democracy) and the democracy of space (democratic relations in the production of space)” are inherently related (García-Lamarca, 2017, referring to Hoskyns, 2014, p. 4). As Ober has put it, the original term of democracy was meant to capture ‘power’ as the ‘capacity to do things.’ “Demokratia is not just “the power of the demos” in the sense of “the superior or monopolistic power of the demos relative to other potential power-holders in the state.” Rather it means, more capaciously, “the empowered demos” - the regime in which the demos gains a collective capacity to effect change in the public realm, “the collective strength and ability to act within that realm and, indeed, to reconstitute the public realm through action” (Ober, 2008, p. 7).

By better understanding the processes, actions, and implications of recent urban resistances, our research aspires to contribute to the renewed attention concerning the role and significance of public space in the practice of lived democracy and lived space. Specifically, we have argued that in the face of diminishing democratic institutions in cities around the world, spaces of political resistance have a greater role to play not only in holding the state and political establishments accountable to society’s interest but in renewing and reinvigorating democratic culture and pursuit for equity, difference, and justice. Without resistance and public space agencies, mobilization of the masses, and continued public debates and social movements, democracy is at risk of becoming stagnant, narrow, and obsolete. The continued presence, contestation, and discourse of lived space are fundamental to a renewed and lived democracy, a democracy that is fundamental to protecting and enhancing welfare of citizens and communities against the encroachment of neoliberal interests and all forms of increases in spatial patterns of social inequality.

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ID 1454 | PERCEIVED QUALITY OF URBAN OPEN SPACE: A STOCKHOLM CASE STUDY

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1 INTRODUCTION

In investigating the quality of urban open space, it is important to investigate how the visual and auditory components contribute to the total quality. The majority of studies investigating audio-visual interaction in environmental perception have concerned how visual stimuli affect auditory perception, such as how vegetation affects the perception of the sound of road traffic from a motorway (e.g., Anderson, Mulligan, Goodman, Regen, 1983). In general, these studies indicate that how people perceive sound depends on the visual context. That is, some sounds are more appropriate in one context than in another, which seems to depend on the participants' expectations. For example, a city center is expected to sound like a city center, and not like a forest, and vice versa. Typically, a mismatch resulted in discomfort.

A handful of laboratory studies investigated how perception of auditory and visual aspects related to the perception of the composite of audio-visual information (e.g., Gifford & Ng, 1982; Kuwano, Namba, Komatsu, Kato, & Hayashi, 2001; Morinaga, Aono, Kuwano, & Kato, 2003). Chiefly, these studies showed that visual aspects of environments were more important than auditory aspects. However, how important the visual aspects were, was highly variable across different environments. This indicates that auditory information might dominate over visual information at some point (see also Gan, Luo, Breitung, Kang, & Zhang, 2014; Preis, Kociński, Hafke-Dys, & Wrzosek, 2015).

The present paper concerns a case study conducted in collaboration with the City of Stockholm, Sweden, in the summer of 2016. The purpose was to characterize and to investigate the potential for improving the quality of the environment in a centrally located park area in the city. Walks were conducted in situ together with 61 residents. In the walks the participants assessed five preselected sites in and near the park area, with regards to their perceived total, auditory and visual qualities.